

MEDIA RELEASE

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Digital traceability system to give Australian wool the edge

In a progressive move for the Australian wool industry, from July 2023 every wool pack imported into Australia will carry technology that will allow traceability from farm to retailer.

Developed in collaboration with industry, the technology – called eBale – is the culmination of nearly 25 years of research by AWEX to ensure it is robust and fit-for-purpose for the entire value chain. Elevation of traceability as a priority for agriculture meant eBale received support from the Australian Government’s Traceability Grants Program to assist with industry integration.

AWEX CEO Mark Grave said the rollout of eBale technology will underpin the integrity of traceability and quality claims, and ensure Australian wool leads the world in provenance from the farm to the retailer.

“We are confident that the technology will help meet traceability and biosecurity needs, as well as assist in improving logistics efficiencies and quality control through the supply chain,” Mr Grave said.

Each eBale has a unique number stored on a Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) chip and as a QR code. Wool data is captured on-farm through the WoolClip program, which is electronically transferred to the selling agent via the eBale RFID chip and QR code. The eBale will facilitate information transfer in warehouses, logistics and transport, and by domestic and international processing customers.

AWEX – with the support of industry – has committed to securing 5 million eBales for the Australian wool market, a provision for 2.5 – 3 years of wool production. The introduction of the technology will cost 60 cents per pack. eBales will be commercially available to wool growers in the first half of 2023 and by July, all packs imported will be eBale packs. People will be able to use their old packs as the industry transitions to eBales.

Full implementation of eBale has been welcomed by industry, with leading brokers, exporters and processors supporting the move. It is expected to deliver significant efficiencies through the chain, improve the accuracy of information transfer and traceability, and ultimately render the paper-based system unnecessary, Mr Grave said.

“Traceability is becoming increasingly important to the market and rolling out the eBale across all wool packs is an exciting development that will benefit wool growers and the broader industry,” said John Roberts, CEO of the industry’s research, development and marketing body, Australian Wool Innovation.

WoolProducers’ CEO Jo Hall welcomed the rollout of the technology. She said it demonstrates the Australian wool industry’s commitment to integrity and quality, which will strengthen its reputation into the future.

“Accurate and efficient transfer of clip information is imperative to maintain that reputation, and the marketability of Australian wool.

“The implementation and uptake of this technology will maximise the accuracy of the biosecurity, quality and provenance information that wool customers are seeking, and ultimately optimise markets for a producer’s wool clip.

“It is a small investment to improve the safe and efficient management of wool through the supply chain, and by the end of 2023, it will be a key differentiator for Australian wool globally.”

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Background:

Australian Wool Exchange (AWEX) manages and administers wool marketing arrangements in the Australian wool industry. This includes upholding transparency and integrity through the wool value chain. It oversees standards and compliance, information transfer and trading, from the farm to the retailer.

AWEX regulates the standards of all wool packs used in Australia. The AWEX Wool Pack Standards ensure all wool packs meet rigorous standards and quality controls so they do not contaminate the clip and are safe-to-use.

AWEX approves wool pack manufacturers and registers importers. Sample packs are drawn from each manufacturing batch for laboratory testing and only wool packs which pass these tests can be imported into Australia.

Key dates:

- 31 December 2022 - current bale label production will cease,
- 1 January 2023 – production of the eBale label to commence,
- 30 June 2023 – last date for importation of current non-RFID packs,
- 1 July 2023 – only eBale packs to be imported from this date.