

Animal Welfare (Standards and Guidelines for Sheep) Code of Practice 2026*

Disallowable instrument DI2026-6

made under the

Animal Welfare Act 1992, Section 22 (Approved code of practice)

1 Name of instrument

This instrument is the *Animal Welfare (Standards and Guidelines for Sheep) Code of Practice 2026*.

2 Commencement

This instrument commences on the day after it is notified.

3 Approval

I approve the *Standards and Guidelines for Sheep*, attached to this instrument, as a code of practice.

I am satisfied that adequate consultation has occurred in developing this code of practice.

4 Application

This code of practice applies to those people who own, keep, care for and breed Sheep in the ACT.

5 Revocation

This instrument revokes the *Animal Welfare (Sheep) Code of Practice Approval 1993* [DI1993-168].

Tara Cheyne MLA
Minister for City and Government Services
16 January 2026

*Name amended under Legislation Act, s 60

Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines

for

Sheep

Edition One

Version One

Endorsed

January 2016



This document forms part of the *Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines for the Welfare of Animals*.

This document will be reviewed regularly.

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Preface

The *Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines for Sheep* is a key policy objective under the Australian Animal Welfare Strategy (AAWS) — an initiative jointly developed by governments, industry, and the community, that guides the development of new, nationally consistent policies to improve animal welfare arrangements in all Australian states and territories. The development process for The *Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines for Sheep* is supported and funded by all Governments, and sheep industries.

The standards provide a basis for developing and implementing and enforcing consistent legislation across Australia, and provide guidance for all people responsible for sheep. They are based on current scientific knowledge, recommended industry practice and community expectations.

The development of these standards is part of a comprehensive program agreed by industry and governments to develop standards and guidelines for all commercial livestock species and at all points along the production supply chain.

The standards were developed in consultation with state and territory governments, livestock industry organisations, animal welfare groups and the general public under the auspices of the Animal Welfare Committee, which is ultimately responsible to the relevant ministers for Primary Industries.

The standards were drafted by a writing group comprising researchers and government and industry representatives, supported by a larger and broadly representative reference group which included community group and service providers, and was managed by Animal Health Australia. An important part of the process was the preparation of a regulation impact statement to assess the proposed standards and evaluate the costs resulting from changes to existing requirements.

An extensive consultation process was undertaken, with the final public consultation highlighting ethical and practical issues, which led to the development of more robust standards. The reference group considered the views and comments of all stakeholders in developing the final standards and guidelines for recommendation to Standing Council on Primary Industries.

These standards and guidelines replace the following model code of practice:

- . *Model Codes of Practice for the Welfare of Animals — The Sheep*, PISC/SCARM Report Series 89, CSIRO Publishing, 1991 (revised 2006)

The preparation of these standards represents a significant investment by all parties, especially members of the writing and reference groups. Their efforts are gratefully acknowledged by Animal Health Australia.

Introduction

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide contemporary standards and guidelines for the welfare of sheep in Australia. The document informs all those with responsibilities for the care and management of sheep.

The **standards** provide the basis for developing and implementing consistent legislation and enforcement across Australia, and direction for people responsible for sheep. They reflect available scientific knowledge, current practice and community expectations.

The standards and guidelines may be reflected in the industry-based quality-assurance programs that include sheep welfare provisions.

In May 2009, primary industries ministers took the position that **guidelines**, regardless of their purpose in existing codes and the new standards and guidelines documents, **will not be regulated**.

In particular, agreement was reached that:

All future revisions of Model Codes and 'Australian Standards and Guidelines' documents must provide a number of:

- a. clear essential requirements ('standards') for animal welfare that can be verified and are transferable into legislation for effective regulation, and
- b. guidelines, to be produced concurrently with the standards but not enforced in legislation, to be considered by industry for incorporation into national industry QA along with the standards.

This document has been prepared as part of a series of standards and guidelines, each of which brings together welfare standards and guidelines for a particular species — in this case, sheep.

This document aims to:

- specify the legal standards of management and husbandry required to protect and maintain the welfare of sheep in Australia
- provide recommended guidelines for livestock producers, owners, managers, stockpersons and contractors, to complement the standards and to assist them to minimise risks to the welfare of sheep in all types of sheep farming and related enterprises.

Scope

The standards and guidelines will apply to all sheep farming enterprises in Australia from extensive grazing to fully housed systems. Some provisions such as handling standards will apply in other enterprises if there are not already higher provisions in place, such as during transport or at abattoirs or saleyards.

The standards apply to all those responsible for the care and management of sheep. ‘Sheep’ includes a single ovine animal.

These standards and guidelines should be considered in conjunction with other requirements for livestock, and related Commonwealth, state and territory legislation, including:

- for farming enterprises — model codes of practice or standards and guidelines for livestock species, saleyards, livestock processing (slaughter) establishments and the *Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock*
- for transport — *the Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines — Land Transport of Livestock, Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock*, livestock health and biosecurity requirements, and regulated livestock loading schemes and driver regulations
- for research and teaching purposes — *Australian Code for the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes*, 8th edition, 2013.

Where legislation requires a higher standard than these standards, the higher standard will apply. Where there is a conflict with another standard in meeting the livestock welfare standards, the welfare of livestock must be the first consideration unless there is a work health and safety requirement.

Cruelty and unacceptable animal welfare practices can be prosecuted under cruelty and aggravated cruelty offence clauses in animal welfare legislation. For example, sheep must not be allowed to die from lack of feed or water.

Advice or assistance with welfare management and disease control is available from state and territory departments of agriculture, locally based private consultants or veterinarians, as appropriate. These Australian standards and guidelines do not endeavour to describe ‘best practice’, because it is often too difficult to reflect known regional variation. There are other industry and government documents to better communicate these industry practices that also consider regional variations.

Development process

Each document in the series of *Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines* is produced following the same overall process. Production of the document is undertaken by a writing group and guided by a reference group that includes appropriate representation from industry, government and nongovernment organisations.

Standards are based on the collective experience and judgement by the writing group and, where possible, on relevant published scientific literature and other references. The four main decision-making principles¹ used for standards are that they are:

- desirable for livestock welfare
- feasible for industry and government
- important for the livestock welfare regulatory framework
- will achieve the intended outcome for livestock welfare.

¹ Adapted from HA Linstone and M Turoff (2002). ‘The policy delphi’, chapter III.B.1 in *The Delphi Method: Techniques and Applications*, New Jersey Institute of Technology 2002.

A regulation impact statement (RIS) is also prepared for the proposed standards in the document.

Through a public consultation process, the community, industry, government and any other relevant stakeholders are given opportunities to comment on drafts of the standards and guidelines document, and the RIS. Final documents are made available in print and on the internet at www.animalwelfarestandards.net.au.

The final documents are also provided to state and territory jurisdictions and industry bodies for referencing in relevant legislation, and to be available for incorporation into industry quality-assurance programs.

Interpretation

Each numbered section of the document covers a particular topic (water, feed, etc.) and contains the following information:

- *Animal welfare objective* — the intended outcome(s) for each section of the standards and guidelines.
- *Standards* — the animal welfare requirements designated in this document (i.e. the requirements that must be met under law for livestock welfare purposes). The standards are intended to be clear, essential and verifiable statements. However, not all issues are able to be well defined by scientific research or to be quantified. Standards use the word 'must'. They are presented in a box and are numbered, with the prefix 'S'. The use of hyperlinks in the standards indicate a defined term.
- *Guidelines* — the recommended practices to achieve desirable animal welfare outcomes. Guidelines use the word 'should' and complement the standards. Noncompliance with one or more guidelines will not constitute an offence under law.
- *Notes* — explanations of the context of the standards and guidelines (notes are advisory statements for selected background information).
- *Definitions* — are described in the glossary. Jurisdictions may vary in their definition of specific terms under their animal welfare legislation. Every endeavour has been made to adopt terms that have nationwide application. Readers are urged to check the relevant definitions under the relevant legislation in their jurisdiction.

Further detail on livestock management practices can be found in other industry and government publications.

Note the use of 'a person' or 'a person in charge' in the standards. 'A person' means anyone interacting directly with sheep. The reference can be to more than one person (plural) and not just a specific person. Use of 'a person in charge' is appropriate where responsibility is shared and may extend along a hierarchy of management to include all levels of management and ownership as appropriate. In contrast, the term 'the person in charge' usually relates to a single, specific person.

Some standards describe the required welfare outcomes, without prescribing the exact actions that must be done.

The 'risk to welfare of sheep' is the potential for a factor to affect the welfare of sheep in a way that causes pain, injury or distress to sheep. The outcome could include sunburn, hypothermia, heat stress, dehydration, exhaustion, abortion, injury, metabolic disease or death. These risks can be

managed by undertaking reasonable actions to prevent or reduce the risk. ‘Sheep’ includes a single ovine animal.

A ‘reasonable action(s)’ are those actions regarded as reasonable to be done by an experienced person in the circumstances to address a problem, as determined by accepted practice and by other similarly experienced people. It is not intended that all reasonable actions are described in this document.

In the context of these standards, the term ‘at the first reasonable opportunity’ means within the time-frame that would be expected by a reasonable person with the relevant knowledge, skills and experience in the management of livestock given the urgency of the situation in relation to the welfare of the livestock.

Principles for sheep welfare

Sheep in Australia are managed in environments that vary from extensive rangelands to intensively housed systems. In all cases, the people in charge of sheep are responsible for the welfare of the animals under their control. In achieving improved welfare outcomes envisaged by the standards, it is important that people responsible for animals have the necessary knowledge, experience and skills to undertake the various procedures and meet the requirements of the standards, in a manner that minimises the risk to sheep welfare.

Adherence to good animal husbandry principles is essential to meet the welfare requirements of animals. Sheep strongly prefer to be with other sheep in a flock. Good husbandry principles that also meet the basic physiological and behavioural needs of sheep include:

- a level of nutrition adequate to sustain good health and welfare
- access to sufficient water of suitable quality to meet physiological needs
- social contact with other sheep
- sufficient space to stand, lie and stretch their limbs and perform normal patterns of behaviour
- handling facilities, equipment and procedures that minimise stress
- procedures to minimise the risk of pain, injury or disease
- provision of appropriate treatment, including humane killing if necessary
- minimising the risk of predation
- provision of reasonable precautions against extremes of weather and the effects of natural disasters
- selection and breeding of sheep appropriate for the environment and the level of planned flock management to be provided
- assessment of the need to undertake any husbandry procedures that may result in significant short-term pain against alternative strategies for the long-term welfare of the sheep
- undertaking of any husbandry procedures required for planned flock management in a manner that reduces the impact of these procedures and minimises risks to sheep welfare.

1 Responsibilities

Objective

A person knows their responsibilities for sheep welfare and is able to perform the required tasks to minimise the risk to the welfare of sheep.

Standards

S1.1 A person must take reasonable actions to ensure the welfare of sheep under their care.

Guidelines

G1.1 Elements of responsibility for sheep management should include:

- understanding the standards and guidelines for sheep welfare
- obtaining knowledge of relevant animal welfare laws
- understanding sheep behaviour and use of low stress stock handling techniques
- planning and undertaking actions for the enterprise to meet the welfare standards and address contingencies that may arise
- assessing the quantity, quality and continuity of feed and water supply
- handling to minimise stress, and using handling aids, facilities and other equipment appropriately
- undertaking hygienic husbandry procedures in a manner that minimises the risks to sheep welfare
- understanding and following chemical and drug treatment instructions for sheep
- identifying distressed, weak, injured or diseased sheep, and taking appropriate action
- knowledge of local patterns of disease and disease prevention
- maintaining appropriate records
- humanely killing sheep by appropriate methods, or seeking the assistance of someone who is capable and equipped to kill them humanely.

G1.2 Agistment responsibilities should be communicated, documented and clearly understood by all parties involved.

G1.3 Owners, managers and stockpersons of sheep should have an appropriate staff induction program, periodically review existing practices, and be aware of new developments.

2 Feed and water

Objective

Sheep have access to feed and water to minimise the risk to their welfare.

Standards

S2.1 A person in charge must ensure sheep have reasonable access to adequate and appropriate feed and water.

Guidelines

- G2.1 Sheep should have access to feed and water daily, except where reasonable management practices, such as shearing, preparation for sale, transport, slaughter and drenching, result in a longer period of water deprivation, to a maximum of 48 hours. Feed and water deprivation exceeding 48 hours should be avoided.
- G2.2 If sufficient feed and water cannot be provided to sheep, options that should be considered are to relocate, agist, sell or humanely kill the sheep before sheep welfare is adversely affected.
- G2.3 Weaned lambs should gain weight and be provided with appropriate energy and protein supplements when grazing dry pastures or stubbles.
- G2.4 Lambs should be supplementary fed with ewes (imprint feeding) before weaning, where appropriate for the production system, so that the lambs learn to accept supplementary feed.
- G2.5 Regular assessment should be made of the needs of the sheep in relation to the quantity and quality of feed and water.
- G2.6 Self feeders and watering points should be checked regularly and maintained.
- G2.7 Access by sheep to contaminated and spoilt feed, toxic plants and harmful substances should be managed or avoided if possible.
- G2.8 Sheep should be gradually introduced to a change of diet to enable them to adapt and to prevent digestive problems, and should be closely monitored.
- G2.9 A body condition, fat scoring or weighing system should be used as a guide for the monitoring and planned feeding of sheep.
- G2.10 Sheep should be closely monitored during transition to varying water quality (e.g. mineral content, salinity, etc.) to ensure that they are drinking. Alternate water supplies should be provided if sheep are seen not to drink.

3 Risk management of extreme weather, natural disasters, disease, injury and predation

Objective

Sheep are managed to minimise the impact of threats to their welfare, including extremes of weather, natural disasters, disease, injury and predation.

Standards

- S3.1 A person in charge must take reasonable actions to ensure the welfare of sheep from threats, including extremes of weather, drought, fires, floods, disease, injury and predation.
- S3.2 A person in charge must ensure the inspection of sheep at intervals, and at a level appropriate to the production system and the risks to the welfare of sheep.
- S3.3 A person in charge must ensure appropriate treatment for sick, injured or diseased sheep at the first reasonable opportunity.

Guidelines

Contingency planning, inspection and drought management

G3.1 Contingency plans to minimise risks to sheep welfare should include:

- emergency contact details
- breakdown or mechanical failure affecting feed, water or ventilation
- adverse weather — specifically conditions that predispose sheep to heat or cold stress
- flood, fire and drought
- disease outbreak or injury
- other issues specific to the enterprise or sheep being managed.

G3.2 Inspection of sheep should take into consideration:

- feed availability
- water supply
- age
- pregnancy status
- weather
- disease risk, including flystrike
- predation risk

- recent management procedures.

G3.3 Sheep that appear to be isolated from the flock, caught in structures or bogged should be inspected and appropriate action taken without delay.

G3.4 Drought strategies should be prepared in advance and then progressively implemented. Strategies should be implemented before paddock feed runs out and may include:

- relocation
- supplementary feeding and use of stock containment areas
- sale or agistment
- segregation according to risk
- early weaning
- humane killing.

G3.5 Sheep being fed in a drought situation should be carefully observed. Weak sheep and shy feeders may require segregation to ensure appropriate treatment.

Weather

G3.6 Sheep and lambs should be provided with adequate shelter. In the absence of natural protection, consideration should be given to the provision of shade, windbreaks or sheds.

G3.7 Shorn sheep should be given protection during cold conditions and sudden weather changes.

G3.8 Protection for sheep around shearing may include:

- postponing shearing
- using stud combs
- providing shelter
- providing wind breaks
- providing additional feed.

G3.9 Sheep handling should be minimised during extreme weather and particularly during extremely hot weather.

Predators

G3.10 Predator control programs should be implemented where predation is a risk to the welfare of sheep.

Disease and injury

G3.11 Advice on sheep disease prevention or treatment should be sought from qualified advisors. A health management plan should be devised and implemented.

G3.12 Unexplained disease and deaths should be investigated to formulate appropriate remedial and preventive actions.

G3.13 Sheep should be vaccinated against relevant diseases.

G3.14 Treatments and vaccines should be administered in accordance with directions.
Records of treatments should be kept.

G3.15 Internal and external parasites should be monitored and controlled.

G3.16 Where flystrike is a risk, preventive techniques that should be considered are:

- selecting replacement sheep with greater genetic resistance to flystrike
- culling sheep with high wrinkle scores
- culling previously struck sheep
- tactical crutching/shearing during high prevalence periods
- strategic chemical use
- using an effective flock worm control program and/or grazing management to prevent scouring
- selecting replacement sheep with correct tail length and/or breech modification
- tail docking lambs
- using clips and other appropriate new technologies
- mulesing lambs.

Objective

Facilities and equipment are appropriate to minimise the risk to the welfare of sheep.

Standards

S4.1 A person in charge must take reasonable actions in the construction, maintenance and operation of facilities and equipment to ensure the welfare of sheep.

Guidelines

G4.1 Facility construction or modification should take into account:

- sheep behaviour
- topography (location and drainage)
- flood and fire risk
- climate
- purpose/length of confinement
- space
- feed and water space requirements
- shade/shelter
- surface materials
- cleaning and waste disposal.

G4.2 Shade should be considered in hot weather for outdoor pens where sheep are penned for extended periods.

G4.3 Floor surfaces should be nonslip, nonabrasive and free-draining. Concrete is only recommended for high-traffic areas.

G4.4 Facilities should be free from protrusions and obstacles that may cause injury.

G4.5 Facilities and equipment for restraining sheep should only be used:

- for the minimum time necessary
- with the minimum restraint necessary.

5 Handling and husbandry

Objective

Handling and husbandry practices are appropriate and minimise the risk to the welfare of sheep.

Standards

S5.1 A person must handle sheep in a reasonable manner.

S5.2 A person handling sheep must not:

- 1) lift sheep off the ground by only one leg, or by the head, ears, horns, neck, tail or wool, unless in an emergency; or
- 2) throw or drop sheep, except to land on their feet from a height less than 1.5 metres; or
- 3) strike, punch or kick sheep in an unreasonable manner; or
- 4) drag sheep that are not standing by only one leg, except in an emergency to allow safe handling, lifting, treatment or humane killing; or
- 5) drag sheep by only the ears, or tail; or
- 6) drag sheep by mechanical means, except in an emergency for the minimum distance to allow safe handling, lifting, treatment or humane killing.

S5.3 A person in charge of a dog that habitually bites sheep must ensure the dog is muzzled while working sheep.

S5.4 A person in charge must ensure a sheep is shorn before the wool length is greater than twice the average annual growth for that breed.

S5.5 A person must consider the welfare of sheep when using an electric prod, and must not use it:

- 1) on genital, anal, or udder areas of sheep; or
- 2) on facial areas, unless sheep welfare is at risk; or
- 3) on sheep less than three months old unless sheep welfare is at risk or;
- 4) on sheep that are unable to move away; or
- 5) in an unreasonable manner on sheep.

S5.6 A person must not trim or grind the teeth of sheep.

S5.7 A person must not alter the anatomy of the prepuce of sheep by incising the

surrounding [skin](#) (pizzle dropping).

S5.8 A person in charge must ensure that tethered [sheep](#) are able to exercise daily.

Guidelines

Handling

G5.1 Sheep should be handled to take advantage of their natural flocking behaviour when mustering, yarding and handling. People handling sheep should have an understanding of the flight zone.

G5.2 Extra care should be taken when handling sheep with special needs — for example, young lambs, heavily pregnant ewes, lame sheep and rams.

G5.3 Sheep should be restrained and isolated for the minimum time necessary. Sheep isolated in a pen should be provided with a pen mate or a mirror.

G5.4 A person tethering sheep should:

- ensure the tether is long enough to allow adequate exercise and grazing
- ensure the tether does not become entangled
- ensure sheep have adequate shelter
- inspect the sheep a minimum of once per day
- not tether sheep by the leg or foot.

G5.5 The use of dogs and handling aids should be limited to the minimum needed to complete the task.

G5.6 During mustering, sheep should be rested or allowed to slow if they show signs of laboured breathing.

G5.7 Temporary yards should be used where appropriate for husbandry procedures.

G5.8 Overcrowding of sheep in pens or yards should be avoided. Precautions should be taken to prevent smothering, especially for lambs and weaners.

G5.9 Care should be taken when handling, catching or restraining a segregated sheep, but particularly a ram, because this act may result in serious injury to an animal. Handling practices and facilities should be appropriate to manage these risks.

G5.10 Sheep should be returned to feed and water as soon as possible after handling.

G5.11 Unnecessary sheep handling should be avoided during extreme weather.

Husbandry

G5.12 Operators should adopt practices to manage risk from dipping and other forms of ectoparasite treatments, which include treatment failure, post-dipping infections and injury. When dipping sheep, take into consideration:

- that adverse weather is not prevailing or predicted
- that sheep should not be overloaded in the dip
- the use of disinfectant if dipped immediately after shearing.

G5.13 Feet should be inspected as appropriate and any necessary action taken.

G5.14 Operators should adopt practices to manage risk from drenching and other forms of oral treatments, which include treatment failure, toxicity, inhalation of the medication and injury. This applies to treatments with solutions, suspensions, pastes, capsules or any form of bolus, including bullets.

G5.15 Manufacturer's instructions should be followed for husbandry procedures for sheep, such as applying clips and ear tags.

G5.16 Horn trimming should avoid excessive damage to soft tissue.

G5.17 Eartagging, tattooing, tagging and vaccination should be done in a way that minimises the risk of infection and with instruments that are sharp and clean.

G5.18 Sheep fitted with nets or coats should be inspected regularly to ensure that they do not become tangled, cast or adversely affected by grass seeds.

G5.19 Insect worry should be managed by implementing control measures where appropriate.

Wool harvesting

G5.20 Care should be taken when shearing and crutching to minimise cuts, and severe cuts should be treated at the first reasonable opportunity.

G5.21 When harvesting wool, consider:

- stopping if cold, wet and windy weather is experienced or predicted and adequate shelter is not available
- releasing newly shorn sheep into adequate shelter or allowing sheep to remain in the shed until the risk has passed
- ensuring there is adequate feed and water available for newly shorn sheep.

G5.22 Rams that are sedated for shearing or crutching should be managed to prevent exposure, sunburn and smothering and in accordance with the directions of the prescribing veterinarian.

G5.23 Sheep that grow and retain long wool should be shorn annually.

6 Tail docking and castration

Objective

Tail docking and castration are done only when necessary, and in a manner that minimises the risk to the welfare of sheep, particularly pain and distress.

Standards

- S6.1 A person performing [tail docking](#) or [castration](#) must have the relevant knowledge, experience and skills, or be under the [direct supervision](#) of a person who has the relevant knowledge, experience and skills.
- S6.2 A person must not [tail dock sheep](#) that are more than six months old without using appropriate [pain relief](#) and haemorrhage control for the [sheep](#).
- S6.3 A person must leave a docked tail stump of a [sheep](#) with at least one [palpable free joint](#) remaining.
- S6.4 A person must not [castrate](#) or use the [cryptorchid method](#) on [sheep](#) that are more than six months old without using appropriate [pain relief](#) and haemorrhage control for the [sheep](#).

Guidelines

- G6.1 Tail docking and castration should only be done where there are no alternatives and the procedure results in:
 - benefits to life-time sheep welfare
 - better flock management
 - a reduced work (occupational) health and safety risk.
- G6.2 Tail docking and castration should be done after a secure maternal bond has been established, and after the lambs are 24 hours old.
- G6.3 Lambs should be tail docked, castrated or made cryptorchid as young as possible and before they are 12 weeks old.
- G6.4 Tail docking, castration and other marking procedures should be planned with consideration of the age of lambs, weather, staff availability and facilities, including the use of temporary or permanent yards.
- G6.5 Good hygiene practices should be practiced in relation to facilities, hands, handling and instruments. Disinfectant should be used and changed frequently.
- G6.6 Infection should be minimised by avoiding muddy or dusty yards, and wet or humid weather.

G6.7 Operators should adopt appropriate strategies to minimise the risk and impact of common infections, through vaccination of lambs and/or their mothers.

G6.8 Lambs should be appropriately restrained in a lamb cradle and, when released, should land on their feet to avoid contact of the wound(s) with the ground.

G6.9 Lambs should be separated from their mothers for the shortest possible time.

G6.10 Haemorrhage should be minimised by selecting an appropriate method, preventing overheating of lambs and allowing them to settle after mustering.

G6.11 Tail docking and castration should not be undertaken during extreme weather.

G6.12 Tail docking and castration should be done when fly activity is minimal, or in conjunction with appropriate preventive flystrike treatments.

G6.13 Sheep should be inspected regularly and with minimal disturbance for signs of post-operative complications during the healing process, and appropriate action taken.

G6.14 Tail docking and castration should be accompanied by pain relief when practical and cost-effective methods become available. Operators should seek advice on current pain minimisation strategies.

G6.15 Ewes should be managed to optimise milk production to maximize protein availability for the lamb to aid wound healing.

G6.16 After placement in paddocks, lambs should not be forcibly mustered and yarded until wounds are healed.

Tail docking

G6.17 Lambs should be tail docked by the hot knife or rubber ring methods, in preference to the sharp knife method or other cutting methods, except for larger tails. The hot knife method is generally preferable for tail docking done with mulesing. Recommendations may change with future research and development.

G6.18 A hot knife should be operated at the recommended temperature.

G6.19 The tail should be docked through the joint space.

G6.20 The docked tail should be long enough to cover the vulva in female lambs and be of similar length in males.

G6.21 Tail docking should not be done for cosmetic reasons or on fat-tail sheep breeds.

Castration

G6.22 Lambs destined for slaughter before they are 12 weeks old, or before the onset of puberty, should not be castrated.

G6.23 A person should use the most appropriate tools and least painful method to castrate sheep that is applicable to the production system.

Objective

In circumstances where mulesing is necessary for the long-term welfare of the sheep, it is done in a manner that minimises the impact of the procedure.

Standards

- S7.1 A person performing [mulesing](#) must have the relevant knowledge, experience and skills, or be under the [direct supervision](#) of a person who has the relevant knowledge, experience and skills.
- S7.2 A person must not [mules sheep](#) that are less than 24 hours old or more than 12 months old.
- S7.3 A person must not [mules sheep](#) that are 6–12 months old without using appropriate [pain relief](#).
- S7.4 A person must not [mules sheep](#) showing signs of debilitating disease, weakness or ill-thrift.
- S7.5 A person [mulesing sheep](#) must only remove wool-bearing [skin](#).

Note: Mulesing does not include nonsurgical approaches that deliver analogous outcomes for the sheep such as clips, intra-dermal injections of chemicals or other future, non-cutting technologies.

Guidelines

- G7.1 The options for breech strike prevention should be considered before undertaking mulesing including:
 - selection for resistant conformation
 - culling susceptible sheep
 - clips
 - crutching
 - timing of shearing
 - chemicals for flystrike prevention
 - internal parasite control.
- G7.2 Selection for breech flystrike-resistant conformation should include low dag score, low wrinkle score and low breech cover score.
- G7.3 In areas prone to high breech flystrike risk, lambs with a high dag score and/or high wrinkle score should be culled.

G7.4 In assessing breech flystrike risk and the need for mulesing, factors that should be considered are:

- sheep are at a high risk of breech flystrike on the property on which they are kept
- lambs are intended to be kept as adult sheep
- sheep are likely to be sold and kept as adults in areas prone to breech flystrike.

G7.5 The mulesing operation should only remove sufficient wool-bearing skin appropriate to the conformation of the lamb being treated to achieve flystrike protection.

G7.6 Where mulesing is performed, lambs should be mulesed at 2–12 weeks old.

G7.7 Mulesing should only be done where there are no alternatives and the procedure results in:

- benefits to life-time sheep welfare
- better flock management
- a reduced work (occupational) health and safety risk.

G7.8 Mulesing should be accompanied by pain relief where practical and cost-effective methods are available. Operators should seek advice on current pain minimisation strategies.

G7.9 Good hygiene practices should be practiced in relation to facilities, hands, handling and instruments. Disinfectant should be used and changed frequently.

G7.10 Risk of infection should be minimised by avoiding muddy or dusty yards, and wet or humid weather.

G7.11 Operators should adopt appropriate strategies to minimise the risk and impact of common infections through vaccination of lambs and/or their mothers.

G7.12 Lambs should be appropriately restrained in a lamb cradle and, when released, should land on their feet to avoid contact of the wound(s) with the ground.

G7.13 Lambs should be separated from their mothers for the shortest possible time.

G7.14 Ewes should be managed to optimise milk production to maximise protein availability for the lamb to aid wound healing.

G7.15 Haemorrhage should be minimised by preventing overheating of lambs and allowing them to settle after mustering.

G7.16 Mulesing should be done when fly activity is minimal, or in conjunction with appropriate preventive flystrike treatment.

G7.17 Sheep should be inspected regularly and with minimal disturbance for signs of post-operative complications during the healing process, and appropriate action taken.

G7.18 After placement in paddocks, lambs should not be forcibly mustered and yarded until wounds are healed.

G7.19 Mulesing should be planned with consideration to the age of lambs, weather, staff availability and facilities, including the use of temporary or permanent yards.

G7.20 Mulesing should not be undertaken during extreme weather.

8 Breeding management

Objective

Breeding and management practices are appropriate and minimise the risk to the welfare of sheep.

Standards

- S8.1 A person performing artificial breeding procedures on sheep must have the relevant knowledge, experience and skills, or be under the direct supervision of a person who has the relevant knowledge, experience and skills.
- S8.2 A person performing artificial breeding procedures on sheep must not cause unreasonable pain, distress or injury to sheep.
- S8.3 A person must be a veterinarian, or operating under veterinary supervision, to perform surgical embryo transfer and laparoscopic insemination of sheep.

Guidelines

- G8.1 Persons responsible for breeding management should have an understanding of reproduction and behaviour of both the ewe and the ram.
- G8.2 The timing and duration of the joining period should be managed to align with feed availability for the ewes and lambs, and to reduce weather risk for lambs.

Ewes and lambing

- G8.3 In the last 4–6 weeks of pregnancy, management practices should minimise stress on ewes to reduce pregnancy toxæmia and other metabolic diseases.
- G8.4 Lambing ewes should be monitored, but disturbed as little as possible.
- G8.5 Ewes that receive severe injuries during lambing or that are affected by a severe adverse outcome (prolapsed uterus, unable to remove lamb) should receive urgent treatment or be humanely killed without delay.
- G8.6 Lambing ewes should be placed in a sheltered paddock with quality feed, especially if there is a risk of cold, wet or windy weather.
- G8.7 Predators should be controlled before and during lambing.

Newborn lambs

- G8.8 Newborn lambs orphaned at birth should receive colostrum or colostrum substitute as soon as possible after birth.
- G8.9 Weak or orphaned lambs with very little chance of survival should be humanely killed without delay.

Rams

G8.10 Rams should be checked at regular intervals for injuries and disease.

G8.11 Semen collection using an artificial vagina should be used in preference to electro-ejaculation.

Laparoscopic artificial insemination and, embryo transfer

G8.12 Ewes should be handled and restrained for the shortest duration and as gently as possible. Ewes should spend the minimum amount of time inverted.

G8.13 Laparoscopic artificial insemination and embryo transfer should be done using sedation, analgesia and aseptic technique.

9 Intensive sheep production systems

Objective

Sheep in intensive production systems are managed to minimise the risk to the welfare of sheep.

Standards

- S9.1 A person in charge must ensure that feed and water is available daily to [sheep](#) in [intensive production systems](#).
- S9.2 A person in charge must ensure the daily [inspection](#) of all [sheep](#) in the [intensive production system](#).
- S9.3 A person in charge must take reasonable action where [sheep](#) have not adapted to an [intensive production system](#).
- S9.4 A person in charge must not allow faeces and urine to accumulate to the stage that compromises the welfare of [sheep](#) in an [intensive production system](#).
- S9.5 A person in charge must ensure an indoor housing system for [sheep](#) has effective [ventilation](#).
- S9.6 A person in charge must ensure sufficient space to allow all [sheep](#) to [lie](#) on their sternums at the same time in an [intensive production system](#).
- S9.7 A person must not permanently house a [sheep](#) in a single pen for the purpose of fine wool production.

Guidelines

Feed and water

- G9.1 Drinking equipment should be inspected regularly and maintained to ensure its correct operation, and that pipes, taps and ball valves are not blocked.
- G9.2 Water troughs should be cleaned as required to prevent contamination.
- G9.3 Feed troughs should be cleaned as required to prevent faecal contamination and build-up of stale or spoiled feed and dust.
- G9.4 Trough space should be adequate for the feeding system to allow the daily intake of feed and water, and to minimise bullying and shy feeders.
- G9.5 Sheep should be gradually introduced to a change of diet to enable them to adapt and to prevent digestive problems, and should be closely monitored.
- G9.6 Sufficient fibre should be provided in the diet to promote rumination.

G9.7 Sheep for intensive wool production systems should be maintained at or above a body condition or fat score of two out of five (five is fattest).

Management

G9.8 Managers of intensive systems should be aware of current information in intensive sheep management and health, and have contact with professionals with relevant expertise.

G9.9 When inspecting sheep in the first week of confinement, particular attention should be given to their adjustment to:

- new dietary regime
- environment
- feeding and watering facilities
- other sheep.

G9.10 Sheep should be grouped with others that they are already familiar with, and of the same class.

Inspection

G9.11 During inspections particular attention should be given to:

- identifying signs of sickness, digestive conditions or injury
- measuring feed intake
- checking feed and water facilities
- identifying shy feeders
- identifying stereotypic behaviours early, such as repetitive motion, wool biting and mouthing of railings.

G9.12 Special attention should be given to shy feeders. Management options for shy feeders may include:

- reducing pen density
- drafting sheep to pens based on size of sheep
- altering trough design to enhance feed access
- removing them from the system.

G9.13 Lighting in indoor systems should be adequate to allow inspection of all sheep.

Sheep behaviour

G9.14 Sheep should not be housed in single pens for any longer than is necessary.

G9.15 Wool biting and other stereotypic behaviours should be addressed. Options may include:

- providing coarse fibre (e.g. straw) in such a way that satisfies the need for sheep to forage and ruminate
- correcting dietary deficiencies
- enriching the environment
- removing the sheep from the system.

Disease prevention

G9.16 Prior to entry into an intensive system, sheep should be inspected for disease and injury and appropriate treatment undertaken.

G9.17 A biosecurity plan should be in place for the introduction of sheep to the system.

G9.18 Intensive systems should have hospital pens for sick or injured sheep.

G9.19 Dead sheep should be removed as soon as possible.

Pen density

G9.20 When determining space allowance per sheep, consideration should be given to:

- environment
- group size
- age
- sex
- live weight
- provision of feed and water
- behaviour of stock.

G9.21 Table 9.1 should be used as a guide for the minimum space allowances per sheep in a pen or feedlot.

Table 9.1 Minimum space allowances

Single pens	Minimum space allowances (m²)
Wether or dry ewe	0.9
Ram, pregnant ewe or heavy wether	1.0
Lamb	0.6
Ewe with lamb	1.5
Group pens	
Less than 8 sheep	0.9
8–15 sheep	0.8
16–30 sheep	0.6
31 or more sheep	0.5
Outdoor feedlots	
Lambs up to 41 kg	1.0
Adult sheep	1.3
Heavy wether	1.5
Ewe and lamb(s)	1.8

Source: Model Code of Practice for the Welfare of Animals: The Sheep Edition 2, 2006.

Facilities and environment

G9.22 Dust should be minimised within the intensive system.

G9.23 Pen surfaces should be maintained to minimise slipping and injury.

G9.24 Pen surfaces should be constructed and maintained in a way that reduces the build-up of manure and urine.

G9.25 Shade and shelter should be provided to prevent heat and cold stress.

G9.26 All ventilation equipment should be checked regularly to ensure it is fully operational.

G9.27 Indoor housing systems with controlled or forced ventilation that rely on automatic equipment should be inspected daily, or have a back-up system to warn of mechanical failure.

G9.28 Natural or artificial light should be adequate for all sheep housed in indoor systems.

Contingency arrangements

G9.29 A contingency plan should be in place for the following:

- water supply interruption
- feed supply interruption
- disease outbreak
- extreme weather conditions (heat and cold stress)
- personal accident or injury
- fire or flood.

G9.30 Fire alarms and adequate fire fighting equipment should be fitted and maintained in all indoor housing systems.

10 Humane killing

Objective

Where it is necessary to kill sheep, it is done promptly, safely and humanely.

Standards

S10.1 A person in charge must ensure killing methods for sheep result in rapid loss of consciousness followed by death while unconscious.

S10.2 A person killing a sheep must have the relevant knowledge, experience and skills to kill the sheep humanely, or be under the direct supervision of a person who has the relevant knowledge, experience and skills, unless:

- 1) the sheep is suffering and needs to be killed to prevent undue suffering; and
- 2) there is an unreasonable delay until direct supervision by a person who has the relevant knowledge, experience and skills becomes available.

S10.3 A person in charge of a sheep suffering from severe distress, disease or injury that cannot be reasonably treated must ensure the sheep is killed at the first reasonable opportunity.

S10.4 A person killing sheep must take reasonable actions to confirm the sheep is dead.

S10.5 A person killing a lamb by a blow to the forehead must ensure that the lamb weighs less than 10 kilograms and only when there is no firearm, captive bolt or lethal injection reasonably available.

S10.6 A person must only use bleeding-out by neck cut to kill a conscious sheep when there is no firearm, captive bolt or lethal injection reasonably available.

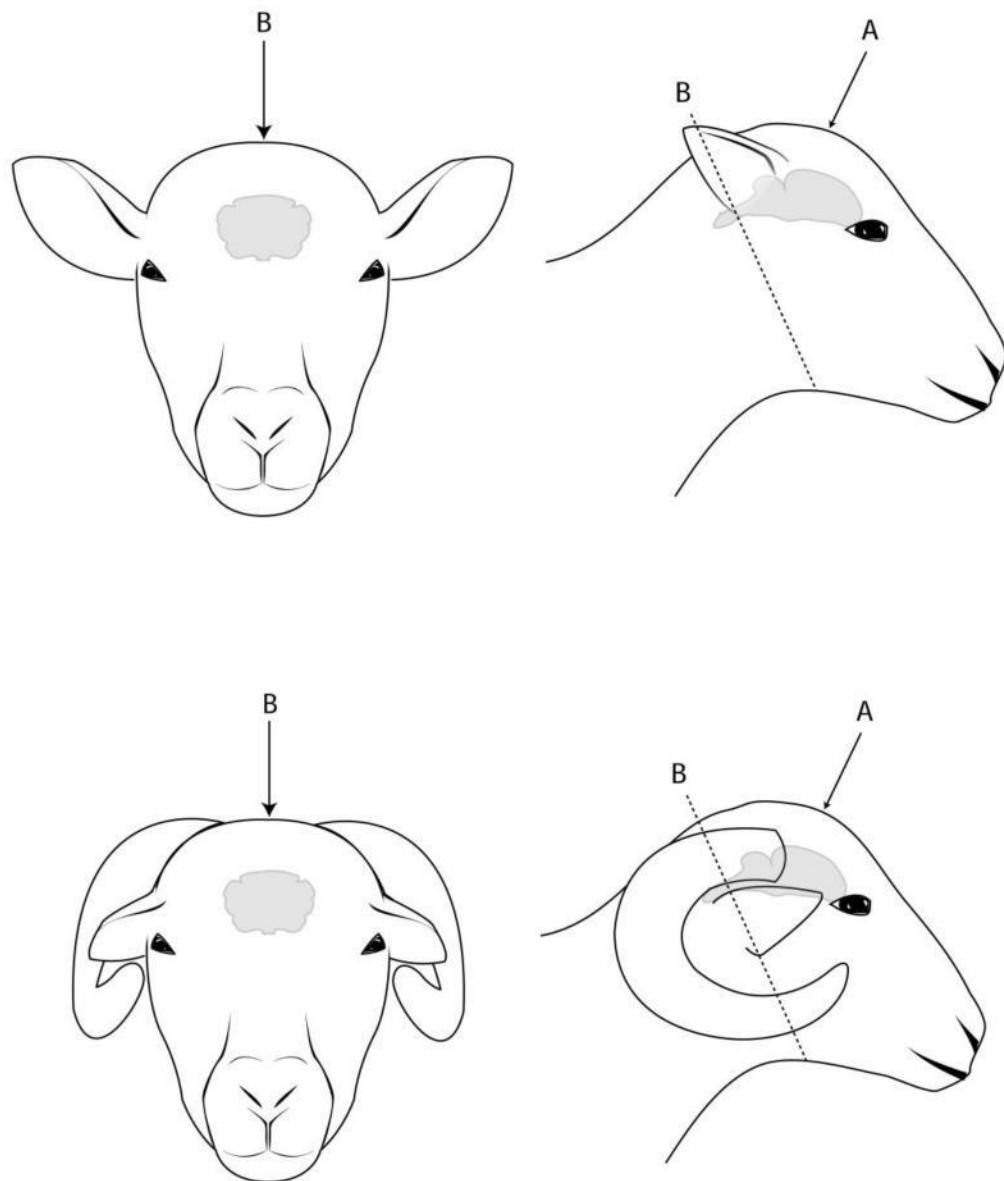
Guidelines

G10.1 The poll method is the preferred method for killing sheep (see Figure10.1). The brainstem should be targeted and it lies midway along an imaginary line drawn between the base of the ears.

Note:

A firearm should deliver at least the power of a standard 0.22-long rifle cartridge.

Figure 10.1 Recommended position and direction of fire for humane killing of sheep



Notes:

1. Close-range firearm use is recommended to be applied to the poll or crown position of the head of sheep.

(A) indicates the crown method and (B) indicates the poll method. The dots indicate the point of aim and the arrows indicates the direction of aim for the positions. For blunt trauma use position A.

For the poll method, sheep are shot through the skull just behind the base of the horns. The line of fire should be directed slightly forward of the angle of the jaw of the sheep, depending on the point of impact. The line of fire should be aimed into the skull towards the centre of the brain or spinal cord to target the brainstem which is midway along an imaginary line drawn between the base of the ears.

For the crown method, the firearm should be directed straight down from the highest point of the skull, midway between the base of the ears. The line of fire should be aimed into the skull towards the centre of the brain or spinal cord to target the brainstem which is midway along an imaginary line drawn between the base of the ears.

2. The diagrams are representative, and individual anatomical differences in sheep to be killed must be taken into account.

Confirming death in sheep after humane killing

G10.2 Three or more signs should be observed to determine whether the method used for humane killing has caused death.

Note:

Signs of death include:

- loss of consciousness and deliberate movement including eye movement
- absence of a corneal 'blink' reflex when the eyeball is touched, or
- maximum dilation of the pupil
- absence of rhythmic respiratory movements for at least five minutes.

Firearms

Note:

Firearms energy specifications are as follows:

- The standard 0.22-long rifle cartridge means the use of any 0.22 rim-fire cartridge that produces in excess of 100 foot pounds of energy at the muzzle.
- The standard 0.22 magnum cartridge means the use of any 0.22 rim-fire magnum cartridge that produces in excess of 300 foot pounds of energy at the muzzle.
- The centre-fire cartridge means the use of any centre-fire cartridge that produces in excess of 1000 foot pounds of energy at the muzzle.

Captive bolt devices

Note:

Captive bolt use on sheep is recommended to be in the crown or poll positions, accompanied by appropriate restraint and followed by an effective procedure, if necessary, to ensure death.

The captive bolt stunner should be pressed firmly on the head before being discharged, and should be positioned as described in the approved positions for sheep, which are the crown and poll positions. The temporal position is not an option.

For penetrating captive bolt stunners, the cartridge power should be appropriate to the class of sheep. Non-penetrating captive bolt stunners are not recommended.

Operators should make sure that charges intended for use are appropriate for the class of sheep.

Captive bolts should be regularly cleaned and maintained in optimal working condition, according to the manufacturer's instructions.

Stunning by blunt trauma to the head

G10.3 A single blow should be delivered to the centre of the forehead.

Bleeding out (exsanguination)

G10.4 Bleeding out of sheep without prestunning using the neck cut should only be done as a last resort using a suitable, sharp knife. The cut should transect both the carotid arteries and both the jugular veins.

Note:

Bleeding out is done by cutting the main blood vessels in the neck (neck cut). The neck cut is the only method to be used where permitted in conscious sheep. When sheep are bled out, it is not necessary to sever the spinal cord or to pith.

Glossary

access to water	A reasonable opportunity for sheep to be able to drink water of a suitable quality and quantity to maintain their hydration.
animal welfare	The state of an animal and how well it is coping with the conditions in which it lives.
bleeding out	Loss of blood caused by cutting the major blood vessels, usually in the underside of the neck.
Castration (castrate)	The removal or disruption of the function of the testes by excision, or by constriction and/or crushing of testicular blood supply (using a rubber ring or burdizzo clamp).
<p><i>Notes:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Immuno-castration is not included in this definition but is not a welfare concern.2. For the purpose of this document, cryptorchidism is effectively considered to be castration.	
class	A group of a livestock species defined by age, size or sex. Lactating livestock with young at foot are considered as a single class.
construction	Nature of facilities or equipment includes the design, layout, installation, assembly of the facilities and vehicles, and the materials of which they are made.
crutching	Removal of wool from the hindquarters and tail of a sheep.
cryptorchid method	Where the scrotum is shortened by the application of a rubber ring. This results in the testes being held closer to the body and the sheep becoming sterile due to a higher testicular temperature and disrupted sperm production.
direct supervision	A person (the supervised person) is acting under the direct <i>supervision</i> of another person (the supervisor) if the supervisor: <ol style="list-style-type: none">(a) provides instructions and guidance to the supervised person in relation to the subject activity; and(b) oversees and evaluates the performance of the activity by the supervised person; and(c) is contactable by the supervised person; and
	<ol style="list-style-type: none">(d) is supervising the person in accordance with paragraphs (a), (b) and (c) above; and

	<p>(a) is on the same premises as the supervised person while the subject activity is being undertaken; and</p> <p>(b) is able to immediately render assistance to the supervised person, if required, at any time during which the subject activity is being undertaken.</p>
drought	A severe feed and/or water shortage following prolonged periods of abnormally low rainfall not expected in the seasonal cycles.
emergency	Where animal welfare or human safety may otherwise be compromised.
extremes of weather	Temperature and climatic conditions (e.g. rain, hail, snow, wind, humidity and heat) that — individually or in combination — are likely to predispose sheep to heat or cold stress.
facilities	Fences, yards, sheds, raceways, feed and water troughs, portable yards, ramps and equipment, including lamb-marking cradles, dips, sprays and jetting races.
heat stress	When the response by animals to hot conditions above their thermo-neutral limit exceeds the ability of their behavioural, physiological or psychological coping mechanisms.
hot knife	Any heated device for tail docking, generally heated by gas. Also known as gas-knife, searing iron or docking iron.
inspection	The visual check of the health and welfare of sheep on an individual or mob basis.
intensive production systems	An operation where sheep are confined for a period longer than four weeks for the purposes of wool, meat or milk production, and are dependent on the daily supply of feed and or water provided by human or mechanical means.
	Does not include rams housed for breeding, stud sheep in preparation for showing or sheep held in a containment area.
lie	Sheep are able to rest on their sternums without restriction (or contact with other sheep or structures).
lift (lifted, lifting)	Lifting off the ground. Handling of the head, neck, horns, ears, tail or wool, to control or steady an animal in a supported lift or other manoeuvre, is permitted where the major effort is whole body support, and does not use one or a combination of the above body parts for the major effort.
mulesing (mules, mulesed)	The removal of skin from the breech and/or tail of a sheep using mulesing shears.
mulesing shears	Specially set shears with rounded points and sharp blades.

pain relief	The administration of drugs that reduce the intensity and duration of a pain response.
palpable free joint	Where there is one tailbone segment protruding from the profile of the rump and the connecting joint can be felt and the remaining tailbone segment manipulated.
sheep	<i>Ovis aries</i> and other members of the genus <i>Ovis</i> .
shy feeder	Sheep in a feedlot that do not eat and drink sufficiently.
skin	The full thickness of the skin including the wool follicles; does not include sub-dermal tissue such as selvage (muscle fascia), muscle or other underlying tissue.
stun	To make an animal unconscious.
supervision	A person (the supervised person) is acting under the <i>supervision</i> of another person (the supervisor) if the supervisor:
	(a) provides instructions and guidance to the supervised person in relation to the subject activity; and
	(b) oversees and evaluates the performance of the activity by the supervised person; and
	(c) is contactable by the supervised person.
	See 'direct supervision'.
tail docking	The removal of a portion of a sheep's tail.
tethering	The securing of an animal to an anchor point to confine it to a desired area. It is not short term tying up or hobbling.
ventilation	Natural or mechanically induced air movement sufficient to provide oxygen and remove excessive heat load and noxious gases.
weaning	Liquid feed is no longer provided to the lamb.
wether	A castrated male sheep.