

**From:** Latiefa Behardien  
**Sent:** 23 April 2025 11:03  
**To:** Louise van der Merwe <[avoice@yebo.co.za](mailto:avoice@yebo.co.za)>  
**Subject:** RE: Label for Shade for Sheep  
**Importance:** High

Hi Louise,

As you know, we are passionate about the humane treatment of animals, and we have been consistent and deliberate in our efforts to maintain an exceptional standard in this regard.

To start, we'd like to share the Woolies context for sheep and lamb farming. A key characteristic of sheep farming in South Africa is that the farms are predominantly found in arid areas, like the Karoo, due to the hardy and resilient nature of sheep. In other parts of the country, farmers may graze sheep on agricultural land between harvests – for crops like wheat and canola. This is a regenerative practise that is sustainable, beneficial for the environment, and allows farmers to minimise the costs associated with clearing land and providing feed to animals.

Providing shade for sheep in the arid areas is impractical for a number of reasons, one being the prohibitive costs, and another being the addition of an artificial intervention. Our Five Freedoms of Free Range, [as outlined on our website](#), include the principle of “free to express natural behaviour”. Part of this principle implies that animals must be able to stretch, run, jump, and play. Introducing shade to areas where it is not naturally occurring would be counter to this principle because sheep will inevitably gather together stock-still beneath the shaded area.

Furthermore, providing shade in areas where sheep graze on agricultural land is equally impractical. Because the land is used for agriculture like growing wheat and canola, the shade would need to be temporarily erected and constantly moved to accommodate the sheep during grazing season and then removed during pre-harvest and harvest time.

Lastly, there are concerns that adding shade would create a feedlot-adjacent situation, where the sheep congregate solely in the shaded area, calling into question the free range principles we pride ourselves on. Our free range requirements ensure sheep are allowed to roam and graze on natural or planted pastures for 24 hours per day for their entire life, thus, allowing them to express all patterns of normal behaviour and association in an open environment.

Woolworths is, however, reviewing the possible inclusion of shade as a supplier recommendation. In fact, we are already gathering data on this topic from suppliers to measure the impacts involved.

At Woolworths, we go to great lengths – far beyond the legal requirements – to ensure that the Woolies values are applied across our business, and we have a long history of promoting and advancing animal welfare. External auditors routinely check the living conditions of livestock, and our Supplier Code of Conduct ensures that the highest standards are in place at all farms who partner with Woolies.

In addition to our values-led approach to doing good while we do business, it's worth mentioning there is a strong commercial incentive to maintaining the highest animal welfare standards – distress and discomfort on an animal influences the quality of the final product, a fact which has been widely researched and reported. That is to say, farmers and retailers are equally invested in ensuring the best possible conditions for livestock.

Thank you again for your email, Louise. All feedback is important to us, and your concerns and questions are appreciated.

Best regards,  
**LATIEFA BEHARDIEN**  
Chief Technology and Sustainability Officer, Woolworths Food