

Humane Choice True Free Range Standards – Sheep 2011 Version 1.1



The purpose of the **Humane Choice True Free Range** (Humane Choice) program is to provide a credible, monitored and verified for the humane production of wholesome free range sheep meat while caring for the environment in which we farm and offering assurance to consumers that these certified products meet these standards.

The Humane Choice Standards have been developed in conjunction with the free range sheep meat industry to provide these standards for the rearing, handling, transport and slaughter of Sheep for use in the “Humane Choice” program.

Humane Choice also acknowledges existing state and statutory requirements that are in place for sheep meat producers in general. We have incorporated the necessary requirements into our Standard so that free range producers are able meet the specifications for Food Safety, Risk Management, Herd Health and Animal Welfare expected of a responsible sheep meat producer.

1.1 ANIMAL WELFARE AND INFRASTRUCTURE

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

Animals should be allowed to satisfy their basic behavioural needs. In particular, livestock are able to forage on land and move untethered.

Fences, yards and housing are constructed in ways which do not lead to injury or bruising as a consequence of poor design.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Operators should maintain conditions that promote the animals' physiological and behavioural needs. Shelter in paddocks should include windbreaks and shade throughout the day.

Animal breed selection should encompass consideration of breeds and genetic material, which is naturally suited to the farm and district environment.

Yards next to animal housing should be managed to provide comfortable and secure conditions without excessive mud, dust, hazardous material.

STANDARDS

- 1.1.1 Shelter and shade shall be provided to give all animals protection against the sun, extreme wind and rain.
- 1.1.2 Measures must be taken to provide animals with adequate alternatives to waterlogged pasture, holding pens and accommodation.
- 1.1.3 Animals must be allowed free movement and access to pasture.
- 1.1.4 When confined for nights, inclement weather or for other reasons on a temporary basis, animals must have access to:
 - A sleeping area with adequate natural bedding material;
 - An adequate supply of fresh water and feed;
 - Adequate space to stand, lie down, turn around, groom, and carry out natural behaviour;
 - Adequate fresh air, sunlight, ventilation (to prevent high humidity and build-up of gases), and insulation from heat and cold;
 - Housing cleaned of manure, urine and uneaten or spilt feed as often as necessary to minimise unpleasant odours and avoid attracting pests.

1.1.5 Where livestock are housed on a temporary basis, the minimum “on ground” density shall comply with the following, for:

Small to medium animals	Not less than 1.5 square metres for every animal
Medium to large animals	Not less than 3 square metres for every animal

1.1.6 Housing, pens, equipment and utensils must be cleaned and disinfected to prevent cross infection and the build-up of disease carrying organisms.

1.1.7 Litter must be of good quality and be managed to maintain it in a dry, friable condition; it must be of a sufficient depth for dilution of faeces and be skimmed and topped up as necessary with fresh litter

1.1.8 Herd animals must not be kept in isolation.

1.1.9 Animals must be protected from predation. Feral animals may be managed using the following:

- Physical exclusion, chasing and guard dogs;
- Trapping of individuals using live traps with relocation or, where there is no alternative, humane euthanasia;
- Poisons for control of rodents or feral animals in the field are prohibited, unless required by a statutory authority and the statutory authority confirms use in writing.

Derogation

Male animals and animals about to give birth may be exempted, as well as animals in smallholdings with individual animals only.

1.1.10 The use of restraining tethers, cages or pens are not permitted except for short periods for holding purposes only.

1.2 ANIMAL HUSBANDRY

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

Livestock husbandry is based on the harmonious relationship between land, water, plants and livestock, respect for the physiological and behavioural needs of livestock and the feeding of good quality, feedstuffs.

Animal management is based on the principles of balanced nutrition and feeding for prevention of disease and resistance to infection, parasitic attack and metabolic disorders.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Producers should maintain conditions that enhance the animals' lives, physiological needs and behavioural needs.

Animal breeding and selection should consider breeds and genetic characteristics, which are naturally suited to the individual farm.

A Farm Diary should be maintained in order to provide evidence of farm maintenance, pasture renovations, feed deliveries, chemical treatments and surgical procedures including the age and ID of the animals treated. This diary must be kept for a minimum of 3 years or between audits or as required by law.

STANDARDS

1.2.1 Animals shall be allowed to practice their normal behaviours without interference to normal growth patterns.

In particular animals must be capable of natural copulation and birth.

- Embryo transfer is prohibited.
- Artificial insemination is not recommended.
- The use of genetically engineered species or breeds is not allowed.
- Hormonal heat treatment and induced birth are not allowed.

Derogation

Unless applied to individual animals for medical reasons and under veterinary supervision.

1.2.2 Synthetic growth promotants are prohibited in all livestock production systems.

1.2.3 The operator must make provision for animal welfare through adequate ground cover that considers all extremities in climatic conditions.

1.2.4 Stocking rates for livestock must be appropriate for the region, taking into consideration feed production capacity, health, nutrient balance, and environmental impact.

1.2.5 Animals shall be provided with adequate diet, nutrition and water supply so as to maintain them in fat score 2 or better.

1.3 DIET AND NUTRITION

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

Animal health results from a combination of good management practice and sound nutrition.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Energy, protein and roughage supplies should be adequate to maintain good animal health and condition (eg. young and reproducing sheep fat score 3 or above; dry animals fat score of 2 or above).

STANDARDS

1.3.1 The diet must be balanced according to the needs of the animal, be sufficient and of good quality

1.3.2 All animals must have access to forage. Feed lotting is prohibited.

1.3.3 Suckling animals must be reared by their mother in order to assist in their development of a natural immunity to infection.

1.3.4 Feeds containing offal, faeces, urine, urea, slaughter products, food industry by-products treated with solvents, same species materials or other prohibited substances are not permitted.

1.4 HEALTH

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

Management practices promote and maintain the health and well being of animals through balanced nutrition, stress-free living conditions, breed and breeding selection for resistance to diseases, parasites and infection.

Animal management is based on the prevention of disease and raising healthy animals that are able to resist infection, parasitic attack and metabolic disorders.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Health promotion and disease prevention should include the following techniques:

- Breeding and selection;
- Exercise and access to the open;
- Appropriate stocking densities and rotational grazing.

Approved veterinary treatment should be considered as an adjunct to, and not a substitute for, good management practices.

The aim should be to develop resistance in animals through breeding and selection and to correct the cause of the disorder, rather than treating the symptoms.

STANDARDS

This Standard prohibits the addition of any antibiotics to feedstuff.

1.4.1 Animal health must be maintained primarily through pro-active management, breeding and selection to address the cause of disorders, rather than treating the symptoms.

1.4.2 The operator shall provide records of veterinary treatment to animals.

1.4.3 If animals suffer disease or injury despite preventative measures the operator must not withhold appropriate veterinary treatment.

1.5 WEANING

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

Weaning of animals shall enable the natural process of animal rearing to occur, including progeny having access to first milk where relevant.

STANDARD

1.5.1 Weaning times shall conform to the following minimum time frames:

- Lambs 9 weeks

1.6 ANIMAL SURGICAL TREATMENTS

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

Animal surgical treatments are only carried out if the operator can demonstrate that the benefits of the action outweigh the consequences of non-treatment and there are no other acceptable management options.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The operator should choose breeds and practices which do not rely on surgical treatments.

STANDARDS

1.6.1 Animal mutilations are not permitted.

1.6.2 Where the following surgical treatment is shown to be necessary, it shall be performed in such a way that minimises the stress and injury to the animal:

- Earmarking;
- Castration.

1.6.3 Mulesing and tail docking is not permitted.

1.6.4 Castration of lambs must be carried out as soon as possible after birth and no later than 10 weeks after birth for lambs. Animals over 6 months of age must be castrated under the scrutiny of a licensed veterinarian and with anaesthetic.

1.7 ANIMAL RECORDS AND IDENTIFICATION

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

Identification of animals is the basis for ensuring traceability, final product identity and permitting accurate and informed management.

STANDARDS

1.7.1 Tags or markers shall be affixed to any animals requiring individual identification.

1.7.2 Approved identification includes the following:

- Electronic collars;
- Earmarking;
- Tattooing;
- National Livestock Identification Scheme;
- Ear tags.

1.7.3 The operator shall maintain adequate records and identification practices to ensure that each animal mob or herd can be identified and traced back to the farm.

1.7.4 Records of all livestock sales and purchases must be maintained up to date and kept for a period of five years after the disposal of the animal.

BOUGHT IN ANIMALS

1.7.5 Sheep and lambs may be purchased from a non Humane Choice certified vendor when they are accompanied by an NVD and a declaration from the seller that no surgical or veterinary treatments prohibited in the Humane Choice Standard have been carried out.

1.7.5.1 Such animals must reside on the certified property for a period of 3 months before they can be sold under the Humane Choice Label.

1.7.5.2 Precise records of purchases and sales of bought in animals must be kept and made available to auditors.

1.8 TRANSPORT

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

Transport of stock is carried out to ensure the best animal welfare and sanitation, the preservation of identity and to permit traceability of the animals. A management plan is used to ensure that the holding, loading, watering, transport and delivery of livestock is conducted with compassion, hygiene and oversight.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Animals should be transported to the nearest available facilities for slaughter and should not be unnecessarily transported between properties or owners unless required by feed shortages and drought.

Transport of animals between properties or to abattoirs shall take into consideration welfare requirements and shall ensure the minimisation of stress to the animal at all times.

STANDARDS

1.8.1 A Management Plan for transport of livestock shall be in place. This plan shall address the following:

- Mustering;
- Holding;
- Feeding;
- Watering;
- Identification;
- Loading;
- Travel;
- Oversight;
- Delivery;
- Documentation.

1.8.2 Loading and unloading facilities must not have parts protruding or sharp edges that can cause injury, soiling or damage to animals.

1.8.3 Transport vehicles shall be of suitable size to prevent damage and or bruising.

1.8.4 Gates must be used in transport vehicles to segregate animals into compatible groups and restrict movement of animals that could cause injury or damage.

1.8.5 Floors and ramps must be corrugated or suitably designed so the animal does not slip unduly. Unloading ramps (not less than 1.5 metres in length) should have a level dock before the ramps go down so that animals have a level surface to walk on when they exit the truck. A good target for the slope of the ramp is no more than 20° with a non-slip surface. The inside walls of the ramp should be constructed so animals cannot see activities outside the ramp.

1.8.6 Animals should be offloaded by experienced personnel as soon as practicable after arrival

1.8.7 The use of electric prods is prohibited. Substitutes for prods include plastic paddles or sticks with flags on the end.

1.8.8 Working dogs must be muzzled and under control at all times during loading, transport and unloading of sheep and must not be transported in the same pen as stock.

1.8.9 Animals should not be lifted by the horns, legs, ears, tail or wool during unloading.

1.8.10 Feed and clean water must be available before and after transport.

1.8.11 Time period from loading to unloading must not exceed 8 hours.

1.8.12 A responsible agent must accompany the livestock on the journey and be present for loading and unloading.

1.8.13 Unfit animals must not be transported.

1.9 SLAUGHTER

STANDARDS

1.9.1 Slaughter will be carried out quickly and without undue stress.

1.9.2 For waiting periods in excess of 6 hours, provision of clean and dry areas must be made for animals to lie down and feed provided if animals are held overnight.

1.9.3 Animals may not be held or herded in an area where the killing of other livestock is visible.

1.9.4 Animals must not be conscious during slaughter.

1.9.5 A stun action device must be backed up by emergency measures in the case of failure.

1.9.7 Death by bleeding, without stunning, is not permissible.

1.9.8 Clearly identifiable labelling such as branding of all carcasses must take place which differentiates them by colour from conventional carcasses and identifies them as "Humane Choice".

1.9.9 Where stock is slaughtered for "Humane Choice" sale, the operator (party certified) must give assurances that any processing facility that is employed to process their livestock meets the requirements as set out in Section 1.9 of these Standards.

1.9.10 An operator must visit each abattoir employed to process their livestock at least four times each year to assess the operational procedures and facilities at each plant to satisfy themselves and give assurances to Humane Choice that Section 1.9 of these Standards are being met.

1.9.11 If an operator should witness any act of cruelty, or a processor or staff member of a processing facility acting contrary to the conditions set out in Section 1.9 1.9.1 through to 1.9.7 of these Standards, they must notify Humane Choice immediately. Humane Choice will log a record of the operator's report and act on behalf of Humane Choice to keep the relevant authorities advised. Failure to report such incidences to Humane Choice by an operator will result in suspension or cancellation of accreditation.

1.10 ENVIRONMENT

RECOMENDATIONS

Each farm should have in place a management system that considers the impact of grazing on the environment.

A paddock rotation system is recommended.

Manure and spent bedding should be collected, and where possible composted, and spread onto land that is not designated for the grazing of animals.

Paddocks should be monitored for signs of erosion and steps taken to minimize land degradation. Careful consideration must be given to siting of paddocks and yards that they do not have the potential to allow runoff into river and water systems.

In the event of the death of an animal, the carcass must be disposed of in an appropriate and responsible manner. Composting, deep burial or in the case of suspected disease, incineration is recommended.

HSI concentrates on the preservation of endangered animals and ecosystems and works to ensure quality of life for all animals, both domestic and wild. HSI is the largest animal protection not-for-profit organisation in the world, with over 9 million supporters globally and has been established in Australia since 1994.



Humane Society International Inc - Australian Office
PO Box 439 Avalon NSW 2107 Australia
Ph: 02 9973 1728 Fax: 02 9973 1729 www.hsi.org.au
www.humanechoice.com.au