

COMMUNIQUE

Sheep Producers Australia Policy Council – September 2024

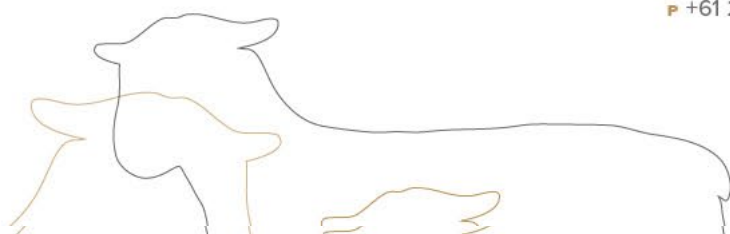
- Sheep Producers Australia Policy Council (Council) met virtually on 19 September. As the leading voice for the sheep meat industry, the Council is responsible for developing policy and advocating on national issues that impact sheep producers.

SPA Climate Smart Workplan

1. A Working Group comprised of SPA Staff and several Council Members has been established to develop a Work Plan to foster a climate resilient, sustainable and productive sheep industry. The Climate Smart Working Group R&D priorities were presented for feedback at the Council meeting. The objective of this Work Plan is to enable SPA to advocate for appropriate policy settings and critical research needs.
2. The Climate Smart Work Plan recommends prioritised areas for R&D to enable sheep production to effectively measure and reduce emissions, ensuring producers can meet supply chain reporting requirements at an enterprise and industry level.
3. The Council raised concern over the underwhelming consideration that Climate Change Authority's Sector Pathway Agriculture and Land devoted to agriculture. Council disapproved the lack of consultation from government in the development of climate regulations in the industry, exemplified by the government pushing ahead with the GWP100 method for carbon calculations.
4. Council Members expressed support for the Working Group R&D priorities that SPA submitted to MLA.

Animal welfare

5. The Council noted an update on national animal welfare policy initiatives, including the Australian Animal Welfare Strategy.
6. Council noted that SPA and WoolProducers Australia have written to the Chair of the Animal Welfare Task Group formally requesting that the Australian Animal Welfare Standards for Sheep be amended to mandate the use of pain relief for mulesing, in accordance with the policy's of both



organisations. The response from the Animal Welfare Task Group advised that any amendments to the Standards will require a jurisdiction to nominate to lead the process.

7. Council discussed a revised set of SPA animal welfare policy priorities and policy statement and agreed on a process to finalise the documents. It was agreed that consultation in all animal welfare issues continues to be a priority item.

Animal Raising Claims- Trade Description Approval Protocol

8. SPA has been requested by LambPro to support its application to establish a certified Primeline breed content Animal Raising Claim (ARC). LambPro presented to the Council at the meeting.
9. The Australian Meat Industry Language and Standards Committee (AMILSC) (of which SPA is a member) recently reviewed the ARC Frameworks for Beef and Sheep Production in Australia. The review focussed on ensuring that the ARC Framework provides an up-to-date platform that supports industry, ensuring that Trade Descriptions applied to meat products are accurate and unambiguous.
10. The ARC Framework specifies that approval of ARCs (via AUS-MEAT) must have the support of the appropriate member organisation on AMILSC.
11. SPA has not previously been asked to table an ARC Trade Description Approval Protocol and therefore must establish a formal policy and review process to review ARCs. This was supported by the Council.
12. The Council discussed the minimum breed genetic percentage required to make trade descriptions relating to a set percentage for ARCs. Council will have further discussions with LambPro to confirm the minimum breed genetic percentage for their Trade Description for ARCs. Once endorsed by the Council, SPA will approach AUSMEAT to obtain accreditation of the Primeline as an official breed and brand.

External Presentation- Animals' Angels

13. Animals' Angels presented a report to the Council, outlining issues surrounding the regulation and oversight of sheep welfare in transport and at saleyards. The presentation noted the significant improvements to welfare which can be attributed to MLA's 'Fit to Load' guide.
14. Council raised that greater clarity on animal loading at the farmgate would enhance the 'Fit to Load' guide and would be beneficial in achieving higher animal welfare levels.
15. Council suggested that it is imperative for transporters to understand the chain of responsibility for animals and to be empowered to refuse to load unfit animals.

Process for Over-the-Hook Dispute Resolutions

16. NSW Farmers (NSWF) is pursuing an over-the-hook (OTH) dispute resolution for primary producers following requests from its members.
17. NSWF provided a paper to the Council seeking SPA's endorsement of the development of an OTH dispute resolution process to facilitate practical outcomes should there be inconsistencies between the assessed stock sent and kill data provided back from processors.
18. SPA agreed to form a working group comprised of Policy Council Member representatives to progress proposal with the Australian Meat Industry Corporation. The objective is for processors and producers to implement an over-the-hook dispute resolution processes that enables expedient resolving of any disputes.

Australian Response to EU Antimicrobial Legislation

19. At the request of SPA, the Department of Agriculture will progress requesting label amendments by manufacturers to modify the labels on affected products to remove any reference to antimicrobials being used as growth promotants.
20. Council raised concerns over whether approval and labelling change would allow Australia to maintain market access of sheepmeat products in the EU. Council shared the imperative to remain proactive in this field.

Integrity Systems Update

21. The Council noted the update. The Council discussed the declaration of non-mulesing and pain relief within integrity programs and mechanisms to achieve this. It was noted that there will be further discussions with ISC regarding this issue.
22. Council shared the testimonies of continued poor experience and difficulty using the eNVD, and the need to continue to pursue the issues with ISC. Specific reference was made to difficulties using the platform to facilitate large ram sales.

Policy Council Workplan

23. Council Members discussed the Policy Council workplan which included updates to the agreed priority areas of animal welfare, climate change, hook tracking and biosecurity.