



ARMADILLO
MERINO

This fact sheet
presents the animal
welfare and health
aspects of
ZQ Merino

made from

ZQ[™]

MERINO FIBRE

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ANIMAL HEALTH

INTRODUCTION

Consumers, when considering purchase decisions, need certainty that environmental, social, animal welfare and other relevant values are positively addressed in the production of the products they purchase. ZQ Merino has been developed by The New Zealand Merino Company Limited (NZM) to provide this certainty in relation to the production of New Zealand Merino fibre.

NZM is the major seller and marketer of Merino and Mid-micron fibre from New Zealand and has strong links with processing, retail and consumer markets in Western Europe, Asia, North America and Australasia. NZM also supplies fine wool sourced from South America and Australia, where the fibre has been proven to meet the high quality, performance and ethical standards required by consumers, and the ZQ Merino programme.

NZM maintains a strong research, development and innovation capacity to build and enhance fibre production, processing and products, and to validate and improve performance from an ethical and sustainability perspective.

ZQ MERINO PURPOSE

The ZQ Merino programme has been developed to provide assurance that production systems meet suitable standards for the stewardship of livestock, management of the environment and social responsibility, and that the resulting products are of the highest quality.

The objectives of ZQ Merino are:

- To increase the economic, social and environmental sustainability of Merino fibre production in both New Zealand and globally;
- To provide confidence to processing, brand and retail customers in respect to product quality, animal welfare, social responsibility and environmental performance;
- To provide the market with a consistent marque of integrity for sustainable Merino fibre;
- To support NZM and its brand partners in their goal to become the preferred suppliers of sustainable natural fibre globally; and,
- To encourage the purchase of ZQ Merino fibre through the contract system which provides economic stability and sustainability for growers and users of ZQ Merino fibre, and traceability for those purchasing products made from ZQ Merino fibre.

ANIMAL WELFARE AND HEALTH

There is increasing interest and sensitivity among consumers and broader society with regard to the welfare of farmed animals. The ZQ Merino accreditation seeks to provide consumers with reassurance that the fibre they purchase has been produced in a manner that respects and cares for animal health and welfare.

ZQ MERINO FARMING SYSTEMS

ZQ Merino fibre is sourced from sheep that are grazed on pasture and kept outside in 'free range' conditions throughout the year. Supplementary feed, typically pasture that has been conserved as hay or silage, or fodder crops is sometimes provided during periods of slower pasture growth in order to meet the 'maintenance' nutritional requirements of the sheep. It is essential to minimise nutritional stress of sheep both from an animal welfare and ethical perspective, and a fibre quality perspective.

This free range style of farming suits both the environment and the sheep. Merino growers have developed a high level of understanding and the necessary stockmanship skills, often over many generations, to ensure that the health and welfare of their sheep is maintained. The growers also focus on ensuring that the productive capacity of their farms is maintained or enhanced, rather than degraded, over time.

ANIMAL WELFARE STANDARDS

The principal focus of initiatives to support the welfare of animals is to ensure that, at a minimum, the management of animals takes account of their five basic requirements, as described in both The New Zealand Animal Welfare Act 1999 and the New Zealand Code of Recommendations and Minimum Standards for the Welfare of Sheep 1996. These requirements are:

- Freedom from thirst, hunger and malnutrition;
- Provision of appropriate comfort and shelter;
- Prevention, or rapid diagnosis and treatment of injury, disease or infestation with parasites;
- Freedom from distress; and,
- Ability to display normal patterns of behaviour.

From a ZQ Merino perspective, this means the following requirements must be met:

FEED AND NUTRITION

- Sheep shall be given appropriate feed in sufficient quantities to maintain their body weight within the normal physiological range for their type, age, production status and sex, and their diet should be adequate to prevent disorders caused by faulty nutrition.
- Generally sheep should not be deprived of feed for longer than 24 hours and they must not be deprived of feed for longer than 48 hours.

WATER

- Sheep shall be given sufficient good quality water to maintain body weight within the normal physiological range for their type, age and sex.
- Sheep should not be deprived of water for more than 48 hours, and in hot weather for no more than 24 hours. Water sources should be reliable and the water clean.

SHADE/SHELTER

- Shade should be provided for sheep especially in hot, sunny weather. Activities such as mustering, transportation and prolonged yarding should be avoided in these conditions.
- Shelter should be provided for sheep especially in cold, wet, windy weather; at lambing; and after shearing.
- There should be sufficient shelter at lambing to provide the ewes and their lambs with effective protection while allowing the shepherd to inspect the flock from an appropriate distance without disturbing lambing ewes.

CLIMATE

- Heavy rainfall, unseasonal snowstorms and droughts can cause significant distress and losses in livestock. To lessen these effects, farms susceptible to climatic disasters should have contingency and action plans.

MULESING

- Mulesing must not be conducted on properties supplying fibre into the ZQ Merino programme from the date of joining the ZQ Merino programme.
- Any mulesed sheep bought onto the property supplying fibre into the ZQ Merino programme must be clearly identifiable and their wool kept separate at all times.

FARM SERVICE ANIMALS

- Animals used in the operation of the farm, such as dogs and horses must also be maintained, housed and treated according to the principles listed above.
- The use of farm service animals must occur in a manner that does not cause injury or undue stress to sheep.

TRANSPORTATION

- From time to time, and prior to slaughter sheep may need to be transported. When this occurs, growers and their transport operators must ensure that the sheep are transported in a humane and ethical manner, consistent with the principles listed above.
- The live export of sheep for slaughter is not currently permitted in New Zealand, and is enforced by the New Zealand Government.

END OF LIFE

- Merino sheep lead a healthy and productive life of around seven years. After that age the sheep tend to lose condition naturally and it is not always humane to keep them. At this point they are typically sold, usually for slaughter.
- ZQ Merino is sourced only from countries with strong legislation to ensure the humane treatment of animals at all times, including the point of slaughter. In New Zealand, this is regulated by New Zealand's Government, within the Animal Welfare Act 1999 and the Code of Recommendations and Minimum Standards for the Welfare of Sheep 1996.

ANIMAL HEALTH STANDARDS

The maintenance of a high standard of animal health enhances reproductive performance, productivity and the overall profitability of a farm, and helps to ensure the welfare and prolong the productive life of the sheep.

The ZQ Merino programme encourages the maintenance of good animal health, low levels of stress, and the minimisation of the risk of infection and disease. This is achieved through good husbandry practices, and effective stock and pasture management. Specifically, the ZQ Merino programme has the following requirements:

ANIMAL HEALTH TREATMENTS

- Only officially registered veterinary animal health products or those used under the direction of a registered veterinarian may be used.
- All animal health products must be used in accordance with label directions, and stored securely.
- ZQ Merino growers must monitor disease incidence and treat sick or injured animals promptly.
- All animal health treatments must be recorded.
- The ZQ Merino programme also recommends that growers formulate a detailed Animal Health Plan in conjunction with a registered veterinarian.

AUDITING

The ZQ Merino programme has been developed to provide customers with a high standard of verification that product quality, animal welfare and health, environmental, economic and social values are positively addressed. The programme is based on encouraging growers to adopt best management practices and to continually refine and improve their performance.

Compliance with the ZQ Merino standards is assessed and audited by trained and qualified third party auditors, who visually inspect sheep, farms and facilities to ensure these are met.

The maintenance of 'accredited' ZQ Merino status is dependant on ongoing compliance. This is determined through a programme of ongoing auditing, including self assessments and on farm auditing.

All ZQ Merino accredited farms are audited every 3-5 years, and in addition, a random selection of farms are audited annually to ensure that the integrity of the programme is maintained. Some of these audits are conducted by a veterinarian focusing specifically on the animal welfare and health components of the programme.

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