



Mulesing gets the slice with 180+ fashion brands opposing the brutal practice

Momentum of brands moving away from mulesed sheep wool is growing. FOUR PAWS calls on more brands to join them, and warns the Australian wool industry will be left behind without a strong commitment to end mulesing.

Global animal welfare organisation FOUR PAWS has published a list of over 180 Australian and international textile brands that are opposed to the mulesing of lambs. Mulesing is practiced solely in Australia, as a quick and cheap way to prevent a condition called flystrike, despite having viable pain-free solutions available. Brands like Patagonia, H&M, Country Road Group, Kmart Group and Hugo Boss are speaking out against this cruel practice, while making solid commitments to phase out their use of wool from mulesed sheep. With demand for non-mulesed wool clearly growing, it is crucial that brands, wool producers and shoppers keep up the momentum towards a mulesed-free and kinder future.

As part of its global Wear it Kind campaign to raise animal welfare standards in fashion, FOUR PAWS has compiled a list of 185 fashion brands who have taken a stance against mulesing, a controversial practice that has been debated for decades, and recently been made illegal in New Zealand.

This list of powerful fashion stakeholders is further evidence that Australia's wool industry must listen to their customers and prepare for a non-mulesed future, or risk being left behind. Many brands highlighted in the FOUR PAWS brand assessment have already or are in the process of moving away from mulesed wool.

FOUR PAWS found that:

- 185 brands now oppose mulesing,
- 121 of these, state they do not currently accept mulesed sheep wool, or wool from Australia, and
- 68 have stated their use of robust certification systems, making commitments to help achieve more traceable supply chains.

Outdoor brands like Patagonia, Ortovox and Kathmandu are already completely mulesed-free certified, and therefore leading with their progress.

“At Kathmandu we expect our suppliers to treat all animals in the supply chain humanely and with respect. Mulesing is inhumane, and we see using mulesed-free wool as a means to recognize and reward farmers for doing the right thing,” Manu Rastogi, Head of Product Innovation and Sustainability at Kathmandu.

“Our research demonstrates that there is a huge mass of brands that don't want wool from mulesed sheep in their supply chains. Both the demand for non-mulesed wool and the distinct message that mulesing must end is certainly growing louder. With demand for ethical fashion on the rise, the Australian wool industry must work together to make a bold and proactive plan to phase out mulesing, both for the animals and to avoid losing further business to other markets,” said Jessica Medcalf, Head of Programmes and brand engagement at FOUR PAWS Australia.

Concern from brands specifically about the Australian wool supply chain were noted by FOUR PAWS researchers.

“Wool from Australia is considered to be the highest risk as the use of surgical mulesing is widespread.” – Marks and Spencer, which sources New Zealand RWS certified wool.

“Due to the widespread practice of mulesing sheep in Australia, we don't use Merino wool sourced from Australia.” – New Look Group, UK fashion brand with 500+ stores and ships to 66 countries.

Traceability and certification initiatives like the Responsible Wool Standard (RWS) are increasingly relied upon by brands to help meet animal welfare needs and improve transparency in their supply chains. FOUR PAWS urges brands to utilise robust certification initiatives comparable to the RWS when selling wool. Consumers wanting to ditch mulesed wool are encouraged to avoid products where labelling regarding mulesing status is unclear.

Retailers like H&M and Abercrombie & Fitch, as well as fashion brands such as Witchery and Politix are among those committed to become certified by a credible third party in the next few years.

“H&M Group does not tolerate animal abuse, and we only buy from suppliers that guarantee mulesing-free merino wool. H&M Group aims to ensure that by 2022 all our wool is either certified by Responsible wool standard or comes from recycled sources,” notes Jennie Granstrom, Business expert within Animal welfare, material ethics and Biodiversity, H&M Group.

“After decades of outrage over the practice, still only 14% of Australian wool producers declare their wool as non-mulesed. Brands can help to encourage a greater rate of industry change, by setting time-bound targets to transition their supply chains away from the practice. There is no excuse for mulesing, or the sourcing of mulesed sheep wool to continue long-term,” states Ms Medcalf.

Working in collaboration with FOUR PAWS, Humane Society International (HSI) have also compiled a list of brands and their stance on the practice. FOUR PAWS and HSI, stand united in their opposition to mulesing, and their call for an industry wide transition to the genetic solution to both mulesing and flystrike.

“Research launched just last month, co-commissioned by FOUR PAWS and Humane Society International, shows that there are viable solutions to flystrike management that don’t include mulesing – rendering the practice of mulesing unnecessary and cruel long-term.” See the report by BG Economics *Towards a Non-Mulesed Future* [here](#).

“Mulesing causes lambs intense pain and suffering for up to three days, leaving a wound that can take many weeks to heal. There are better ways to treat flystrike, which don’t cause acute pain, stress and fear, but do provide natural whole-body resistance to flystrike. It’s no wonder 150,000 people have now signed our petition calling on brands to help protect lambs from mulesing,” concludes Ms Medcalf.

Mulesing – A brutal and outdated practice

The longstanding focus on sheep with more skin wrinkles that produce a higher amount of quality wool, has also created an animal who is highly susceptible to flystrike. Maggots bury themselves into the sheep’s skinfolds and flesh and infest the animal. These maggots can create wounds that, if left undetected and untreated, can lead to debilitating pain and even death.

Mulesing was created over a hundred years ago in Australia to counteract flystrike, and is still done to over 10 million lambs annually. The process generally entails the restraint of 2 to 10-week-old lambs, on their back in a metal cradle, while strips of skin around their breech are cut away with sharp shears. Once the wound heals, the scar tissue left behind reduces the amount of wool and wrinkles around the area.

The brands against mulesing list can be found here: <https://www.four-paws.org.au/campaigns-topics/topics/animal-in-fashion/brands-against-mulesing> and the petition for consumers to call on more brands to take a stand here - <http://wearitkind.org/end-mulesing/>

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About FOUR PAWS: FOUR PAWS is the global animal welfare organisation for animals under direct human influence, which reveals suffering, rescues animals in need and protects them. Founded in 1988 in Vienna by Heli Dugler, the organisation advocates for a world where humans treat animals with respect, empathy and understanding. The sustainable campaigns and projects focus on animals used for textiles, stray dogs and cats as well as pets, farm animals and wild animals – such as bears, big cats, orangutans and elephants – kept in inappropriate conditions as well as in disaster and conflict zones.

With offices in Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Germany, Hungary, Kosovo, Netherlands, South Africa, Switzerland, Thailand, Ukraine, United Kingdom, USA and Vietnam, FOUR PAWS aims to help animals in need directly and quickly. www.four-paws.org.au