



**WEEKS OF ACUTE  
SUFFERING IN 40°C HEAT  
UNDER THE BLAZING SUN  
– AND NOT A TREE OR  
SHELTER IN SIGHT!**



With temperatures soaring above 40°C, **Compassion in World Farming (South Africa)** is calling on food retailers to introduce **labelling**, as a matter of urgency, **that will assure customers that, in life, their lamb or mutton products were afforded shade.**

## **In blistering heat, South Africa's sheep search for shade in each other's shadows**

BY LOUISE VAN DER MERWE

Most people would like to think that the lamb or mutton on their plate enjoyed a life worth living.

But they would be wrong!

Most sheep live the harshest of lives in semi-arid and arid conditions in South Africa.

Worse still, climate change has exacerbated the blazing heat of these regions to the point where 40°C is common in the summer months.

Anyone who has taken a trip through the Karoo will have seen how sheep huddle in desperate attempts to find shade in each other's shadow.

**Only a feedlot could possibly be worse...**



39°C, RIVIERSÖNDEREND, FEBRUARY 2024

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# Moreover, the provision of shade for sheep makes economic sense!

Research conducted at Elsenburg Agricultural College, Stellenbosch in 2021 on heat stress in Mutton Merino and Dormer lambs concluded that heat stress influenced ewe fertility by as much as a 60% drop in fertilization rates and an embryo loss rate of up to 80%.

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Earlier research conducted at Elsenburg Agricultural College between 1996 and 1998 concluded that sheep in paddocks with shade consumed less water than those in control paddocks, and their lambs tended to be heavier at birth, and fully 3.8 percent heavier at weaning age.

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Research on heat stress in Australia produced similar results. In addition, the Australian study noted that the degree to which sheep are panting is “an important indicator of the extent to which they are suffering from heat stress.”

- **Mild** heat stress – mild to fast panting, but with a closed mouth
- **Moderate** heat stress – fast panting, progressing to mouth slightly open
- **Severe** heat stress – panting with the neck extended, head held up and tongue extended
- **Extreme** heat stress – open-mouth panting with the tongue fully extended and the head often lowered

Behavioural signs of heat stress included:

- crowding at water troughs
- increased water intake
- bunching to seek shade from other sheep
- immobility or staggering.

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**ANIMAL VOICE** asked *Bool Smuts*, well-known South African wildlife conservationist, activist and founder of the Landmark Leopard and Predator Project, for comment.



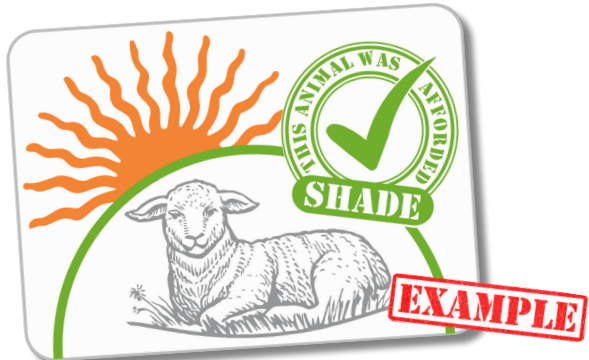
He said: "Surely we can offer sheep a bit of empathy and compassion and a decent quality of living? Providing shade also makes sense in economic and production terms with the costs being offset by production gains in terms of improved fertility, improved growth, less mortality and disease, and let us not forget that stress produces cortisol in the meat.

The solution is really so simple:

- Erect mobile shade and shelter structures with poles and shade-cloth with enough space for sheep not to be crowded;
- Mobile shelters prevent trampling at the water points
- Plant trees
- Provide additional water points to supply greater access to clean, cool water for all the animals. Sheep are happiest and healthiest when water temperature is 17 – 18°C."



← See recent results of **Bool Smuts'** efforts to stop the torture of Africa's wildlife.



Please **email** the major food retailers...

1. Click on the **retailers' logos** below for their **e-mail contact** addresses.
2. Type in the subject line: **PRODUCT LABELLING**
3. Copy and paste this text: **Please consider upgrading your business ethics in regard to mutton and lamb product labelling, by stating whether or not the animal, in life, had access to shade.**

