

This document describes the key elements of the *NewMerino*® standards which are different to that of the Textile Exchange Responsible Wool Standard (RWS).

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While they are very important, there is much more to establishing an authentic, ethical and sustainable supply chain than farm operating standards.

An independent, pro-active, supply chain management system from farm to yarn is required.

NewMerino® works on behalf of the retail brand and with their nominated processing partners.

The system is verified by Control Union, an independent, internationally operated certification body.

Background

The cost of certification to the RWS can be very high both under the Farm Group Model and as a farmer seeking individual certification. As a result, very few individual farm certifications have been issued in Australia.

NewMerino® has developed a more efficient methodology for the auditing and the assessment of farms without impacting the integrity or veracity of the standards.

Conditions

Australia is a very large country and conditions are very different to those in Europe, South America and South Africa. In a number of categories, the RWS standards appear to have been written without regard to these differences.

Pastoral zone v high rainfall country: Australian conditions vary by region. Closely settled high rainfall areas production capacity is measured in sheep per hectare compared to the pastoral zones where carry capacity is measured as hectares required to maintain one sheep.

Standards

NewMerino® standards closely reflect those of the RWS. There are however four key elements that have been modified to be practical in Australia. They are all items where derogations are regularly granted under the RWS and are listed in the following table. (page 2)

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).

Working conditions, Living Conditions, Health and Safety, Social Welfare

References to working condition are not included because Australia has extensive and tightly enforced laws covering working conditions, award wages, sick leave, annual leave entitlements, worker safety, compulsory workers compensation insurance and unfair dismissal. Work safety inspections (facilities and equipment) are carried out by state authorities.

See page 2 for details

<i>NewMerino</i>	Comment – Details - Alternatives
All lambs can be tail docked	<p>This is also allowed in the RWS if it is considered that without tail docking there will be animal welfare issues (eg fly strike).</p> <p>Not tail docking all lambs would certainly be problematic in Australia.</p>
All male lambs can be castrated	<p>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 (feed availability etc).</p> <p>Under Australian condition most lambs will still be on the farm by the time puberty is reached.</p>
Use of 1080 poison to control foxes and wild dogs.	<p>Allowed under <i>NewMerino®</i> if there is no practical alternative and it is used strictly in accordance with the state law and codes of practice laid down by the relevant state Department of Agriculture.</p> <p>1080 can only be purchased and handled by an <u>individual</u> who has completed a poison handling course.</p> <p>Under RWS, a derogation is usually granted if it can be demonstrated there are serious predator issues.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">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>It is not uncommon for two farms contributing to the same consignment to be located 1,000 kms apart.</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>A declaration system 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 location, risk factors and volume as a supplier / size of merino enterprise. Farms supplying a high percentage of an individual processing consignment will be audited promptly.</p> <p>Registered <i>NewMerino®</i> farmers will most likely be audited before supply.</p> <p>Initial audits are conducted within 12 months of initial ‘desk audit’ 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.