

Key Differences to the Responsible Wool Standard

The cost of certification to the RWS can be very high both under the Farm Group Model and as an individual farmer. *NewMerino* has developed a more efficient methodology for the assessment of farms against a set of standards without impacting the integrity or veracity of the standards.

NewMerino® standards closely reflect those of the RWS. There are however three key elements that have been modified to be practical in Australia. They are all items where derogations are regularly granted under the RWS and listed below.

Also, references to conditions under which sheep may be housed have been excluded as they do not apply in Australian because of the mild winter conditions (compared to Europe & South America).

<i>NewMerino</i>	Comment – Details - Alternatives
All lambs can be tail docked	This is also allowed in the RWS if it is considered that without tail docking there will be animal welfare issues (eg fly strike). Not tail docking all lambs would certainly be problematic in Australia.
All male lambs can be castrated	This is also allowed in the RWS if lambs are to be kept beyond puberty. The age at which lambs reach puberty can be highly variable and subject to seasonal conditions. Under Australian condition most lambs will still be on the farm by the time puberty is reached.
Use of 1080 poison to control foxes and wild dogs.	Allowed under <i>NewMerino</i> if it is used strictly in accordance with the state law and codes of practice laid down by the relevant state Department of Agriculture. Under RWS, a derogation is usually granted if it can be demonstrated there are serious predator issues.

<p>Audits</p> <p>RWS requires every farm to be physically audited every year.</p> <p>This is a high cost requirement.</p> <p><i>NewMerino</i> does not physically audit every farm every year.</p> <p>Audit fatigue: Many farms operate more than one enterprise for which they are audited. Audit fatigue can cause disinterest when farmers feel they are being over audited.</p>	<p><i>NewMerino</i> uses a decision tree to establish timeframes for on-farm audits. This is detailed in the Standards Protocol.</p> <p>It has also established a declaration system which is used for the initial desk audit phase in conjunction with the Registration and Farm Fact Sheet documents</p> <p>Physical audits follow on a timeframe based on time, risk factors and volume as a supplier. Initial audits are conducted within 12 months of initial certification.</p> <p>Declarations are required every year for farms that are currently supplying into verified consignments.</p>
Higher standards in some health, nutrition and infrastructure categories	Under <i>NewMerino</i> , several clauses have been raised to a higher level of non-conformance in the health, nutrition and infrastructure categories. These are clearly identified in the document.