

Open Letter to All State and Territory Agriculture Ministers and the Federal Minister for Agriculture

Dear Ministers,

This month marks twenty-one years since the Australian wool industry promised to phase out live lamb cutting (mulesing). That promise, to be delivered by 2010, was broken.

In September last year [The Broken Promise report](#) was launched, jointly commissioned by the Australian Alliance for Animals, FOUR PAWS, and Humane World for Animals | Australia (formerly Humane Society International). The report highlighted that wool industry leaders failed at ending this outdated and cruel practice. Since then, another year has passed, and wool growers have continued to breed sheep with high wrinkles that are susceptible to flystrike. And another ten million lambs have endured painful live lamb cutting. Since 2010, an estimated 150 million lambs have been subjected to live lamb cutting across Australia. Another year of industry and government inaction has left lambs to suffer unnecessarily and left wool growers exposed.

Australia remains the only country in the world still routinely carrying out this cruel practice. It is indefensible on animal welfare grounds, and it is increasingly a trade and market liability. Over 400 major global brands including Adidas, Country Road, H&M, Nike, and Zara have rejected mulesed wool. A 2024 YouGov survey found that more than two-thirds of Australians support retailers phasing out live lamb cut wool, with even higher support among Millennials and Gen X. Both consumers and brands are signalling that pain relief alone is not an acceptable long-term solution.

In July this year, Australian wool industry executives were told that Chinese and European processors [preferred certified non-mulesed wool](#) from countries that have banned live lamb cutting such as South Africa and New Zealand. This shift puts Australian wool growers at risk of losing access to essential markets and price premiums.

The solution is proven. Thousands of producers are already breeding plain-bodied, flystrike-resistant sheep, achieving higher welfare, reduced costs, and premium prices. But their hard work is being undermined as governments have left the rest of the industry to 'self-regulate', while taxpayer funds are wasted in the search for other alternatives that have failed to deliver.

It is time for federal and state leadership. We call on governments to:

1. Commit to an expedited review of the Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines for Sheep, with a clear mandate to legislate a phase-out of live lamb cutting.
2. Legislate a phase out of live lamb cutting by 2030 at the state and territory level.
3. Support wool growers to transition away from live lamb cutting through the use of genetics, ensuring they are not left exposed to global market risks.

Twenty-one years is long enough. Every year of delay means another ten million lambs suffer extreme pain and fear unnecessarily. Every year of delay places Australian farmers at greater economic risk.

It's time for governments to act.

Yours sincerely,

