

PEOPLE FOR
THE ETHICAL
TREATMENT
OF ANIMALS

The Rt Hon Jonathan Reynolds MP
Secretary of State for Business and Trade
Department for Business and Trade

Dear Minister,

I am writing to urge a review and update of the *Footwear (Indication of Composition) Labelling Regulations 1995*, particularly the pictograms used to indicate material composition, to ensure they accurately reflect the origins of wool used in footwear.

Currently, there is a discrepancy in how footwear made from animal-derived materials is labelled. While leather and sheepskin are clearly marked with distinct, widely recognised symbols, wool—despite also being an animal product—is categorised under the ‘textile’ symbol. This icon, representing woven fabric, is commonly associated with plant-based or synthetic materials such as cotton, hemp, or polyester. Grouping wool under this symbol is misleading, as it obscures the fact that wool production, like leather and sheepskin, involves the exploitation and slaughter of animals.

Sheep endure significant suffering in the wool industry. Over recent years, PETA has released 15 exposés filmed across more than 150 wool industry facilities on four continents. Each investigation documented disturbing acts of cruelty. Lambs are routinely subjected to castration and tail docking without pain relief, and sheep were observed sustaining injuries, suffering fatal heart attacks, or having their necks broken during rough handling and shearing. Once deemed no longer profitable, many are shipped in crowded conditions to overseas abattoirs where they are often killed while still conscious. I invite you to view the evidence firsthand at www.woolfacts.com.

With shoes containing wool widely available to UK consumers, accurate labelling is critical. Many people choose products based on ethical considerations and environmental concerns, and they deserve transparency. It is worth noting that due to the energy consumed to make wool and the greenhouse gases the process emits, the Made-By Environmental Benchmark for Fibres rank wool as a “Class E” fibre – the worst category possible. If wool is grouped with humane and non-animal materials, it prevents consumers from making informed decisions aligned with their values.

For these reasons, I respectfully request that the regulations and associated guidance be updated so that wool is no longer represented by the textile symbol but instead by a symbol that clearly communicates its animal origin—such as the one currently used for leather.

Thank you for considering this important issue.

Yours sincerely,

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