



# Understanding Wool Declarations

**Author:**  
**International Wool Textile Organisation**

Wool declarations provide information to the users and buyers of wool. This fact sheet focuses on the wool declaration system in place in Australia, one of the world's largest wool producers, including approximately 80% of merino wool used in apparel.

## Traceability in a Nutshell

Australia's National Wool Declaration (NWD) was introduced in 2008. The NWD enables wool growers to promote their animal welfare practices, such as mulesing status, and dark and medullated fibre risk (DMFR) to wool exporters, processors, and retailers.

The NWD is a voluntary declaration from the wool grower or owner of the wool clip, and it applies to all sheep and sheep breeds.

The information it contains can be transferred through the supply chain via test certificates. An Australian Wool Exchange (AWEX) certificate is also available. AWEX developed and has managed the NWD since its inception through the NWD Integrity Program (NWD-IP).

Declaration rates at the end of 2017 are >65% of all eligible wool.

**More than 65% of all eligible Australian wool is declared.**

## Wool Integrity

AWEX developed and has managed the NWD since its introduction in 2008, with on farm inspections commencing in 2010. AWEX supports the NWD with a series of services and functions.

Annually, AWEX conducts (randomly selected):

- 1000 desk-top audits (i.e. requesting documentation from 1,000 farms)
- 225 on farm inspections (of clips that have declared Non-Mulesed (NM) or Ceased Mulesing (CM)),
- 200 pain relief verifications i.e. 200 farms that have declared the use of pain relief. can also give a "second life" to wool garments (e.g. M&S' Shwop scheme).<sup>5</sup>

In desk-top Audits, AWEX contacts the wool broker and audits the NWD documentation against the electronically transmitted data. Any errors are corrected and updated presale. For on-Farm Inspections, AWEX arranges directly with the wool grower an inspection of any sheep declared as NM/CM. Any errors or non-compliance are reported to the purchaser of the wool.

AWEX also provides a Mulesing Certificate service on request. This is used where a buyer is requested by their client to provide a certificate, by an independent third-party, which validates the status of the individual lots of a specific batch of wool.



## Traceability through Test Certificates

Nearly all wool is sold with an IWTO Test Certificate. Australian Wool Testing Authority (AWTA) is the body that, in Australia, undertakes the sampling and testing that produces the IWTO Test Certificate.

IWTO rules require AWTA to report the information from the NWD on the Test Certificate. AWTA holds a statutory declaration from each of its customers (generally the selling agents or brokers) stating that they will declare that information truthfully. All AWTA Test Certificates contain the mulesing status, it cannot be removed by a trader

If AWEX audits or other information casts doubt on the declarations the Certificate is cancelled and reissued with correct information

Top-makers buy wool on the basis of the AWTA Combined Certificate (a combination of the various sale lots that go into one order). This reports the mulesing status of each component lot. In this way the NWD is fed into the supply chain

If the spinner or other later stage processor demands the mulesing declaration information the AWTA Certificate, or a summarised Mulesing Status Report is passed along the supply chain

AWTA provides an online Certificate Verification service that can be used to check the authenticity of the report. Making false declarations in trade or commerce is an offence in Australia and the Competition Regulator will prosecute this if necessary.

For more information on IWTO Test Certificates, visit [www.iwto.org/test-certificates](http://www.iwto.org/test-certificates)

### TERMINOLOGY

#### **Mulesing**

The removal of skin from the breech and/or tail of a sheep using mulesing shears.

#### **Ceased Mulesing**

Wool from sheep where mulesing has ceased on the property. No lambs born on this property in the last 12 months have been mulesed. No purchased sheep are mulesed.

#### **Non Mulesed**

No sheep in this mob has been mulesed.

#### **Mulesed with Pain Relief**

All sheep in this mob have been mulesed using a registered Pain Relief product.

*Note: PR must be declared separately for each mob (it is not a property Declaration).*

#### **Mulesed**

Some/all sheep in this mob have been mulesed.



## About IWTO

With a world-wide membership encompassing the wool pipeline from sheep to shop, the International Wool Textile Organisation (IWTO) represents the interests of the global wool trade. By facilitating research and development and maintaining textile industry standards, IWTO ensures a sustainable future for wool. To learn more about IWTO and its activities, visit [www.iwto.org](http://www.iwto.org).

