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## **Submission to the Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines for Sheep Public Consultation**

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Vegan Australia is pleased to have the opportunity to provide a submission to the Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines for Sheep Public Consultation.

Vegan Australia is a national vegan organisation that aims to promote veganism to the broader Australian public. Vegan Australia envisions a world where all animals live free from human use and ownership. Compassion is the foundation of Vegan Australia - compassion towards animals, people and the earth. Vegan Australia believes that the starting point for people to put this compassion into action is to become vegan and to encourage others to become vegan.

Vegan Australia believes that the public consultation of the Welfare Standards for Sheep is an opportunity to reflect on our use of sheep for food, wool and other products. It is an opportunity to consider alternative products that promote compassion and put an end to the unnecessary suffering and killing of sheep.

It is important to emphasise that sheep suffer pain and their lives extinguished to produce products that are not necessary for human wellbeing. All these products, including those for food and clothing, can be replaced by plant-based products.

A review of the standards is an excellent opportunity for the Australian Government to really make the welfare of sheep the primary goal of the standards, by enforcing that sheep must not be used in any way.

The public consultation seeks "views from interested parties about how well the draft sheep welfare standards would protect the welfare of sheep". Also, "the submission may include ideas on how to improve these documents".

The standards are meant to "protect and maintain the welfare of sheep in Australia". Vegan Australia recommends that the standards go much further and fully protect the interests of sheep. The goal of the standards should be to completely phase out the use of sheep for any purpose. Sheep value their own life and body and have an interest in continuing their existence and avoiding suffering. They have the right to be treated with respect and justice and not to be treated as property.

Production of products from sheep necessarily results in the suffering and/or death of individual sheep. Humans have no need for any products from sheep, including for meat or wool. Since there are non-animal based alternatives to all sheep products, the breeding, raising, using and killing of sheep is not necessary for humans to live.

Vegan Australia believes that the pleasure of taste of the flesh of a sheep and the utility of other sheep products do not outweigh the pain, suffering and death caused to individual sheep that is part of the production of sheep products. No reforms or standards will be enough to change this.

The standards say they are "based on current scientific knowledge". But they ignore well accepted scientific principles that sheep are sentient, that humans have no need for any animal products and that the animal industries are having a significant negative impact on the environment.

First, sheep are sentient, emotional and social animals. Sentience means they are aware of their physical and social environment, they able to feel fear, pain and distress as well as happiness and pleasure.

Sheep have emotions and needs just as human beings do. They react emotionally to their own achievements and are self-aware. They are capable of using the same system as humans to remember and respond emotionally to individuals in their absence.

The Victorian Department of Primary Industries states that "all livestock species (and fish) have the necessary brain structures and nervous system to allow them to feel pain and suffer". In addition "all livestock species are capable of comprehending and desiring pleasurable experiences."

Second, humans have no need for any animal foods and are able to live healthily on a vegan diet. There is clear evidence of not only the health benefits of a well-balanced vegan diet, but of the significant health costs of consuming animal products. Many people who adopt a nutritious vegan diet will enjoy significant health improvements by reducing the risk of major killers such as heart disease, stroke, cancer and diabetes.

Third, raising and processing of animals for food is a major cause of environmental damage, including land degradation, water shortage, deforestation, ocean degradation, air pollution and climate change. The standard ignores the costs to the environment of sheep farming on the environment, including soils, waterways, forests and native vegetation.

Together these principles suggest that the standards should not suggest "better" ways to tail dock, castrate, use an electric prod, tie up, mules, electro-ejaculate, inseminate, intensively house, pen and kill sheep by shooting, blunt trauma to the head or cutting the throat. They should state that none of these procedures should be necessary. They should give guidance on how to eliminate the sheep industry and replace it with an industry based on compassion for animals, people and the earth.

## References

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