

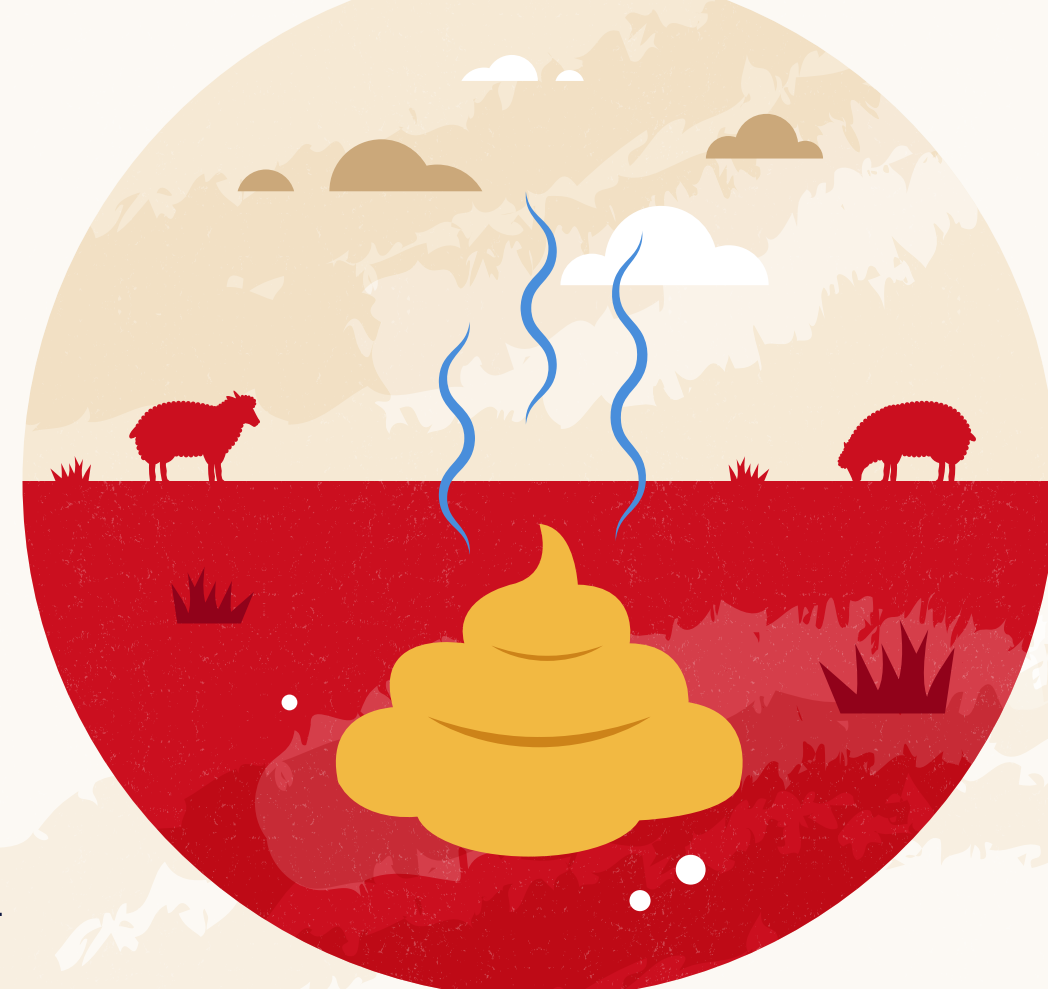
THE ECOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF WOOL

Many people think naturally occurring materials are better than synthetic fibres for the planet. But as this infographic shows, in addition to involving horrific cruelty to animals, **wool production is extremely damaging to the environment.**

CLIMATE CHANGE:

The most significant impact of wool farming on the environment is its contribution to climate change:

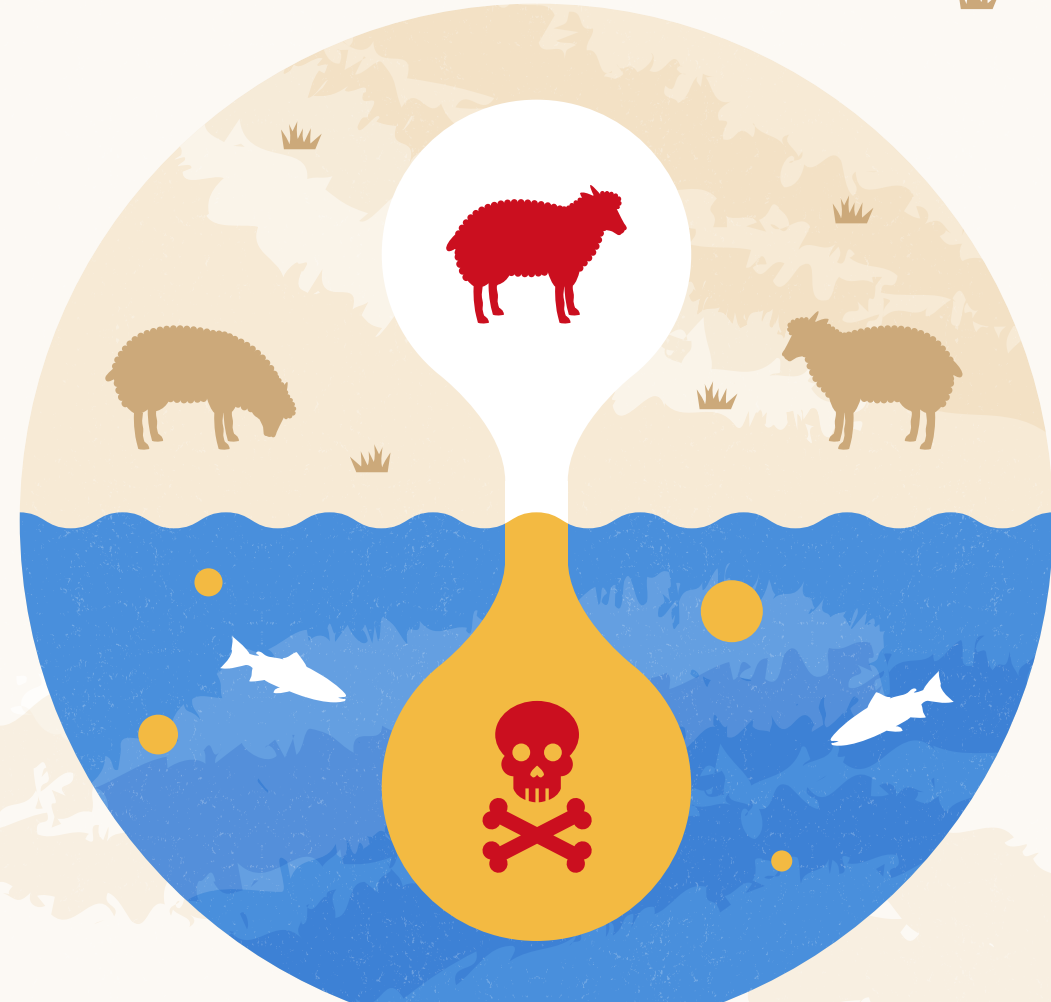
- ! Sheep are second only to cows in the global production of methane, a potent greenhouse gas.
- ! Over the last 250 years, the concentration of methane in the atmosphere has increased by 151% worldwide.
- ! In New Zealand, methane emitted by animals – primarily sheep – accounts for over 90% of the country's total methane emissions.



POLLUTION

Wool farming can have a serious detrimental effect on the surrounding land, air, and water:

- ! The enormous flocks of sheep bred by the wool industry produce huge amounts of manure, which pollutes the water, land, and air.
- ! This faecal waste also contaminates water with bacteria.



SHEEP DIP

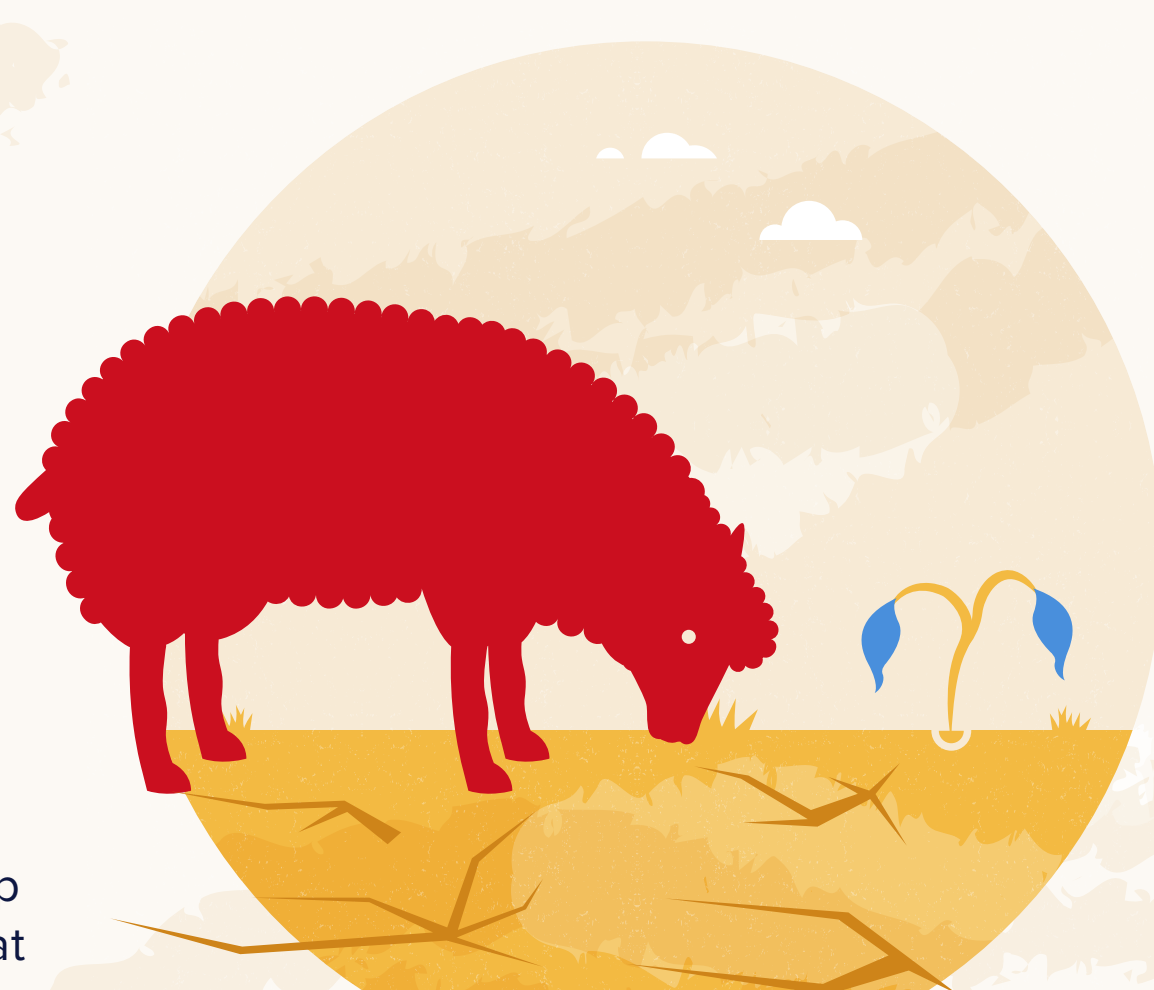
Sheep “dip”, a toxic liquid used to rid sheep of parasites, is difficult to dispose of safely and commonly ends up in local waterways.

In one incident, just one cupful of used sheep dip (which contained cypermethrin, a noxious chemical) was dumped into a river, killing 1,200 fish downstream.

DESERTIFICATION

Pollution isn't the only way that the wool industry damages the land – forested areas are cleared to make room for sheep, with devastating consequences:

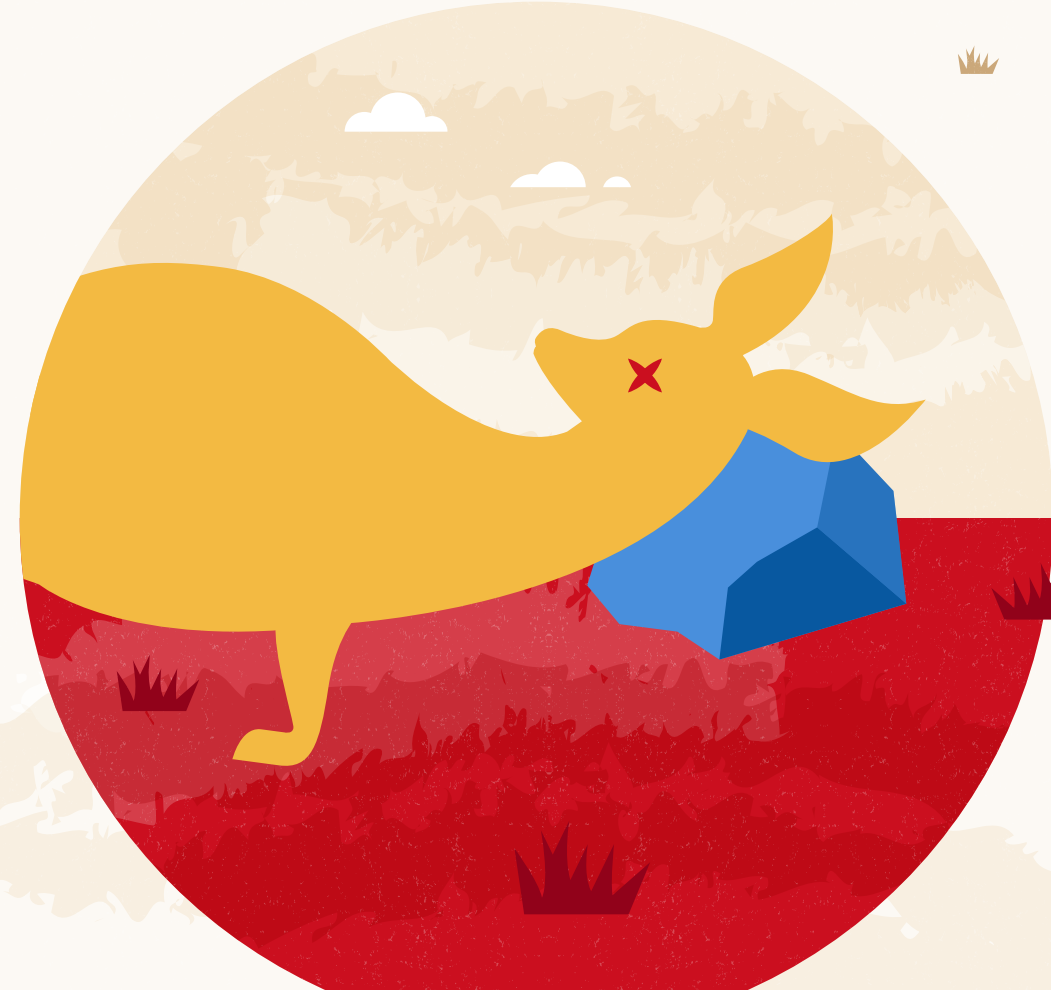
- ! Sheep grazing alters the vegetation and causes soil erosion, resulting in the formation of heavily eroded areas known as *badlands*.
- ! In Patagonia, Argentina, widespread sheep farming led to such severe soil erosion that it triggered a desertification process that currently threatens an estimated 93% of land in the region.



WILDLIFE CULLING

Wool farmers commonly try to protect their profits by using lethal measures against local wildlife:

- ! In Australia, many landowners kill kangaroos, who are considered “pests” because it's believed that they compete with sheep for resources.
- ! In the US, farmers and the federal government slaughter millions of coyotes every year to prevent them from preying on farmed animals like sheep.



CRUELTY TO SHEEP

The wool industry also inflicts a great deal of suffering on the animals it exploits:

- ! PETA affiliates have released exposés of nearly 100 wool-industry operations across four continents – including in the UK – that show sheep being mutilated, abused, and even skinned alive.
- ! Eyewitnesses have documented that workers kick, punch, and stamp on sheep to restrain them for shearing.
- ! Shearers tend to work recklessly, leaving large, bloody wounds on sheep's bodies.
- ! Farmers commonly cut off lambs' tails and castrate male sheep, all without any painkillers.
- ! Industry schemes such as the “Responsible Wool Standard” haven't reduced or prevented suffering – they've simply created a veil for the wool industry to hide its cruel practices behind.



COMPARING WOOL TO OTHER FIBRES

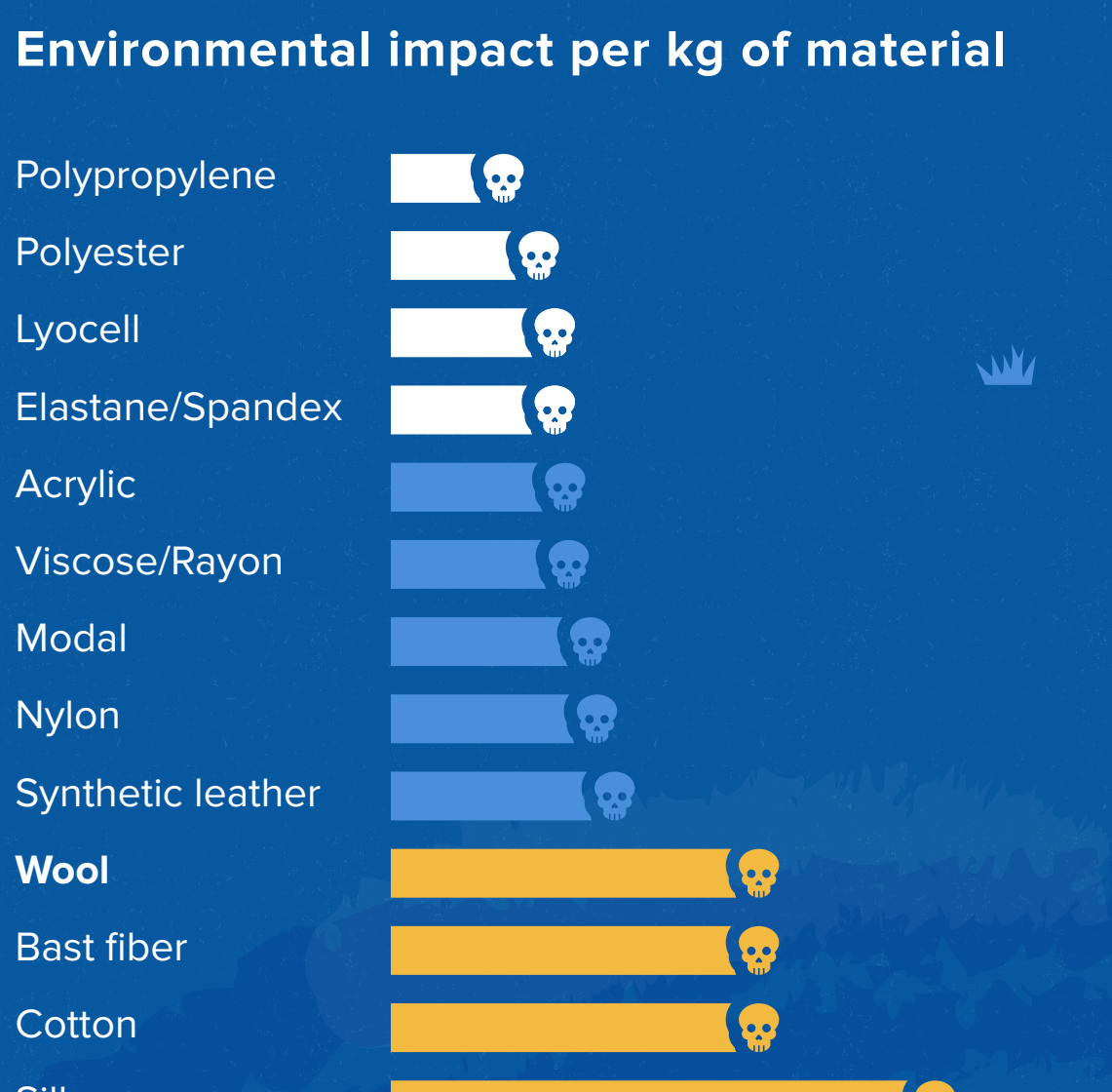
Wool's negative impact on major environmental issues is worse than that of most other materials:

There are at *least* nine fibres that are more sustainable than wool. And the data in the chart don't even account for many of the kinds of environmental harm caused by wool production that are discussed elsewhere in this infographic (such as the impact on wildlife).

The production of animal-based fibres is always unsustainable because animal agriculture is a major cause of climate change.

Chart source: Global Fashion Agenda

Environmental impact per kg of material



THE FUTURE OF WOOL IS VEGAN

In 2019, there's simply no need for animal-derived wool. The wool industry is trying to survive by pointing to a false dichotomy between wool and synthetics. But in reality, many synthetic fabrics have a lesser environmental impact than wool, and numerous eco-friendly, natural alternatives to wool are available, including the following:

- ✓ Hemp
- ✓ Organic cotton
- ✓ Nullarbor (made from coconut)
- ✓ Soy-bean fibre
- ✓ Nylon 6.6 (made from glucose and other renewable sources)
- ✓ Monocel (made from bamboo pulp)
- ✓ Woocoa (made from coconut and hemp)
- ✓ Tencel (made from wood pulp)