

## STATEMENT



11 April 2008

Compassion in World Farming  
Tel: +44 (0) 1483 521 970  
+44 (0) 7771 926005

### **Australia: Compassion in World Farming supports *Better Choices* programme of immediate pain relief for sheep mulesed before the 2010 deadline**

#### **Swift licensing for Carprofen vital to provide more effective relief from pain**

Compassion in World Farming remains implacably opposed to mutilations of livestock including mulesing.<sup>1</sup> A proper approach to the prevention of flystrike is to breed sheep which are less prone to the problem, to keep those sheep in environments which do not predispose those breeds to high levels of flystrike risk and to provide levels of management and care which ensure that any remaining flystrike outbreaks are effectively controlled.

Where mutilations are practised it should be unthinkable, as well as unacceptable, to conduct these operations without short and long-term pain relief.

Compassion in World Farming welcomes the Australian wool industry's commitment to end the practice of mulesing by the end of 2010, confirmed in a statement by the Australian Wool Innovation (AWI) Board on 19 March 2008. We strongly urge the industry firmly to stick to this deadline and, as has been suggested, to end it earlier.

Meanwhile, we welcome the initiative of the *Better Choices* scheme to promote the use of Tri-Solfen, with immediate effect, to reduce the pain of animals mulesed in the period prior to expiry of the deadline.

*However, we note that Tri-Solfen on its own is only a partial solution, that will be significantly enhanced by combination with Carprofen* The Australian licensing authorities must take swift action to license the use for sheep of the anti-inflammatory drug Carprofen. Research by CSIRO (Fisher, A.D. et al, 2007)

---

<sup>1</sup> Mulesing – the surgical removal of strips of wool-bearing wrinkled skin from the breach area of a sheep (usually the Merino breed). Throughout Australia, this is carried out overwhelmingly and without pain relief as an antidote to the onset of fly-strike, which can cause the animal a protracted and painful death.

shows that effective pain relief depends on the combination of Carprofen with Tri-Solfen for the following reasons:

1. Carprofen is applied before mulesing. Tri-Solfen is not applied until immediately after the operation. Clearly, pain relief is required before any cut is made
2. Carprofen is highly effective at reducing behavioural signs of pain for 24 hours after mulesing, as exhibited by hunched standing. It significantly adds to and prolongs the pain alleviating affects of Tri-Solfen.
3. Tri-Solfen is the more effective of the two drugs at reducing the levels of the stress hormone cortisol. However, the combination of Tri-Solfen with Carprofen is more effective still

For all these reasons, more acceptable levels of pain relief depend on Carprofen being used in combination with Tri Solfen. While licensing of Carprofen is awaited, there should be no delay in using Tri Solfen to provide a level of pain relief for recently mulesed lambs. Carprofen should also be used routinely immediately it is licensed.

Whilst the combination of Carprofen and Tri-Solfen can greatly relieve pain during and immediately after the mulesing operation, some residual pain remains likely during wound healing once the effects of these drugs wears off. Compassion in World Farming considers it essential that the urgent focus on genetic selection continues unabated, so that mulesing is abandoned from the end of 2010 as planned.

We have been assured that the *Better Choices* programme:

- Has a system for auditing prescription of pain relieving drugs
- Requires growers to commit to “best available” analgesia which will automatically include Carprofen, as well as any analgesic products that are proven effective for castration and tail-docking, once licensed
- Will require farmers to use breech scoring in their flock breeding strategies to reduce risk of fly-strike and phase to non-mulesed sheep as soon as possible.
- Audits the monitoring of non-mulesed sheep in the programme during periods of fly strike

Similar issues arise as regards tail docking and castration. Timetables are also needed to drive research for phasing these out in Australia. Meanwhile, we note that the combination of Carprofen and Tri Solfen, in combination with other drugs as appropriate, is likely also to provide useful pain relief for these mutilations. As with mulesing, pain can be reduced in advance of deadlines for an end to these mutilations.

Support of *Better Choices* does not preclude Compassion in World Farming support for alternatives to surgical mulesing that may prove to provide good animal welfare prior to the deadline, nor alternative marketing schemes which already source wool from non-mulesed animals.

References:

Fisher, A.D. et al, 2007. New Research on Methods for Alleviating Pain in Farm Animals. Proceedings of the Australian Animal Welfare Strategy Science Summit).