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Championing the benefits of crossbred wool to the world

Telling the story of wool is one of the keys to its successful resurgence as the global fibre of choice, says Wools of New Zealand.

For this reason, the grower owned wool company has launched its new 12-part 'wool benefits' marketing programme, aimed at re-introducing the world to the sustainable and renewable fibre.

Wools of New Zealand Executive Director Mark Shadbolt said the recently launched programme had resonated with local and international customers alike. "The messages are simple, premised on the fundamentals of style, people and planet, backed by research, to give front line retailers and others throughout the supply chain the confidence in promoting crossbred wool as a truly sustainable, naturally occurring fibre."

The creativity of the approach was recognised with a flooring innovation award for marketing this month at this year's National Flooring Innovation Awards at Harrogate in the UK.

Mr Shadbolt said recognition in a key market like the UK was a great start. "British consumers are the highest per capita consumers of wool carpets in the world so it is important that we reiterate to the retail sector that this is a key focus for Wools of New Zealand.

"On a wider scale, there has been a significant increase in demand for certified wool and fully traceable products from brands looking for a trust mark for consumers so Wools of New Zealand wool ticks those boxes," he said.

The marketing material and initiative also has appeal with wool growers. West Otago grower Lloyd Brensell, who runs 41,000 stock units on his 10,500 hectare property, said sheep farmers have been looking for something to happen with the marketing of wool for some time. Three years ago, wool from his Fernvale property at Moa Flat sold for an average \$6 a kilogram. This year around half of that sales price was achieved.

"This is an exciting initiative for the promotion of crossbred wool. I have finally been shown something that will inform the general public about the attributes of wool and we need to continue distributing material of this kind and getting it in front of consumers."

Mr Brensell said part of the problem was the public's lack of appreciation of the natural qualities of the fibre. "People simply don't understand wool and its qualities. We get a lot of negative publicity about the perceived effects of our operations on the environment, yet here we are producing a natural and sustainable product that will not take years to break down. Government is very vocal around plastic use and plastic waste, what we should also be shouting about on the environmental side are the natural products that our farmers produce."

Due to the integrity and sustainability of the wool, Wools of New Zealand has also been given preferred supplier status by leading UK retail group John Lewis, a significant retail partner for leading carpet manufacturer Ulster carpets.

Andrew Gicquel, Retail Sales Manager at Ulster Carpets, said that they had worked in partnership with Wools of New Zealand for a number of years, notably to develop the popular Open Spaces Auckland, Queenstown and Wellington Stripe ranges.

“It can be overwhelming for retailers to communicate the extensive range of benefits offered by wool but this marketing program has made the process much easier and more effective. Combined with our own initiatives, this can only help create a better understanding of the many attributes and benefits of wool, providing retail staff and, ultimately, consumers with more confidence around selecting and buying wool-rich carpets.”

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