

The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia

SHEEP HUSBANDRY

Report by the
Senate Select Committee on Animal Welfare

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PREFACE

Appointment of the Committee and its terms of reference

The Senate appointed the Select Committee on Animal Welfare on 16 and 17 November 1983 and reappointed it on 22 February 1985 and again on 22 September 1987 in each new Parliament to inquire into and report upon:

the question of animal welfare in Australia,
with particular reference to:

- (a) interstate and overseas commerce in animals;
- (b) wildlife protection and harvesting;
- (c) animal experimentation;
- (d) codes of practice of animal husbandry for all species; and
- (e) the use of animals in sport.

As a result of the broad nature of the terms of reference, the Committee decided to divide the inquiry into a number of discrete areas and, as far as possible, to examine two or more simultaneously. After preliminary public hearings in mid-1984, the Committee decided to examine kangaroos and the export of live sheep from Australia. It later added dolphins and

whales in captivity to this priority list. The Committee reported on live sheep exports on 13 August 1985, on dolphins and whales in captivity on 29 November 1985 and on kangaroos on 1 June 1988. Its next priorities were animal experimentation, on which it reported on 5 September 1989, and sheep husbandry.

The sheep husbandry issue

The Committee's decision to inquire into and report on aspects of on-farm sheep husbandry was motivated by concerns expressed to it during its inquiry into live sheep exports and by issues raised both in the media and in submissions to the Committee by the general community, by animal welfare organisations and by sections of the sheep and wool industry itself.

Perceived sheep welfare problems have provoked much passionate, emotive and heated debate. By inquiring into these problems, the Committee hoped it might provide a forum in which all interested parties could outline their concerns and from which guidelines for constructive change in one of Australia's most important industries might emerge.

Scope of the sheep husbandry inquiry

In this inquiry, the Committee has elected to consider only on-farm aspects of sheep husbandry, including the provision of food, water; shelter protection; control of injury and disease; protection from predation; and appropriate handling.

The Committee will reserve its consideration of sheep transportation issues, saleyards, abattoirs, and intensive production for inquiries into these issues across species.

Conduct of the inquiry

The Committee received numerous submissions which touched on or were wholly devoted to sheep husbandry issues. It heard evidence from 31 organisations or private individuals, on various aspects of sheep welfare. In addition, Committee members visited the Department of Mechanical Engineering, University of Western Australia, to observe robotic shearing; Merino Wool Harvesting in Adelaide, to observe electro-immobilisation; sheep properties at Tarago, New South Wales, to observe lamb marking and mulesing, and at Menindee, to observe arid zone production. They later visited the CSIRO Division of the Mechanical Environment to inspect the Auto-trough designed by Mr Tony Miller.

Acknowledgements

The Committee would like to thank all the organisations and individuals who contributed to this inquiry through their submissions or evidence given at public hearings.

In particular, Committee members would like to thank all the organisations and individuals who made possible the Committee's visits to observe sheep husbandry practices and procedures. They include Mr James Trevelyan and staff of the Department of Mechanical Engineering, University of Western Australia; Dr James Baxter and staff of Merino Wool Harvesting; Mr J. Caskey of "Larloona", Menindee; and Mr Robert Campbell and family of "Euroka", Tarago, and the Officers of the NSW Agriculture and Fisheries and the Sheepmeat Council who organised that visit and accompanied Committee members during it.

Thanks also go to Mr Tony Miller, Officers of the CSIRO Division of the Mechanical Environment and of Mono-Pumps, who demonstrated and discussed features of the Auto-trough.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

ABARE	Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics
ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
AFIC	Australian Feeds Information Centre
AFWA	Australian Federation for the Welfare of Animals
AMLRDC	Australian Meat and Live-stock Research and Development Corporation
ANZFAS	Australian and New Zealand Federation of Animal Societies
AVA	Australian Veterinary Association
AVCA	Australian Veterinary Chemicals Association
AWC	Australian Wool Corporation
CALM	Computer-aided Livestock Marketing
CEP	Community Employment Program
CSIRO	Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation
DSE	Dry Sheep Equivalent
EGF	Epidermal Growth Factor
FAWC	Farm Animal Welfare Council (UK)
IED	Income Equalisation Deposits
MWH	Merino Wool Harvesting Pty. Ltd.
NTP	National Tree Program
PSMG	Pregnant Mare Serum Gonadotrophin
RSPCA	Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals
SCAW	Sub-committee on Animal Welfare
SIRM	Sterile Insect Release Method

GLOSSARY

anthelmintics:	substances given to expel parasitic worms.
beta-endorphin:	a peptide from the pituitary gland.
cortisol:	a steroid from the adrenal gland.
cryptorchidism:	condition induced by forcing the testicles of ram lambs up close to the body and placing a ring around the empty scrotum. The animals retain male characteristics but cannot sire young.
cutaneous myiasis:	the invasion of sheep skin by fly larvae; flystrike.
dermatophilosis:	lumpy wool; a disease caused by the bacterium <i>Dermatophilus congolensis</i> . The bacteria infect the skin, causing scabs which lift with the growing fleece.
dystocia:	difficulty during lambing.
hypocalcaemia:	condition exhibiting the the symptoms of a deficiency of total calcium circulating in the bloodstream.
hypoglycaemia:	deficiency of sugar in the blood.
immunocastration:	immunisation of male animals against their own male hormone, testosterone, to prevent sperm production.
mulesing:	the surgical removal of strips of loose, wool-bearing skin from the breach and tail of the sheep.
pregnancy toxaemia:	an acute metabolic disorder occurring during the last few weeks of pregnancy, typically in ewes carrying twins or triplets.
prolactin:	a hormone associated with lactation and secreted by the pituitary gland.
transgenic:	animal which contains foreign DNA integrated into its own chromosomes.