

AsureQuality
Kaitiaki Kai

**AsureQuality Good Farming
Standard**



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1.0 Introduction and Scope

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 Purpose

To ensure the highest standards of on farm animal welfare, food safety, and biosecurity. To promote transparency, credibility and consumer trust in the agricultural products traded.

1.1.2 Background

The agricultural sector is a significant contributor to the economies of New Zealand and Australia, with meat, dairy and other sectors playing pivotal roles. To ensure the sustainability, safety, and quality of agricultural products, an Integrated Assurance Standard has been established. This standard aims to improve food safety, enhance animal welfare, and strengthen the reputation of producers of high-quality livestock products.

1.2 Scope

New Zealand and Australian certified farms supplying livestock (Ovine and Bovine) for processing to domestic and export markets. The standard entails certification of farms and includes applicable raising claims.

1.3 Interpretation

- Shall: refers to a requirement of the standard; these may also be a requirement under regulations or codes of practice. Shall. Non-compliance will result in a non-conformance (NC) being issued to the supplier.
- Should: refers to a recommendation under the standard and is not mandatory. Non-compliance will not result in a non-conformance.
- Excepting items indicated as “should”, failure to comply with the requirements of the standard will result in a non-conformance (NC) being issued to the supplier.

- The requirements of the standard shall be met for any certification. Specific raising claims shall also meet the additional requirements for the specific claim.

2.0 Glossary

Antibiotic	A substance, either naturally occurring or synthetically produced that inhibits the growth of or destroys bacteria.
AQ	AsureQuality
ASD	Animal status declaration (New Zealand)
Competent personnel	An individual who possesses the required skills, knowledge, training, and experience to effectively perform their assigned tasks and responsibilities.
ESI	Export Slaughter Interval
Farm	One or more blocks of land, no more than 20kms radius apart that are managed as one entity including common farm policies, procedures, and records.
Forage	Forage consists of grass (annual and perennial), forbs (e.g., legumes, brassica), browse, or cereal grain crops in the vegetative (pre-grain) state. Hay, haylage, baleage, silage, crop residue without grain and other roughage sources may also be included as acceptable feed sources.
Genetically Modified Organism (GMO)	An organism whose genetic material has been altered in a way that does not occur naturally, typically for the purpose of introducing specific desired traits.
Hormonal Growth Promotant	Any veterinary medicine containing either natural or synthetic hormones sold for the purpose of increasing muscle tone, growth rate, weight gain, or feed efficiency of animals.
HSNO	Hazardous Substances and New Organisms
Ionophore	Antimicrobial compounds that can be administered or fed to ruminant animals that specifically target the ruminal bacterial population to increase feed efficiency and promote growth in livestock. Examples include Monensin (commercially marketed as Rumensin, Monotec, Kexxtone, and Rumenox) and Lasalocid (commercially marketed as Bovatec and Avatec).

LPA	Livestock Production Assurance
NAIT	National Animal Identification and Tracing (New Zealand)
NC	Non-conformance
NFAS	National Feedlot Accreditation Scheme (Australia)
NLIS	National Livestock identification Scheme (Australia)
NVD	National Vendor declaration (Australia)
PIC	Property Identification Codes (Australia)
QA	Quality Assurance
Raising Claim	A statement made by a meat producer indicating specific practices or conditions related to the rearing, feeding, or treatment of animals used in production.
Ruminant Protein	Protein derived from the tissue (including blood) of a ruminant (such as cattle, sheep, and deer).
SDS	Safety Data Sheet
Withholding Period	The specified timeframe during which treated animals shall be kept from entering the food supply chain to ensure that residues of veterinary medicines have sufficiently cleared from their tissues. Or the minimum permissible time between the last application of an agrichemical before grazing by animals.

3.0 General Requirements

- Access to the current AQ Good Farming Standard; either hard copy or electronic.
- Access to the relevant supply agreement (this may be in the form of a handbook and includes access to electronic copies).
- Personnel are:
 - Trained and deemed competent for the tasks they complete.
 - Competency demonstrated via records.
- Comply with any additional requirements advised by their supply agreement including those relating to breed restrictions or raising claims.
- Ruminant Protein:
 - No ruminant protein fed to livestock.
 - Ruminant proteins stored securely on farm so livestock cannot access them.
- No hormonal growth promotants are to be administered.
- Genetically modified animals are not eligible for the AQ Good Farming Standard.

4.0 Traceability

4.1 General

- All suppliers shall meet the requirements of their country specific livestock tracing and/or property registration programmes:
 - New Zealand:
 - NAIT regulations.
 - Australia:
 - Property Identification Codes (PIC number).
 - National Livestock Identification Scheme.

4.2 Records

- Records are available, accurate and verifiable.
- Records shall be retained for a minimum of 4 years unless otherwise specified in legislation or supply agreements.

4.3 Stock origins and movements

- Imported animals are not permitted.
- Livestock received from a farm assured property or PIC registered property will remain farm assured.
- Livestock received from a non-farm assured property are required to be on farm for 60 days before they become farm assured.
- Livestock movement records are maintained for transfers on and off farm.
 - The following data shall be recorded:
 - Date of arrival/departure of livestock from the farm.
 - Origin/destination of the livestock.
 - Purchases/sales entered in the stock tally and identification details.
 - Name of the transport operator.
 - Any comments to assist identification and traceability.
 - Movements shall be recorded and accompanied by records as required by the applicable regulatory requirements.
- There is a management system to enable identification and traceability of animals.
- Stock moved onto the farm are accompanied by documentation.
 - Shall be accompanied by a declaration covering any intended Raising Claim requirements.
 - For Australia, there is a maximum of 3 transfers between different entities.

5.0 Food and Water

5.1 General

- Animals are to receive sufficient quantities of safe food, nutrients, and water.
- If animals show signs of being thin or have an unacceptable body condition score:
 - Immediate action needs to be taken to improve their condition or the animal is euthanised humanely.
 - Records of checks and subsequent actions taken are to be retained.

5.2 Feeds

- Records are to be kept of bought in feeds and shall include:

- Feed type including ingredient composition.
- Date of delivery.
- Supplier name.
- Expiry date.
- Quantity and the load or batch number.
- Feeds shall meet the requirements of any intended raising claims and any applicable regulatory requirements. Records must contain evidence to support an intended raising claim.

5.3 Water

- Livestock have access to water sufficient for their daily needs and that is not harmful to their health.
- Water is easily accessible to the animals.
- Water troughs are kept clean.
- Backup water supply for 24 hours is available where private water supply is used.

6.0 Animal Welfare

6.1 General Requirements

- All suppliers need to be familiar with and know how to access the relevant animal welfare codes or standards of welfare.

6.1.1 Additional requirements for Australian suppliers

- Under LPA requirements, all Property Identification Code (PIC) representatives or persons responsible for the management of livestock will have successfully completed training in relation to the Australian animal welfare standards and guidelines.

6.2 Shelter

- Livestock have access to shelter to reduce any risk to their health and welfare caused by exposure to cold.
- Livestock giving birth have access to an environment that protects the newborn from climatic conditions that could compromise their health and welfare.
- Livestock are provided with the means to minimise heat stress.
- Animals can lie down without discomfort.

6.3 Animal health

- Signs of ill-health or injury shall result in timely preventative or remedial action, as appropriate.
- Medication shall only be used in accordance with the registration conditions, manufacturer's instructions, or professional advice.
- Documented animal health plan:
 - Shall be fit for purpose and reviewed annually.
 - The animal health plan shall be developed, reviewed, and implemented by competent personnel and include the following:
 - Background information on the enterprise.
 - Links to a Biosecurity plan.
 - Identifies all significant livestock pest and disease problems that might be faced.
 - Outlines intended preventative measure.
 - Explains treatments to be used if pest or disease problems do occur.
 - Identifies intended improvements for overall herd or flock health.
 - Explains how nutritional requirements are met.
 - Record keeping.
 - Treatment of injuries.
 - Pain relief procedures.
 - Emergency procedures.
- Certified properties shall have 24-hour access to a nominated local veterinary practice or a veterinarian.

6.4 Painful procedures

- Shall be performed at the same time where possible, to reduce stress.
- Shall not be performed on newborn animals less than 24 hours old.
- Shall be performed by trained and competent personnel.
- Shall be performed only when necessary for the animal's long-term welfare, or to reduce the safety hazards to humans and other animals, or to improve farm management or the quality of the product.
- Pain relief should be used when performing painful procedures.

6.4.1 *Castration*

- Castration of lambs or calves shall not be performed within the first 24 hours of life.
- Castration shall be undertaken within 12 weeks of age, unless performed by a veterinarian using authorised pain relief throughout the procedure.
- When using a high-tension band to castrate cattle of any age, pain relief authorised by a veterinarian shall be used throughout the procedure.
- Procedures including short scrotum castration of lambs if carried out, shall be undertaken within 12 weeks of age.
- Shortening of the scrotum of lambs (cryptorchid) shall be carried out in such a way as to minimise acute pain and chronic consequences and shall be performed when the lamb is less than 12 weeks old unless undertaken by a Veterinarian.
- When rubber rings are used, they shall be placed below the testes, and they shall be of a tension and a size to ensure that blood supply to the scrotum is stopped immediately.

6.4.2 *Tail docking*

- Shall be undertaken within 12 weeks of age. A veterinarian shall be used if over 6 months of age.
- For lambs, a tail shall not be docked any shorter than the distal end of the caudal fold.
- Tail docking of cattle is prohibited unless carried out by a veterinarian and shall only be carried out when they deem it necessary for animal health and welfare.

6.4.3 Disbudding and dehorning

- Disbudding should be done in preference to dehorning.
- Requirements for the use of pain relief are as follows:
 - New Zealand:
 - No animal shall be disbudded or dehorned irrespective of age without the use of pain relief.
 - Australia:
 - Pain relief shall be used after 20 weeks of age.
- Horned animals shall be dehorned to prevent risk to themselves and other animals.
- Only competent personnel can perform the procedure; there shall be evidence of training.
- The supplier shall be able to explain the methods used and the steps undertaken to minimise the pain and distress to the animal.

6.4.3.1 Additional requirements for Australian suppliers

- Calves should be less than 8 weeks old if disbudding with a hot iron.
- Calves should be less than 14 days old when using caustic chemicals.

6.4.4 Mulesing

- Is prohibited in New Zealand.
- Lambs intended to be supplied into the programme shall not be mulesed.
- Lambs can only be supplied if they have come from breeding ewes that have either not been mulesed or have come from breeding ewes that have been mulesed with pain relief.
 - Evidence of this is to be obtained at the time of purchase e.g., contractor statements.

6.5 Welfare of working animals

- Working animals shall have sufficient exercise and suitable facilities and be provided with shelter from inclement weather conditions.

- Adequate quantities of food and water are supplied.
- Areas for toileting are available away from their sleeping area.
- Working animals are included in and treatments are recorded on the animal health plan.

6.5.1 Additional requirements for NZ suppliers

- Dogs are treated for *Cysticercus Ovis*.

6.6 Euthanasia

- Livestock and working animals shall be handled, restrained, and euthanised in such a manner as to minimise unnecessary pain and distress prior to death.
- Personnel undertaking euthanasia shall be competent in the handling and euthanising of livestock.
- Unless they are euthanised by a Veterinarian, animals shall be killed using a captive bolt or firearm. They should be bled out immediately unless death is already confirmed.
 - Selection of the firearm calibre shall take into consideration the size of the animal. Regulatory requirements shall be met.
- The spinal cord shall not be severed or broken until after death.
- Devices used for euthanising animals should be in good condition and appropriate for the animal.
- Animals shall be euthanised without delay if there is no expectation of improvement in their condition (ill or injured).

6.7 Animal mortality

- Records shall be kept for animals that die on farm and include:
 - Date.
 - Species/stock class.
 - Animal identifier.
 - Number of animals.
 - Age.
 - Cause of death.
 - Actions taken (if any).

7.0 Animal Husbandry

7.1 General

- Livestock are managed to minimise pain, injury, or distress.
- Livestock are monitored for signs of lameness and appropriate action is taken.

7.2 Stockmanship

- Livestock are cared for by enough personnel who collectively possess the ability, knowledge, and competence necessary to maintain the health and welfare of the animals.
- All animal handlers shall have either the relevant knowledge or training, or appropriate supervision to ensure the animals' health and welfare needs are recognised and met, and the handler's safety is ensured.
- All livestock shall be monitored. The frequency shall be appropriate considering the farm type, animal breeds, land extent and topography.

7.3 Animal Handling

- All livestock shall be handled in a way that does not cause harm or undue stress.
- Sheep should be handled to take advantage of their natural flocking behaviour when mustering, yarding, and handling. People handling sheep should understand the flight zone.
- Cattle should be handled quietly and calmly, considering their flight zone and natural herding instinct to minimise stress during handling. Allowances should be made for cattle with special needs such as young calves, lame cattle, and bulls.
- Handlers shall not:
 - Strike, punch, or kick an animal.
 - Drag sheep by only the ears, or tail or by one leg.
 - Drag cattle that are not standing.
 - Deliberately dislocate or break the tail of cattle or sheep.
- Electric prodders, sticks or goads shall not be used on sheep or calves. Electric prodders shall only be used on the muscled hind or forequarters of cattle over 3 months of age.
- Goads shall not be used to strike or prod an animal in the most sensitive areas including the udder, eyes, nose, anus, vulva, or testicles.

- Animals shall have room to move forward before being prodded.
- A person in charge of a dog, shall always have the dog under effective control during the handling of cattle and sheep.

7.4 Weaning

- Weaning of calves under 6 months of age should not occur unless the cow's animal welfare status (e.g., body condition) is compromised.

7.5 Facilities

- All facilities, including fences, yards, sheds, and housing, shall be constructed, maintained, and operated in a manner that minimises the likelihood of distress or injury to animals.

7.6 Reproductive Management

- Induction of cows and ewes is prohibited unless medically necessary for welfare reasons.
- Unless euthanised immediately, all animals with uterine prolapse shall be administered pain relief and be euthanised or treated by a qualified veterinarian.

7.7 Shearing

- Sheep shall have access to food and water as soon as possible after shearing.
- All severe cuts or injuries shall be treated immediately.
- The means to treat cuts and injuries shall be available when shearing.

8.0 Biosecurity

8.1 General

- Livestock showing signs of unusual illness should be notified to a veterinarian.
- Notifiable diseases shall be reported immediately to authorities.
- Farmers and workers shall exercise good hygiene.

8.2 Sewage

- No human sewage, excepting water discharges, shall come into contact with pastures grazed by livestock.
- Adequate sewage disposal facilities shall be available on farm.

8.3 Additional requirements for Australian suppliers

- Suppliers shall have a biosecurity plan in place.

9.0 Food Safety

9.1 Animal treatments & remedies

- Records are available for all animal treatments/remedies administered and include:
 - Treatment date.
 - Mob/herd identification.
 - Number of animals.
 - Product name and type of medicine administered.
 - Reason for treatment.
 - Application point.
 - Quantity/dose per head.
 - Batch number.
 - Medicine/vaccine expiry date.
 - Withholding period (WHP)/Export slaughter interval (ESI) in days.
 - Date eligible for slaughter.
 - Name of person administering treatment.
- Treatments shall be secured and stored as per the manufacturer's instructions.
- Treatments shall be stored away from other chemicals.
- Livestock shall not be treated with expired medicines.
- Unused/expired treatments and remedies are discarded.
- A letter from a veterinarian cannot be used to extend expiry date.
- Off-label use of medicines is not permitted without an approval from a veterinarian.
- There shall be a process for the disposal of empty treatment or vaccine containers.
- Animals shall not be provided for slaughter before any withholding periods, or export slaughter intervals (ESI), have elapsed.

9.2 Physical hazards

- The Supplier shall have a system for managing and identifying livestock with embedded foreign materials; this includes during movements of stock for slaughter.

9.3 Agrichemicals

- Storage meets HSNO regulations (New Zealand) and country regulations (Australia), is secure, and product is stored as per the manufacturer's instructions.
- Decanted chemicals shall include the original product name and expiry date.
- Fertiliser and agrichemical storage prevents contamination of the environment and animal feeds.
- Inventory is held for all chemicals and bait.
- SDSs are available either in hard copy form or by accessing via the internet.
- Manufacturer's instructions are available and understood.
- Records are kept for agrichemical/fertiliser applications and include:
 - Date administered.
 - Location of application on a map or list.
 - Name of product.
 - Application rate by map or paddock identifiers.
 - Withholding period if applicable.
 - Calculated earliest grazing/slaughter date (safe date).
 - Person or contractor applying agrichemicals.
- There shall be a process for responsible disposal of expired chemicals to minimise environmental impacts.
- Livestock shall not be grazed during any withholding period.

9.4 Supplementary feed

- Records are kept for all supplements/supplementary feed fed to livestock and include:
 - Type of supplement.
 - Purchase date.
 - Source.
 - Expiry date.
 - Class of animals.
 - Number and identification of animals fed.
 - Total quantity fed.
 - Period of feeding.
 - Reason for supplementation.
- Commercial feed mixes shall be accompanied by a certificate and/or sourced from a Feedsafe accredited manufacturer.
- Storage shall prevent contamination of feed.

9.5 Vermin and Pest control

- Livestock shall not be able to access poisons used for vermin and pest control.
- Periodic checks of live traps shall meet applicable legislation.

10.0 Transport

10.1 Pre-Transport

- Livestock shall be fit for transportation.
- Livestock about to give birth shall not transported.
- Livestock shall be held in suitable holding and loading facilities so animal welfare is not compromised.
- Livestock shall have access to water, feed, and resting areas whilst in a holding facility. Curfew periods are to be taken into consideration.

10.2 Livestock transport

- At every stage of transport, animals shall be cared for by enough personnel, who collectively possess the appropriate ability, knowledge, and competence necessary to maintain the health and welfare of the animals.
- The owner or representative is present during loading.
- Farmers shall refuse to load livestock if they consider the crate is unclean/unsafe.
- Vehicles used shall be fit for purpose and have appropriate loading densities to minimise stress/injury and must take account of animal size, weight, prevailing climatic conditions and the distance being travelled.
- Documentation shall comply with relevant legislation and any applicable contractual agreements.
- These requirements also apply where transport is undertaken by the Supplier.

10.2.1 Additional requirements for Australian suppliers

- Suppliers should seek out transporters that are approved under an independently audited QA system e.g., Trucksafe.

<https://alrta.org.au/%20animal-welfare-2/trucksafe-animal-welfare/>

11.0 Environment

11.1 Waste Management

- Waste production shall be minimised; materials are recycled where possible.
- Waste, packaging, and containers used to hold waste are disposed of responsibly.
- There shall be no leachates occur from stored silage/baleage.

11.2 Carcass disposal

- Carcasses shall be disposed of as soon as possible and before they become a health risk.
- Carcasses can be buried, burnt, or sold for petfood.
- Offal/carcass pits shall be located away from waterways and have systems to minimise risk to the welfare of both animals and humans.
- Raw offal shall not be fed to dogs.
- Carcass disposal shall comply with applicable regulations.

11.3 Sharps disposal

- Sharps shall be disposed of in a responsible manner.

11.4 Additional requirements for New Zealand suppliers

- Suppliers shall meet requirements of the NZ Resource Management legislation and any applicable by-laws for their region.

12.0 Raising Claims

12.1 Traceability

- All requirements of Section 4.0 Traceability shall have been met.
- Livestock shall have lifetime traceability of their eligibility for raising claims.
- Livestock ineligible for raising claims shall be readily identifiable and traceable. This could be by tags, physical separation, or breed of animal and animal identification numbers noted on records.
- Livestock not born on the property shall be able to demonstrate eligibility for the raising claims.
- If eligibility cannot be demonstrated, livestock shall not be supplied as eligible for raising claims.

12.2 Grass Fed

- Livestock shall be solely grass fed (forage) in their lifetime after being weaned from their mother's milk.
 - Livestock shall never be fed grain or grain by-products.
 - Livestock shall never be fed feed containing animal by-products.
 - Routine mineral and vitamin supplementation may be included in the feeding regimen.
- Livestock shall never have been confined in an intensive feeding system for the purpose of production.
- Livestock shall have continuous access to pasture from birth to slaughter.
- Supplementary feed derived from forage or crop residue not containing grains, can be fed to Livestock. These can be in any form including pellets or cubes.
- Other roughage sources may also be included as acceptable feed sources.

12.2.1 Additional requirements for Australian suppliers

- Refer to the member company requirements for a list of supplements banned under the grass fed claim.

12.3 Free Range

- Livestock shall have continuous access to pasture from birth to slaughter.
 - Livestock shall have year-round access to pasture and shall have never been confined in a feedlot.
 - Livestock shall only be removed from pasture for routine husbandry and management activities (e.g., weighing, drafting, marking, weaning, shearing, treatment, and preparation for transport). The time off pasture shall be for the shortest period possible.

12.3.1 Additional requirements for Australian suppliers

- Paddock shall not be grazed to the extent that the paddocks have become adversely affected.
 - Paddocks shall be maintained at more than 75% coverage of an eligible forage at a height of 50mm.

12.4 Antibiotic Free

- Livestock shall be raised without antibiotics from birth to slaughter.
 - Livestock shall never be treated with antibiotics either administered orally or injected.
 - Livestock shall never have been fed feed containing antibiotics or ionophores.
 - Livestock water supply shall not have been dosed with antibiotics.
- Where antibiotics have been administered, the livestock shall be identified on the suppliers' records and not supplied as eligible for the raising claims.

12.4.1 Additional requirements for a Canadian Antibiotic Free Claim

- Livestock shall never have been administered antibiotics in their lifetime by topical application.
- No antibiotics shall be fed to a lactating mother feeding a calf or lamb being supplied as eligible for the raising claim.

12.5 GMO Free

- Genetically modified feed ingredients shall not be fed to livestock, this includes:
 - Manufactured feed.
 - Grain.
 - Imported feed.

12.6 Natural Grain

- Only natural grains shall be fed in a balanced mix along with approved supplements and excluding banned supplements and substances. Natural grains include barley, corn, millet, oats, rice, rye, sorghum, triticale, and wheat.
- Feeds shall not include, at therapeutic or sub-therapeutic levels, any antibiotics, ionophores or antiprotozoal agents.
- Feeds shall not contain, or have been in contact with, animal products excluding fish oils and milk products.
- Feeds shall not contain waste products from catering or cooking activities.

13.0 References

- Food Safety and Inspection Service (2019). *Labelling Guideline on Documentation Needed to Substantiate Animal Raising Claims for Label Submissions*.
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- Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines for Sheep, Version 1 Endorsed January 2016
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