



## British Wool fact sheets

# Wool & Sheep Welfare

## Legislation

Animal Welfare has been an integral part of British farming for centuries and the UK has led this area globally for many years and today have the strictest animal welfare laws in the world. UK legislation includes all of the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE)'s animal welfare standards.

- 1822  First law in the world protecting against animal cruelty was introduced in the UK.
- 1824  Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals established (now known as the RSPCA).
- 1911  Protection of Animals Act introduced into law in the UK.
- 1964  The "Five Freedoms" framework was established in the UK.
- 1998  The EU passed the Council Directive 98/58/EC (Protection of Animals) based on the "Five Freedoms" framework.
- 2006  Animal Welfare Act introduced in the UK introducing a maximum sentence of up to 6 months and/or unlimited fines and a possible lifetime ban.
- 2020  The UK passed legislation formally recognising animals as sentient beings.

Animal welfare is a complex and multi-faceted subject with scientific, ethical, economic, cultural, social, religious and political dimensions. It is attracting growing interest from civil society and is one of the priorities of the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE). The OIE, at the request of its Member Countries, is the international organisation responsible for setting standards on this topic.

To find out more visit [britishwool.org.uk](http://britishwool.org.uk)



## The Five Freedoms

The Five Freedoms is a framework that was originally developed in the UK in the 1960s and has since been adopted globally and forms an integral part of the **2006 Animal Welfare Act**.

1. Freedom from hunger, malnutrition and thirst
2. Freedom from fear and distress
3. Freedom from physical and thermal discomfort
4. Freedom from pain, injury and disease
5. Freedom to express normal patterns of behaviour

Good animal welfare means that an animal is healthy, comfortable, well nourished, safe, is not suffering from pain, fear or distress, and is able to express behaviours that are important for its physical and mental state. Good animal welfare includes disease prevention and appropriate veterinary care, shelter, management and nutrition, a stimulating and safe environment.

## Auditing

In the UK the vast majority of farmers receive a subsidy, as part of this subsidy payment farmers must comply with and adhere to Cross Compliance rules (amongst other things, this covers Animal Welfare under clause SMR13).

Every year up to 5% of UK farms are audited to ensure they are adhering to the rules, this is carried out by Trading Standards and this information is then fed into the relevant local Governments.

This audit process is very in-depth and is a 3-4 day audit covering a whole raft of things such as animal movements, farm records, relevant licenses and crucially animal welfare.

Farms who are found to break any rules receive a penalty on the subsidy and where it involves animal welfare issues they are also reported for prosecution to the relevant authorities in line with local laws.

## Shearing

British Wool train between 800-1,000 shearers every year. An integral part of the course is animal welfare ensuring sheep are shorn in a way that causes the animal no stress or pain.



All UK wool comes from **non-mulesed sheep**.