



WHY USE IWTO CERTIFICATES?

ABOUT IWTO CERTIFICATES

Today, in the areas of the world where wool production is a serious business, objective measurement is a central part of the breeding, preparation, marketing and processing of wool. Its use in trading goes back more than a century, when scoured wool, tops and yarns in Europe were delivered by merchants to independent conditioning warehouses so that consignments could be weighed, hand sampled and the samples dried to determine agreed moisture regains and acceptable invoice weights for the transaction. However, it was the development of core testing in the USA after 1937 that made the representative sampling of bales of greasy or scoured wool possible for all locations, and the development of test methods, which were able to provide more accurate and precise estimates of the important value-determining characteristics of wool.

In the UK, WIRA and the British Wool Federation developed yield and fineness test methods, and both the USA and Europe established different processing and moisture tolerances to estimate commercial yields of fibre obtained from greasy wool. CSIRO in Australia developed manual pressure core equipment and with AWTA Ltd in Australia and NZWTA Ltd in New Zealand designed core testing equipment suitable for large volume testing.

The development of a common acceptable sampling and testing procedure became possible through IWTO. Although the organisation was established in 1930, it was not until 1965 that technical delegates at IWTO were able to agree on core testing processes, which became acceptable to the commercial delegates and are the basis of the methods used universally today. With the development of grab sampling and staple measurement tests in Australia, it was IWTO that enabled a common sampling and measurement process to be adopted for all the wool growing countries.

DEVELOPMENT OF IWTO TEST METHODS

Before any new test or new testing technology can be promoted to a new IWTO Test Specification or included in an existing Specification, there are a number of steps that must be taken.

One or more technical papers, presented to IWTO, usually foreshadow a new test method or a change to an existing method. Researchers in one or more organisations who are developing a new measurement technology or developing a new application of some existing technology usually present these papers. This enables discussion with and questions from their peers in the wool science community. As commercial participants in the industry are also free to attend the technical sessions of IWTO, they too can participate in this discussion and contribute a commercial viewpoint. In any event, the deliberations of the technical committees are always reported to the commercial sessions of IWTO Conferences so the opportunity for further commercial input is available.

Eventually the scientists reach a point where they are convinced that the new measurement technology is commercially useful, and is commercially viable. Usually they will then present a Draft Test Method, for consideration and further discussion. As part of this process, round trials are conducted, involving at least 3 laboratories, to determine the precision of the new method.

The Draft Test Method and all the supporting data is again discussed and reviewed, both technically and commercially, and may pass through this cycle several times before the Draft is accepted as an IWTO Specification.

REQUIREMENTS FOR IWTO CERTIFICATES

IWTO also has a requirement that each IWTO Specification must have an associated set of regulations. These, in the main, set out definitions and rules covering the sampling and testing and documentation requirements that must be met, before an IWTO Certificate can be issued. They also establish procedures for initiating and conducting retesting of lots or consignments certified using the particular IWTO Specification, in the event of a claim or a dispute.

WTAE is a strong supporter of this process. The Company understands that Certification must be built upon confidence and integrity. IWTO Certificates are today used routinely for the exchange of ownership of wool, and more and more the vendors and purchasers are relying upon them rather than any subjective valuation. This development could only have occurred in a climate of confidence in the integrity of these Certificates.

SUPPORTING THE INTEGRITY AND IMPARTIALITY OF IWTO CERTIFICATES

Standardised Test Methods are not the only factors that create confidence in IWTO Certificates. Sampling integrity, guaranteed by WTAE by a policy of supervised or independent sampling, is also fundamental. But integrity must also exist within the testing process as well. How does the industry achieve this?

IWTO plays an integral role in world standardisation of raw wool and wool textile methods and techniques for wool testing, including the licensing of laboratories to issue IWTO Certificates. The licensing process requires Test Houses to demonstrate that they have the technical capability to perform the testing to the requirements of the Specifications. IWTO Licensed Test Houses are required to gain accreditation to the quality requirements established by their National Accreditation bodies. WTAE has this accreditation.

Another factor underpinning the integrity of IWTO Certificates issued by WTAE is independence. The Company is not a party to the exchange of ownership. This impartiality is critical in ensuring that neither the vendor nor the purchaser can have any influence on the test results that would favour either of them in the transaction.

THE IMPORTANCE OF QUALITY CONTROL

In themselves are these things sufficient? We believe not. Integrity in testing requires a system of quality control. The accreditation system does require Test Houses to implement in-house quality control systems. However, WTAE believes that measuring performance against other Test Houses is also critically important.

To this end, the New Zealand Wool Testing Authority Ltd (NZWTA Ltd), Wool Testing Bureau South Africa (WTBSA) and AWTA Ltd in Australia established the Independent Laboratories Round Trial Group (ILRT), which organises twice weekly round trials between the member laboratories. While not yet a full member, WTAE is a regular participant in these trials. It is the only raw wool laboratory in Europe that benchmarks its performance against the largest raw wool testing laboratories in the world.

WHY USE IWTO CERTIFICATES?

IWTO Certification is critical in guaranteeing integrity in wool trading, particularly where ownership changes hands several times. It is supported by:

- Scientific rigour in developing new test methods or enhancing existing methods
- Regulations concerning sampling, testing, documentation, retesting and dispute resolution
- Laboratory accreditation – you can check if a laboratory is licensed to issue IWTO Certificates

FURTHER INFORMATION

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