

# ASI Wool Standards

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# Development of Animal Welfare-Oriented Standards for the “American Wool Assurance” (AWA) program

- American Wool Assurance (AWA) Working Group
- ASI staff
- Colorado State University faculty
- University Extension Specialists
- Shearers



# Background and Purpose

# Rationale for the AWA Program

- Animal welfare important for wool producers, individuals involved in wool harvesting, and end-users.
- Wool buyers are requesting assurances about animal welfare practices.
- A set of U.S.-based standards to emphasize proper animal handling and management practices is needed.

# Rationale for the AWA Program (cont'd)

- Standards reflect international standards (e.g., Five Freedoms of Animal Welfare) and account for American-style sheep rearing practices.
- Being designed to be an integral part of the Sheep Safety and Quality Assurance (SSQA) producer education and certification program.
- Focus is on shearing and wool harvest and animal care pre-shearing and post-shearing, involving actions of both the owner/manager and shearer, but also addresses entirety of lifetime sheep management practices.

# Ultimate Goal of the AWA

- Training in the AWA standards will allow producers to become certified via on-line educational materials. Adherence to standards enables participation in an optional audit of practices when harvesting wool and raising sheep in comparison to AWA standards.
- AWA is intended to help textile and apparel companies identify U.S. wool that has been produced consistent with a set of animal welfare standards.

# Role of Colorado State University (CSU)

- ASI and CSU have a long history of collaboration on development of educational materials, including creation of the SSQA Program.
- CSU was asked to coordinate the development and review of science-based standards for ASI's new AWA.
- Standards being presented today are part of a comprehensive draft document.
- Resources relied on:
  - Existing ASI resources (SCG, SSQA)
  - Sheep industry professionals (e.g., producers, industry experts, vets, univ. specialists)
  - Available research findings

# Animal Welfare Based Practices

	Freedom	Action
1.	<b>Freedom from hunger and thirst</b>	Ready access to fresh water and a diet to maintain full health and vigor
2.	<b>Freedom from discomfort</b>	Providing an appropriate environment including shelter and a comfortable resting area
3.	<b>Freedom from pain, injury, or disease</b>	Prevention and/or rapid diagnosis and treatment
4.	<b>Freedom from fear and distress</b>	Ensuring conditions and treatment which avoid mental suffering
5.	<b>Freedom to express normal behavior</b>	Providing sufficient space, proper facilities, and company of the animal's own kind

The Five Freedoms of Animal Welfare. Source: Adapted from J. F. Webster. The Brambell Report (1965) and the Farm Animal Welfare Council (1979). *Five Freedoms*



# Standards

1

**Shall:** Designates a requirement through U.S. industry and university-supported protocols

2

**Should:** Designates a U.S. industry recommended practice

3

**Required:** Designates that no exceptions are permissible

4

**Never:** Designates that no exceptions are permissible



## GENERAL

1.1	SHEEP ARE TO BE SHORN ANNUALLY AT A MINIMUM
1.2	SHEEP SHOULD BE SHORN EITHER ONE MONTH PRE-LAMBING OR ONE MONTH POST-LAMBING
1.3	SHEARING IS TO BE PERFORMED BY A COMPETENT SHEARER WHO EMPHASIZES PROPER ANIMAL HANDLING TO REDUCE ANIMAL STRESS
1.4	WRITTEN OR VERBAL SHEARING CONTRACTS ARE ENCOURAGED AND SHOULD CONTAIN SPECIFIC WORDING HIGHLIGHTING ANIMAL HANDLING, INJURY AVOIDANCE, AND EFFICIENCY
1.5	SHEARING EQUIPMENT IS DISINFECTED BETWEEN OPERATIONS AND REGULARLY BETWEEN ANIMALS
1.6	SUFFICIENT LABOR, FACILITIES, AND ORGANIZATION FOR SHEARING IS PLANNED PRIOR TO SHEARING
1.7	REGION, WEATHER, INSECTS, AND SHELTER SHALL BE CONSIDERED WHEN TIMING SHEARING TO FOSTER AN ENVIRONMENT THAT MAY INCREASE ANIMAL WELL-BEING
1.8	THE SHEARING FACILITY SHALL BE APPROPRIATE FOR THE OPERATION IN TERMS OF SIZE AND BE CLEAN AND WELL-LIT WITH SUITABLE NON-SLIP FLOORING
1.9	FACILITY DESIGN, INCLUDING NON-SLIP FLOORING, AND HANDLING TECHNIQUES MINIMIZE FALLS ON RAMPS AND IN PENS AND HELPS ENSURE THE SAFETY OF THE SHEARER AND THE SHEEP
1.10	THE OPERATION OWNER, MANAGER, OR SUITABLE PROXY MUST BE PRESENT DURING SHEARING TO SUPPORT THE SHEARING CREW AND TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR ALL SITUATIONS

# Proposed American Wool Assurance Standards

## General Section

## PRE-SHEARING

2.1

SHEEP SHOULD BE HELD OFF OF FEED AND WATER FOR OVERNIGHT (6-12 HOURS) BUT NO LONGER THAN 24 HOURS PRE-SHEARING TO ENSURE ANIMAL COMFORT

2.2

ANIMALS SHOULD NEVER BE FORCED TO TRAVEL FASTER THAN A COMFORTABLE PACE WHEN GATHERED AND HANDLED PRIOR TO SHEARING

2.3

PRE-SHEARING PENS CONTAIN AN ACCEPTABLE DENSITY OF ANIMALS

# Proposed American Wool Assurance Standards

## Pre-Shearing Section

## SHEARING

3.1	SHEARING EFFICIENCY AND SPEED ARE A REASONABLE PACE THAT MINIMIZE INJURY TO SHEARER AND SHEEP
3.2	ABRASIONS AND LACERATIONS INCLUDING MINOR NICKS AND CUTS ARE TREATED APPROPRIATELY AND PROMPTLY
3.3	THE SHEARER MUST NOTIFY THE PRODUCER OF A SEVERE LACERATION AND BE FOLLOWED BY ANALGESIC ADMINISTRATION AND SUTURING AS APPROPRIATE
3.4	SHEEP ARE NEVER TO BE GRABBED OR HANDLED BY THE WOOL
3.5	ELECTRIC PRODS ARE NEVER TO BE USED
3.6	ROUGH HANDLING OF SHEEP AT ANY TIME BY ANYONE IS PROHIBITED
3.7	SHEEP SHALL NEVER BE STRUCK BY A PERSON OR WITH SHEARING EQUIPMENT
3.8	ONLY DRY SHEEP ARE TO BE SHORN
3.9	SEPARATE AND SHEAR YOUNG SHEEP FIRST; SEPARATE SICK SHEEP AND SHEAR THEM LAST

# Proposed American Wool Assurance Standards

## Shearing Section

## POST-SHEARING

4.1

ADEQUATE NUTRITION AND WATER IS PROVIDED POST-SHEARING

4.2

SHELTER IS AVAILABLE IF WEATHER AND ENVIRONMENT ARE NOT CONDUCTIVE TO APPROPRIATE THERMOGREGULATION

# Proposed American Wool Assurance Standards

## Post-Shearing Section

## Proposed self-assessment<sup>1</sup>

Variable of Interest	Acceptable threshold <sup>2</sup>
1. Maximum (or minimum) shearing time	___? minutes
1A. Merino, Columbia, Rambouillet or other wrinkled, very wooly breeds	
1B. Open-faced breeds with no leg or belly wool	
2. Abrasions and lacerations	≤8% occurrence
3. Severe <sup>3</sup> lacerations left untreated	0% occurrence
4. Falls (pens and/or exit ramps)	≤2% occurrence

<sup>1</sup>These thresholds are intended for a typical ewe flock; however, variations will need to occur for lambs and large rams including variation in shearing time.

<sup>2</sup>Based on estimates from industry experts for reasonable thresholds – note: we seek input on the appropriateness of these thresholds, particularly “shearing time” which could be addressed with a maximum value (to minimize time in shearing position) or a minimum value (to incentivize shearers to slow down).

<sup>3</sup>“Severe” is defined as causing substantial blood loss, ≥4” in length, or deep through the epidermal layer of skin.

# Proposed self-assessment for use during shearing

# Rationale for Variable Inclusion

1. **Shearing time:** Animals should be shorn at a reasonable pace but also efficiently to optimize time in shearing position for both sheep and shearer; breed variations will be observed.
2. **Abrasions & lacerations:** Should be minimized but are not unavoidable due to the wrinkled nature of some individual animals, density and greasy nature of wool, inconsistency in body shape, unpredictable movement of sheep, and the inherent challenge of harvesting 2 to 20 pounds of wool from a rather large surface area. Lacerations can also be tied to inadequate fasting periods.
3. **Severe laceration left untreated:** Antiseptic, sutures, non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID), and/or other pain management should be considered when treating severe lacerations.
4. **Falls (pens & exit ramps):** Sheep should not be forced to move at an unnatural pace or packed too densely making them a danger to themselves; falls will decrease in relation to adherence to these standards.



- Stress
- Nutrition and Feeding
- Facilities and Handling
- Transportation
- Predation
- Flock Health
- Lambing
- Tail Docking
- Castration
- Elective Procedures Summary

## *Sheep Care Guide Topics*

(ASI, 2005)





# Items for discussion

**AWA components will be refined and finalized based on input, including:**

1. Questions about the need for AWA, its standards, on-line training, and possible auditing
2. Feedback on specific standards, including areas where additional detail/clarification may help and inclusion of practices not yet addressed (but possibly should be)
3. Thoughts on the proposed self-assessment variables and acceptable thresholds
4. Should self-assessment include variables connected with every standard and/or year-round management (beyond just around shearing time)

# Thank you



Colorado State University