# T R A N S C R I P T

# LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL ECONOMY AND INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE

## Inquiry into the Impact of Animal Rights Activism on Victorian Agriculture

Horsham—Wednesday, 18 September 2019

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**WITNESS**

Mr Mark Wootton, Jigsaw Farms.

**The CHAIR**: Welcome to the public hearings of the Economy and Infrastructure Committee. All evidence taken at this hearing is protected by parliamentary privilege, therefore you are protected against any action for what you say here today, but if you go outside and repeat the same things, those comments may not be protected by this privilege. Before you start can you state your name please for the Hansard record and allow us some time to ask you questions.

**Mr WOOTTON**: Mark Wootton.

**The CHAIR**: Go ahead.

**Mr WOOTTON**: I have been asked just to give a five or 10-minute overview—I think it will be closer to five than 10—of what we do. Obviously there is a submission I have already put in, I should say late at night, on the email. I have a wife who is an English teacher and who would have been appalled at the grammar, so be tolerant of me, but that was the speed I was working at.

Jigsaw Farms is a family-owned operation just this side of Hamilton. We are 15 or 20 kilometres out, just near Cavendish, for those who are familiar with it. We have got 8500 acres there in predominately a grazing operation; it is not a cropping area. We are probably known for being carbon neutral since 2011. I am one of those sorts of crossover people—I chaired the Climate Institute, which is Sydney based, for 12 years while living here, and I have been heavily involved in climate change and policies to do with that at all different levels. But I am also very much into farming and farm practice on the farm, so it is one of those unusual crossovers.

We run a 20 000 merino ewe operation. About 40 per cent go to terminals which go to the feedlot, which is part of the reason that I think we may be here. The rest go back to merino and we have a 600 cow-breeding cattle operation as well. To get our carbon neutrality we planted over 1 million trees and we have gone from, just as an indicator, 46 bird species in 1996 to 164 bird species. We are known for our flora and fauna protection. We are known for our respect for both people and animals, and flora and fauna. That is sort of what people talk about.

People come to our farm, and whether they are staff or contractors they have to follow or be trained in best OHS policies before they enter our farm, and they have to sign off on that. Farms, as you would be aware, are quite dangerous places, particularly for unskilled people. They are dangerous to themselves but they are also dangerous to our stock and we have to be pretty strict in terms of process. We have a lot of laneways going through the system. We have got public roads all around us so we are very much aware. Accidental entrants, I suppose, would probably be one of the biggest things we have concerns about.

In terms of transparency we have a lot of tours: farm tours, Landcare groups, agricultural groups, city-based, RMIT and NMIT—we have had a lot of ag students go through. We have had over 15 000 visitors or tourists go through our place under our terms since 1996, so it is not like we are not a transparent or open organisation. We are very happy on that level to have people come through, but we like to know who is coming and when they are coming and under what conditions.

We ceased mulesing in 2016 after trying to breed our way out of it since 2010. We still have a low-fly-risk animal but we are not 100 per cent there. We use this new cryogenetic procedure which is, for want of a better word, freeze-branding, similar to what you would have had if you have had skin cancers removed. If you saw *Landline* a month to six weeks ago we were actually on that. Again, totally transparent. They came in and filmed under our knowing what they were doing and they said, 'What can we film?' and we said, 'You can film anything in front of you', because we knew what the purpose was and what they were trying to do, so there was no issue with transparency.

In the early 2000s we had ovine Johne's disease, which is a difficult disease for sheep farmers. It is a wasting disease, and it was a really tragic time really on the farms because we were in that crossover between how it

was treated, from a declared disease basis, and how it was dealt with. It was a very difficult one for us to deal with. We had deaths on the farm as a result of that. Nothing untoward, and obviously if anything was in pain it was euthanised, but we were very much aware and heightened about the security of what animals or people were coming on farm.

We then moved into using, quite successfully, a Gudair, it is called. It is basically a vaccine. And every animal—we are doing it tomorrow actually; we are starting again. For those who are familiar we have the Balmoral Sire Evaluation Group. We are doing the trial for that at the moment, so again we are opening up tomorrow for a number of people coming forward and being involved. But this Gudair vaccine has been very successful, and we have gone from having Johne's to being as clean as you can get for no Johne's. It is spread through a variety of means—it can be waterborne—but it is basically faecal matter. It can be on people's feet. It can be on people's vehicles. It can be on a number of things—if they have been on a highway, very low risk, i.e. trucks et cetera—for people who have gone from farm to farm.

So when we have people come to the farm—we had a grasslands tour in 2016, I reckon it was. It was August 2016. The Grassland Society had six busloads of people come through—so a significant impact on the farm—to see what we do. We talked to them about risk and they said, 'These people have come from other farms'. And we said, 'We don't know. It's a lot of people'. So as they come off the bus, and this happens quite regularly, they go through a footbath—an antiseptic footbath. So they walk off the bus, they physically put their feet in the footbath and then they move onto our farm. And that is quite a common process for farm-to-farm people. So from our point of view we always ask where they have come from. If they have come from another farm, they will actually have to provide this—or the vets who come on farm will provide a spray on their boots, as an example.

Earlier this year, or at the end of last year, we were put on the Aussie Farms map as one of the chosen few—or chosen many. And we were one of the few in our area, which was sort of a bit bewildering to us because we had never actually had any animal welfare issues. We had never had any notices. We had never even had a phone call about an animal welfare issue, to be frank with you. So I was slightly bewildered, if anything, as to why we were on it. I spoke to DPI. Actually, interestingly enough, DPI came out and they were doing the intensive animal reviewing, the best practice guidelines for that, and they came out to look at our sheep feedlot for shade, because we are known for the shade areas et cetera. I was talking to them as they came out, and I said, 'Well, why do you think we would be on it?'. And they said it might be about scale. It may be that, from an aerial point of view you can see a sheep feedlot which is EPA-compliant, and drainage pens and 5 square metres per animal—by the code, everything done correctly. There could be that process. So I wrote an email to Aussie Farms, from their website, and I got a response, which was basically, in essence—I have it actually—'We are a small organisation and we are busy'. That was in late January. I asked just to be removed from the site and nothing has happened in that interim period, and they still must be busy.

In the weeks subsequent to that listing we had two events. Perhaps I am a bit dopey and I did not realise at the time what was going on. We are on the Henty Highway. So if you go to Hamilton, we are on the highway. There was a mid-50s gentleman who had pulled over right on the edge of the highway, which is quite a busy road, and first of all, I thought he had broken down, so I went past and then I realised he was actually with his camera leaning over the fence taking photos. I do not know of what, to be honest with you. It is just a paddock of sheep there. I returned, and when I came back and pulled over and said, 'Are you right?', he hopped in his car quickly and disappeared. But he may have—I am not insinuating anything other than making an observation.

Then the next day we had a younger couple in an obviously self-made-up campervan near our front gate, and we are now aware, because we are on the list and there is media, of what is going on. Again, I drove past, thinking, 'Well, they are either lost or broken down', not thinking anything more of it, and then I got back and then realised what it was on. I rang up our local policeman at Cavendish, and I said, 'Chris, there are these people out at the gate and we're on this site. What can I do?'. He told me what he thought we could do, which was basically to ask them to leave if they crossed but not to get involved, and I told our guys, who were aware of the risk at that time, to stay away. It was quite unnerving really, to be honest with you. I was not threatened by them—I think that is an exaggeration—but it was unnerving. Anyway, I went back down again, and as soon as I pulled up, wound down the window and said, 'Can I help you?', they just skedaddled again. So I mean if

they had broken down or were lost, it would have been unusual behaviour not to do something. But did they invade us, did they wear the balaclavas? No, they did not. But it was still an unnerving situation.

So we have got to a point now where we are conscious of risk. We have not changed any of our practice because we thought the practice was fine before. We have got nothing to be embarrassed about or hiding from. But ultimately we have a fundamental issue about access. Coming forward, we have very strict procedures going for stock that is introduced. We have quite strict procedures for people coming on board, and all we do is ask that if they are coming, they understand the biosecurity risk of what they are doing and we control when they come. So it is just polite. Our workplace can be a very dangerous workplace. If we are moving down through the laneways, which are our main entrance, with stock at the wrong time, it could be not a pretty sight if they do not know what they are doing. So that is our story, and why I wrote the submission was because I had that going there.

**Mr GEPP**: Thanks, Mark, for that evidence. I am interested in particularly—you have given a lot of testimony here today about the steps that you take when anybody comes on farm from an OH&S and biosecurity perspective, and we have heard a lot of testimony over the hearings in relation to uninvited visitors who come on farm. What would your advice to the Committee be about how we can support farmers, and how should we be dealing with those people who come on farm uninvited?

**Mr WOOTTON**: I would move it beyond the Aussie Farms or the animal liberationists. Poachers are equally a risk to us. In fact probably my worst confrontation was not this; it was a poacher who was shooting across where our black bulls were. They did not see them; they were shooting from the road. We did get the police involved and they did get their licences taken away and they did lose their guns. It was actually quite a serious confrontation. But the law should be the same for all is what I am saying. If they want to come on and to shoot on our property, or if they want to come across and we do not know where they are from—even with stock with us. If we have an animal that comes onto our property that we do not know—we have an unsaid rule with all neighbours that if our stock cross onto their property we do not want it back so it is euthanised there, and conversely the other way around, because of the biosecurity risk. And you know, it is done humanely and quickly and that is because of the status of where we are at, particularly for sheep farmers with Johne's. It is such a big issue.

But in terms of your exact question, I would ask just that the law is provided that allows us to control access to our farm when we want to and under the conditions we want. Now, that does not mean that we are not open to being accountable for what we do. I have no issue with a DPI person coming through at any time, who knows what they are doing, who has gone through the process and says, 'I'm concerned because we have got a crippled sheep coming through to the yards', or whatever the situation was, with transport, 'and we want to make sure there are not any more'. 'Welcome. Come in and let us know'. So there is no issue about access, but the issue is that I think the law should be a very simple law: if you want to come onto our farm, we need to control who comes through that gate. Because it is stock as well. It is not just people. It is very difficult. We can have stock trucks coming in that have not been cleaned properly and we are vulnerable. So it is a broad reach here we are talking about.

**Mr GEPP**: Thank you. And for those that actually come on the farm uninvited—and I understand completely what you are saying in relation to how you need to control every visitation to the property, both human and other—what should we be doing? I take your point about how it should be the same for everybody.

**Mr WOOTTON**: I should be able to say, 'Can you please leave the property'. If they do not leave the property, I should be able to contact Chris the plod. I should not say 'Chris the plod'—our local officer. Chris is actually a lovely man. 'Can you come down?', exactly as he did with the shooters. There was no confusion at all in that process. He came down. I said, 'Here's the registration. I have asked them to leave. They've had a few ales'. It was a dangerous situation. He said, 'Give me the number', and then someone in town picked them up, and boom! It all went through. Well, it took months.

**Mr GEPP**: Yes, of course.

**Mr WOOTTON**: I mean, it was not overnight. But then the young man involved ended up losing his licence, which he should have, to have a weapon. And that is all I want. I just want that same level of

involvement. If I have asked them to leave, if they come on board, I am not going to go out there and be John Wayne and shoot them away or anything.

**Mr GEPP**: But if they do not go, they should be arrested?

**Mr WOOTTON**: They should be removed off the property, and the legislation should empower that to happen, because if they have no proper purpose for being there I do not know why they would be there. It is that simple. And that can be anything, anybody.

**Mrs McARTHUR**: Mark, we often hear that there are animal welfare issues in the agricultural industry. Can you just tell us what compliance procedures you have to comply with to operate your enterprise?

**Mr WOOTTON**: So it is slightly different according to what we are talking about. With the cattle, we are signed up—we are MSA, so Meat Standards Australia, compliant. There is a whole regimen about transport and preparation of stock before they are actually taken either to be sold or to be killed.

**Mrs McARTHUR**: And what happens if you do not sign up to that, Mark?

**Mr WOOTTON**: Well, there is the base level of compliance. If you do not do it, you would ultimately have DPI come out and say, 'You have loaded a not-sound animal that cannot stand on all four legs', whatever the criteria is—and that is sheep and cattle. Then there is what I call that sort of bar, which is high enough as it is, but we actually go to the next level above that. We go into what we call the discretionary market one, which is the MSA. So if we want to have non-dark cutting meat—it is very simple for farmers: if you want to get a premium, do not stress your animals. Do not stress your animals and they will not cut dark. I can normally tell if we have got—sorry, then I will jump to answering your next question. There is a mob called Greenham, which were Cape Grim Beef. They have actually set up in Moe now, in the abattoirs down there as well, because they could not get enough Tasmanian beef. Most of our beef goes there, which is a significant premium. But the animal welfare guidelines on that are another step. Like, we have to euthanise before we do any castration. We have to do, really, stuff which would have been unusual. And we just use rings. We do not—

**Ms BATH**: Did you mean euthanise?

**Mr WOOTTON**: Not euthanise, sorry—anaesthetise. I would like to say it is the first time I have said that.

**Ms BATH**: I just wanted to show we were listening.

**Mr WOOTTON**: It is fairly radical—

**Mrs McARTHUR**: Radical castration, that.

**Mr WOOTTON**: Well, they would not feel the pain.

**Mr MEDDICK**: There are men facing vasectomies around the country that are very scared right now.

**Mr WOOTTON**: If I had time, I would tell you about a Dr Love who does the vasectomies as well. That is his name!

But to go back to that point, that is an extra cost of about $2 to $3 per head in terms of that anaesthetic that we have to give them. It is very difficult anaesthetising an animal for that because you do not want to immobilise them so they cannot get back up, because then it is an issue, but enough that it actually takes the pain away. It is the same with—they are introducing now this English system called Numnuts, which is basically for sheep, where you castrate them with rings. So we are doing all of those things. So that is what we call the discretionary market, and that discretionary market is for most farmers—I am talking a significant difference. It is enough for us to ship the cattle to Gippsland at a $50 carry per head and we are getting a $150 to $250 market for being the best animal welfare practice.

So if I was the animal liberation organisations, I would be trying to work on that market as best practice and then you will have the maximum effect on animal welfare. But then for the sheep one—that is just the cattle—it

depends on where you are going within the market. Most of our lambs are contract lambs. If we put an animal in there not fit for purpose, I will get a call, you know? We had one that went down in the truck probably two or three years ago and they said, 'What happened?'. I said, 'I don't know, it was five-footed', and then they go find the truck driver. I mean, there is a serious bar here. It is not quite out in the Wild West. There is a bit more there; it is a long way advanced.

**Mrs McARTHUR**: So the market is actually playing a major role in—

**Mr WOOTTON**: The market is beyond any of the regulatory-level stuff. The discretionary level—the bar is up here; it is very high and it is getting higher, and so it should. I have no issue with that.

**Mr BARTON**: Mark, I did see this on *Landline*. It is very interesting. So would you describe your farm as having regenerative farming practices?

**Mr WOOTTON**: No.

**Mr BARTON**: Not quite?

**Mr WOOTTON**: Well, I think we are regenerative. I think 'regenerative' has a funny—people have captured it for a variety of reasons, but in terms of soil carbon we are at the top of the tree because we are in a perennial system. So, yes. Under their criteria, yes. I think we are regenerative, but not under their system.

**Mr BARTON**: Not under their system.

**Mr WOOTTON**: Because we use mainstream commercial fertilisers and pesticides on the pastures.

**Mr BARTON**: Got you. One of the groups that we have seen previously talked about the amount of methane coming from cattle producing. Could you explain how you are combating that?

**Mr WOOTTON**: I will try to be brief. What happens in beef and lamb production is—if you want to find an argument to support your case, what commonly happens is that people go to the worst-case scenario they can and they multiply that over the head. So you go to a North American feedlot, you look at what the methane impact of that is in a cold-climate area and then you multiply that through. That is the most common fault that is done in the Australian agricultural one. In broad numbers, northern Australian beef has about double the methane impact of southern Australian beef because of what we call the fecundity level. We produce a lot more calves per cow unit than northern Australia does because of the rangelands and a variety of things. Theirs is offset a little bit because of the perennial pastures and getting back to regenerative agriculture. Quite rightly they could argue they are in a positive place there for that.

We got carbon neutrality. We went through Richard Eckard and a woman called Natalie Doran-Browne, who did their postdoc on it at Melbourne Uni, and I said, 'If we're going to do this, we're going to do it properly'. And they went through, and it took us over a year to get all the data, going through from 2004 to 2015. That was all our stock records, all the tree records and all the soil carbon measurement. Because we are involved in a variety of schemes, we actually had really good data. And then they went away and they wrote it up. Then it had to go through a peer review process, and then it got published by the CSIRO, so it had to go through another peer review process to get published. So it is not Mark just saying, 'We're carbon neutral here'; it is actually a really rigorous process.

But to answer in a nutshell, the way we got it was by doing the offsets with the trees. But there is a lot of scope now, particularly among the New Zealanders, who are really good on this stuff, for looking at changing stomach behaviours to lower that footprint. We have lands in our feedlot which are at double the growth of other lands on the same feed source in the same space, so we need to genetically identify them and look at what is going on. We could arguably get our footprint on that red meat site down by more than 50 per cent just by going through that process. It is a really exciting place to be, and the language which I think is really useful language, even for the regenerative agriculture people, is, 'You should be talking about carbon intensity per kilo of red meat', and that way we are all accountable. So if Mark is saying 'It's X', then he should be able to show the signs.

**Mr BARTON**: Got to be able to prove it.

**Mr WOOTTON**: And then hopefully there will be premiums coming into the system that actually reward that behaviour, not dissimilar to animal welfare.

**Ms BATH**: Thank you, Mark. This is most instructive. I know we enjoyed having you when you were at our conference a little while ago talking about climate change. I think it is so exciting and refreshing to have a discussion that is going to go into Parliament, into the Hansard transcript, about farmers actively, I guess, mitigating but also creating ways of supporting positive outcomes for climate change. So thank you very much for the work you are doing.

I just want to return to the Aussie Farms website. I think you said, 'We weren't identified as having any problems', and I guess I would just put it back that there are hundreds and hundreds of farms and enterprises there who were not having any problems either, but they were still targeted and outlined on that site. The Federal Government is doing some work in that space as we speak in relation to their new laws around the carriage service and inciting trespass. You mentioned you had received an email from Chris Delforce from Aussie Farms. Would you be able to provide that at some stage? Not today.

**Mr WOOTTON**: I can.

**Ms BATH**: On notice?

**Mr WOOTTON**: No, I can leave it with you.

**Ms BATH**: It just adds some clarity around their commentary. So that is one request.

I think what struck me in some of your presentation was that you talked about the individual coming onto the farm and you being able to ring up your local police person and them coming out and dealing with it. But what we have seen closer to Melbourne or in other intensive farming enterprises is that there are 70 people coming onto that place and that the police have turned up and that the police have not arrested anybody. But the issue is really real for them—the dangers and the effect et cetera and the death of livestock that has occurred as a result of those activists. So what would you see as a better mechanism for those larger incidents?

**Mr WOOTTON**: I am slightly out of my league there, to be honest with you. Look, I am a 'walk softly, carry a big stick' person, and in essence if the law was there to protect them I would think that then it is a question of providing a force that is strong enough to stop them coming on board. If we were in that situation and we had a lot coming—like in certain times we will have many thousands in the feedlot, and if they actually went up there they could cause absolute havoc between the pens just because of movement. We are really careful. If you go past you do not have your dog loose and you go slow because also, to be honest with you, if you do not disrupt them they eat more. They eat more, they put on weight more and then we sell them quicker, so there is an economic gain of having good animal welfare and calmness as well.

I still go back to the answer before that I said to Mark, that basically I would still have the legislative power that allows them to actually have right of removal. Then you would have thought at some point if they kept doing that then it has to stop. But I am not an expert in that area.

**Ms BATH**: No, that is fine. I guess the question would be, as we have talked about in other hearings, on-the-spot fines.

**Mr WOOTTON**: I find it odd that the rest of my life is so legislated in so many different ways and then for this one it is not. You are the legislators. You should do what works effectively and talk to the people that have to enforce it to actually change the behaviours, because it is not acceptable now.

**Mr MEDDICK**: Thank you, Mark. This has been a great presentation. Thank you very much. And I read your submission—again, an excellent submission. So thank you for coming here today. Before I ask my questions there is something I want to just say. I very much admire your philosophy of equal treatment under the law for everybody and particularly in relation to talking about people who were shooting over your property. I want to return to that in a moment but for a different reason. I wanted to ask you a question though.

You do not use the cruel practice of mulesing. You use the new cryogenic breech treatment of steining. Can you talk to us about that and in particular the response of the sheep and the recovery after the treatment? What is that like?

**Mr WOOTTON**: As I understand it John Steinfort, who is the vet involved who is sort of, for want of a better word, the mad professor who has designed these things, what he is doing now is some blood sampling just to show stress, which is the next level to answer your question scientifically, which I do not have the data on. I can say that we did a three-way trial, which was basically no treatment of the animal at all at marking, a traditional mules at marking and the steining. I think they have changed the name now; it is not called steining, but I call it steining still. We did that and then we remeasured. So we did an observational one off the cradle, and we had all the New Zealand merino people turn out with AWI. It was quite a group, 20 or 30 people, which again gets back to my point before, to be honest: the animals do behave differently when you have a lot of people around, which is another issue. Anyway, we stood back and we watched and we just basically let them go. The only discomfort I could see in the animals were those that actually had rings on them for their testicles for castration. That is relatively minor because it is a high ring, and they all mothered up with their mothers and off they went. So that was an observational thing.

We had been using Tri-Solfen, which is the local anaesthetic spray, even when we were doing mulesing. We were one of the first people in Australia to use it actually, and we did a measurement then, and that was also a marked difference because they did not actually feel the pain initially. Then what we did as a measurement tool, which is probably even more, is that basically animals show pain or discomfort in weight gain. So if they are losing weight, then normally there is a good correlation between the two, so we measured them from that time to weaning, and we had a 3 kilogram increase in weight from those that had a traditional mules to those who actually had the steining. There was no difference between the steining and the unmulesed. It was zero. So that, from a pain threshold point of view, is a pretty strong factor, but again, we need John's work on actually looking at that stress marker to confirm that.

**Mr MEDDICK**: Excellent. Thank you. I was also very interested to read about the environmental improvements that you have made to your land, and I applaud you for the million trees. That is a wonderful thing to do, the mitigation.

**Mr WOOTTON**: You can come out next week. We are planting again. We are planting next week. You can come out.

**Mr MEDDICK**: Fantastic. Can you explain to us in particular about shelterbelts—this would be a term that not a lot of people generally would be aware of—and the impact that has had on your land, the biodiversity and animal welfare in general?

**Mr WOOTTON**: We purchased in 1996 and later in 2002 two significant properties which were part of the Potter Farmland scheme. The Ian Potter Foundation set that up in the 1980s. They worked with 15 farmers on doing best practice for pasture utilisation and also for lambing and calving protection, so that is leading to what you are saying. We use that as a model. So basically if you came to our farms you would see by and large paddocks in the shape of land type, because animals graze heavily at the top of hills. The biggest problem in western Victoria by and large is under-utilisation of pasture, not over-utilisation of pasture—that they do not eat enough at the right time or they will eat the wrong part in the wrong paddock, and you will end up with baring and then the paddock blows and you lose your topsoil. So you try to utilise that for economic gain.

We put the shelterbelts in. For want of a better word, they are sort of loose corridors, and that provides the linkages. So there are big discussions with BirdLife Australia about what those widths should be. The broader you are, the more biodiversity you have, the more land you give away, so there is this trade-off. We have a compromise. At certain times we go four trees wide; sometimes there is 60 metres. There is one farm where they are nearly 500 metres across, because it is along a salted creek and then you have permanent revegetation and you have your agroforestry above that.

That is all about looking at practice, but the best thing they do is that they provide shelter for animals, and because we are predominantly spring lambers—August is a horrible month for lambing—you will have those wind chill bad days. You know those sheep graziers warnings? When I hear them I go, 'Oh, my God', because

they are vulnerable. The twins get the best protection, because everything is classed according to scanning—whether they have got a single or a twin in them—and the dry sheep obviously do not have the protection of the others. It is the same with the calving. But the other thing is that you actually get more grass growth because the wind chill takes off, so there is a bonus there. But farmers are pretty good on shelterbelts now. Whether they have done them everywhere is a different debate.

**Mr MEDDICK**: Finally then, if I can return to the people shooting over your land, I have got a number of concerns about that, first of all for the animals themselves particularly, but for you and your family as well. This would be a very great concern. You talked about them being poachers. I am struggling to come to grips with that, wondering what on earth they were shooting at.

**Mr WOOTTON**: Foxes. They are looking for red dogs.

**Ms BATH**: First of all, shelterbelts have been around for a long time. I know my father did them in the 1960s probably for protection and a range of things—exactly what they are meant for. I am interested just on that, can we just go back to mulesing for a moment? If you did not do anything, if there was no intervention and there was fly strike, can you lead us through a little bit about the effect on the animal and what that means also I guess for your outcomes but also in terms of animal welfare?

**Mr WOOTTON**: Prior to ceasing mulesing we had been breeding for clean breech—so that is selecting heavily for that and clean face—so we have less risk of fly strike, because it is about the density of the wool and where the wool is. We bought off Tom Silcock about 330 unmulesed sheep, and I thought, 'Well, before we go this, let's give it a trial and see how we go'. We had a horrible fly strike event, and we lost 140 of those 330 in the first summer of owning them. So Mark backed right off the whole 'We're going to cease mulesing' at that point! I reckon I broke a couple of guy's hearts having to go out and pick them up. It was just horrendous. It was mainly on breech and then they moved to the shoulder. It is a really horrible, smelly, terrible death. It is a really unfortunate death.

**Ms BATH**: One final thing, with your total indulgence, Chair. If any of us would like to come out on farm, Mark, would you mind if we arranged—

**Mr WOOTTON**: I am happy for anyone to come to the farm. It is not even you that has an open invitation—any of you. People come in. I gave a talk for this climate smart farming thing up near Euroa a couple of weeks ago and I had some ag students write to me and said, 'Can we come to the farm?'. I said, 'You can, but you're going to come when we're ready', because we cannot just have—

**Mrs McARTHUR**: Random.

**Mr WOOTTON**: Yes. I also work there. It is a nice thing. Although, credit to Emma Kealy: she kept driving past and one day she turned up and said, 'Can I have a look around?' and it was actually a delightful afternoon. If people are genuinely interested, I am really happy to do it, and to be honest with you I have a lot of friends who are very strong animal liberationists and they come as well, so that is fine.

**The CHAIR**: Thank you. On behalf of the Committee I would like to thank you for your time and contribution. You will receive a copy of the transcript for your proofreading.

**Witness withdrew.**