

ANIMAL WELFARE 101

OVERVIEW

Many outdoor products contain materials that came from animals, including down & feathers (from geese and ducks), wool (from sheep), and leather (from cows and other animals such as pigs and goats). Safeguarding the welfare of these animals is an important part of operating responsibly and living up to consumer expectations.

The “**five freedoms**” are an important concept in the realm of animal welfare, as they define the key components of animal welfare and form the foundation of many animal welfare programs. The five freedoms include (1) freedom from hunger and thirst; (2) freedom from discomfort; (3) freedom from pain, injury or disease; (4) freedom to express normal behavior; and (5) freedom from fear and distress.

In addition to general animal welfare practices, key animal welfare impacts that are particularly relevant in the outdoor industry include **live-plucking** and **force-feeding** of ducks and geese, and **mulesing** of sheep.

The following checklist provides steps to get started in identifying leading animal welfare practices and establishing an effective animal welfare program for your organization.

FOUNDATIONAL ACTIONS: CHECKLIST

- ☐ Identify material suppliers who are certified in leading animal welfare standards such as the Responsible Wool Standard (RWS), Global Traceable Down Standard (TDS), or Responsible Down Standard (RDS), e.g.: <http://responsibledown.org/for-business/find-certified-companies/>
 - These standards are designed to protect animals’ five freedoms and address other key supply chain impacts. They also include a consumer-facing product label (for RDS & RWS).
 - To use one of these consumer-facing product labels, the garment manufacturer must also be certified, e.g.: <http://responsibledown.org/for-business/find-certified-companies/all-companies-certified-to-the-responsible-down-standard/>. Additionally, brands who sell to retailers must also be certified for use of a consumer-facing product label.

- ☐ If your supplier is not certified to a leading animal welfare standard, encourage your suppliers to pursue certification and/or partner with them to ensure they have an effective animal welfare program and/or policies in place.
 - In some instances, this may require gaining a better understanding of your supply chain to identify where your materials come from and the stages they pass through during the manufacturing process.
 - Where your brand does not have a direct relationship with a raw materials supplier, you may need to communicate your expectations in writing and require that supply chain partners confirm their understanding in writing.
 - Requesting that suppliers share their animal welfare policy and provide ongoing assurance of the effectiveness of their program can help drive continuous improvement.
- ☐ Define your brand’s animal welfare policy or program in writing. Consider making the policy available publicly so your customers can access it.
 - Sharing information about your program builds trust and confidence in your brand and the efforts your brand takes to promote animal welfare. It also enables customers to make informed purchasing decisions.
 - Aligning your animal welfare program with a leading third-party certification can be an efficient and effective approach, since customers may already be familiar with the third-party program.
- ☐ Explore opportunities to continuously elevate your materials sustainability practices by reviewing OIA’s *Getting Started Guide for Brands in Sustainable Materials*, utilizing the OIA Sustainability Bootcamps, or partnering with another credible sustainability consulting firm.
 - For more information about the upcoming OIA Sustainability Bootcamps, please email sustainability@outdoorindustry.org.

1. <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20121010012427/http://www.fawc.org.uk/freedoms.htm>

KEY RESOURCES

For more information about key impacts in materials and down and wool supply chains, visit:	OIA Getting Started Guide for Brands in Sustainable Materials: https://outdoorindustry.org/sustainable-business/preferred-materials OIA Animal Welfare Toolkit: https://outdoorindustry.org/sustainable-business/animal-welfare Textile Exchange Down Learning Center (for definitions, impacts & opportunities): https://textileexchange.org/learning-center/preferred-down/ Textile Exchange Wool Learning Center (for definitions, impacts & opportunities): https://textileexchange.org/learning-center/preferred-wool/
To learn more about adopting leading animal welfare standards and related tools, visit:	Responsible Down Standard (RDS): http://responsibledown.org/for-business/tools-and-support/ Traceable Down Standard: http://www.nsf.org/newsroom/traceable-down-standard Responsible Wool Standard (RWS): http://responsiblewool.org/tools-and-support/
To get involved with an industry group on advancing animal welfare in leather supply chains, visit :	Textile Exchange Leather Roundtable: https://responsibleleather.org/