



March 2025 update/mini newsletter

Four pages including contents:

NZWCA statement re PETA allegations; Classer/Grader invoicing for 2025 complete; NZWCA Code of Business Conduct; Reminder AGM/Industry PD Day May 9; Appreciation for sponsor support; Classers remind your clients of how they can support NZWCA to maintain a classer register by NZWCA Associate membership; Stencil validity check on the NZWCA website

NZ Wool Classers Assn statement to members

Background

As most will now be aware, the international organisation People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) published a self-described “first ever expose” which targeted New Zealand sheep farming and wool harvesting on 31 December 2024.

Since then PETA has called for live webcams to be placed in shearing sheds and NZ’s Ministry of Primary Industries (MPI) has been investigating more than 230 video files and other evidence supplied by PETA. MPI has promised a thorough investigation and advised prosecutions will be made where evidence makes this possible.

NZWCA position and response

We join with the rest of the NZ wool industry and MPI in condemning any animal abuse.

In response to the PETA allegations and the issue MPI has convened a working group consisting of people from NZ wool businesses and organisations, including NZWCA.

Our chair Tracy Paterson has represented NZWCA in the group and responded to media requests for comment, and will continue to do so, in consultation and collaboration with the rest of the NZ wool industry. NZWCA Registrar Marg Forde is participating in the NZ Merino Company animal welfare working group, and is the nominated back-up for Tracy in the MPI group.

As our members will have realised, the PETA action raises numerous implications and considerations specific to classing and grading work.

The concerns raised by PETA present an opportunity to underline the value of having professional classer or grader oversight in the woolshed and highlight the integrity behind a valid NZWCA stencil on bales and bale specifications. While there is no required confirmation at present we are investigating whether a qualified and registered classer/grader could essentially sign off that, to the best of their knowledge, there were no breaches of the Animal Welfare Code.

This could be included as part of any wool quality assurance programmes, or even added as a sign off on all bale specifications where a classer/grader is present.

Accordingly, we have begun work on a proposed checklist document for our member classers and graders to use at each property they work at, covering off such considerations as

- The wool grower granting authority for the classer to act on their behalf in the wool shed if farmer not available.

- Guidelines for personal safety whilst carrying out any delegated responsibility
- The process to follow and options available if any animal mistreatment occurs. NOTE: MPI have a hotline phone number and NZ Merino Company have set up a QR code to scan to complete an online form, both with anonymous options
- Where relevant recognising classer as an independent contractor. Understanding the legal implications of this. Defining at each individual shed who is legally responsible and which party (eg: wool grower, classer, shearing contractor, ganger, shearer, sheepo, shepherd) is responsible for what. Acknowledged there may be variations between farms and shearing contractors so any checklist would need to reflect that and be completed prior to shearing beginning.

NZWCA has begun working with MPI and shearing contractors to clarify the role of classers/graders in relation to animal welfare at time of wool harvesting. It is believed that in Australia shed staff are asked to prove they know the animal welfare code, so we in NZ need to be prepared for this too.

A representative from MPI will make a presentation at the next NZWCA Industry Professional Development Day (May 9 at Lincoln University) outlining NZ's animal welfare code, especially as it relates to sheep and wool harvesting.

We will be making time on May 9 for discussion and input into the proposed checklist document.

Signed,

NZWCA Board (chair Tracey Paterson) and NZWCA Registrar Marg Forde

Classer/Grader 2025 Invoicing Completed

Invoicing for the 2025/26 year for NZWCA Classer/Grader members was completed in February 2025. **If you have not received your invoice yet, please contact our secretary Annette Gamble by email: secretary@woolclassers.org.nz**

This year the invoices have had included in them wording drawing attention to the NZWCA Code of Conduct (see next item).

Associate member invoices will be sent out this month.

HAVE YOUR CONTACT DETAILS CHANGED? Please notify our secretary Annette (address above)

NZWCA Code of Business Conduct

This document has been in existence and on our website for some years. However, recently the NZWCA Board refreshed the wording, and opted to include a link to it on member invoices.

Here is how the Code reads:

As a registered wool classer or grader we seek to be effective and accountable, we will be clear and open about our work and conscious of our responsibilities to our clients and the wider wool harvesting sector. In particular:

Effectiveness

We will seek a clear understanding of our client needs and advise our clients and other relevant people working in the shed/store of the approach that we will follow in delivery. We will manage and target resources effectively and do what we say we will do.

Accountability

We will evaluate the effectiveness of our work and respond to complaints fairly and promptly. We will agree and set out for all those to whom we are accountable how we will fulfil these responsibilities.

Standards

We will be clear about the standards to which we will work. We will be aware of the requirements of the Ministry of Primary Industries Animal Welfare Code. We will protect the integrity of the NZWCA registration system by ensuring our own stencil is kept valid and not used by anyone else. We will do all we can to keep engaged and informed on wool classing and grading matters.

Equality and Fairness *We will not discriminate based on age, gender or any other physical characteristics. We will respect on another's rights and beliefs. We will hold in confidence all information we obtain on client affairs, unless specifically exempted by the client. We will respect clients and fellow workers privacy.*

Competition

We will not disparage the business practices of a competitor; if an opinion is sought it should be rendered with strict professional integrity and courtesy.

Reputation

We will ensure that at all times both on the job and outside work hours we act in a manner that does not bring the profession of wool classing into disrepute.

In addition: The following statement appears on NZWCA Classer/Grader member invoicing -

“My membership of NZWCA confirms my commitment and agreement to complying to the best of my ability to the terms of the NZWCA Code of Business Conduct, published here <https://woolclassers.org.nz/members-area/membership-information/> “

2025 NZWCA AGM/Industry Professional Development Day May 9

Reminder our 2025 event venue is Lincoln University. Once speakers and activities have been confirmed all details including registration process will be circulated. Attendance is free to members; classers and graders are strongly encouraged to attend as part of their ongoing professional development. Non members welcome however there will be a charge.

Sponsors continue support of the NZWCA and the Classer/Grader Awards

The continuing support of our sponsors is noted and greatly appreciated. Thank you WoolWorks, Wool Merchants Federation, Wool Exporters Council, NZ Merino Company, PGG Wrightson Wool, Peter Lyon Shearing, BJ Mahony Shearing, Wools of New Zealand, NZ Wool Testing Authority, Bremworth, Segard Masurel and WRONZ. We are grateful for the partnership in striving for excellence in wool preparation and presentation and advocacy for wool education and training.

Spread the word about Associate membership

Classers and Graders, if your wool grower client appreciates your work, your valid stencil on their bales and the value of an enduring New Zealand wool classer registration system, have a think about drawing NZWCA Associate membership to their attention.

Associate membership is in most cases tax deductible for a farmer. Joining is easy, just give them our website link, there's a "Join" tab on the homepage <https://woolclassers.org.nz/>

Associate membership is a category that covers farmers, sponsors, shearing contractors, retired wool classers or anyone who wishes to support NZWCA and our roles and objectives. Associate members pay an annual fee and are entitled to attend free all activities and events run by NZWCA. Associate members receive our newsletters and other communications and as with other members have the choice of opting in or out of being visible as members on our website.

Anyone can make a Classer validity check on the NZWCA website

The use of a classing or grading stencil on bales and in wool specifications if it is not valid reflects poorly on the offending classer/grader, the farmer's wool clip and our NZ wool industry. With the evolution of quality assurance programmes (such as ZQ and NZFAP) there are clear values and expectations around such things as Content Claim Standard, Chain of Custody, Credibility, Purchase Assurance, Traceability and Origin.

Putting invalid classer/grader stencils on bales and in bale specifications undermines the integrity of the NZ registration system and, we believe, the quality assurance programmes. Your association is working hard to raise this issue but as always a collective response is strongest. If you see it call it! Anyone can check if a stencil is valid by using the search facility we now have the NZWCA website home page <https://woolclassers.org.nz/>

Keeping your NZWCA membership current is considered a professional obligation for NZ classers and graders. The letter prefix and number which together make the one-off combination that is a registered "Kiwi stencil" is unique and may be used only by the person it was issued to.

Noho ora mai,

nā Marg Forde - NZWCA Registrar

03.03.25