

HEMA animal welfare policy

For some products we use material that comes from animals. At HEMA we believe it is important that animals are treated with respect and that animal-based products have as little negative impact as possible on people, animals and the environment. We strive to comply with the international principles of the *Five Domains*¹, which provide direction on, among other things, good nutrition, a comfortable living environment, health and the opportunity for natural behaviour. We recognise that existing certifications contribute to this, but do not automatically guarantee that these welfare goals are fully achieved. That is why we will continue to work on transparency in our chain in the coming years, in order to determine where we already support these goals and where improvement is possible.

Relation to other policies

How we deal with risks related to animal welfare is set out in this animal welfare policy. In the [material policy](#) we explain why we use certain materials and how we do this responsibly. In the nature policy we share how we counter deforestation and pollution of nature in the supply chain of various materials.

Animal-based materials

The use of materials originating from exotic, endangered or genetically wild animal species is not permitted. HEMA follows international guidelines such as the CITES -convention and the IUCN Red List. We use only the following materials:

- wool from sheep;
- wool from cashmere goats, mohair goats and angora goats;
- leather from cattle;
- down and feathers;
- meat, dairy and fish.

All animal-based materials and products not explicitly mentioned above are not permitted.

Wool

We are aware of the problem surrounding mulesing of **Merino** sheep. Mulesing is the cutting away of parts of the skin around the rear of a sheep. This is done for hygienic reasons, but is not animal-friendly. From 2027, the products in which we use Merino wool will be RWS-certified (Responsible Wool Standard). This means they come from farms that set high animal welfare requirements, in line with the *Five Domains*, and that explicitly prohibit mulesing. A small portion of the Merino wool yarns we use is not RWS-certified, but is sourced in areas where mulesing is prohibited.

Other **sheep wool** we like to source locally, for example from the Texel sheep. When the sheep wool is of foreign origin, we require RWS certification on the product from 2028.

In the production of **mohair** wool, angora goats are sheared. Rough shearing can lead to injuries, and without their coat they lack natural insulation. That is why we only want to source mohair yarns that are RMS-certified (Responsible Mohair Standard). This means that farms meet strict animal welfare requirements in line with the *Five Domains*, such as protection from the weather and careful shearing. If the entire chain from farm to product is certified, this is made visible with the RMS logo. By 2028, we want to sell only certified products containing mohair wool.

In the production of **cashmere** wool, cashmere goats are plucked, combed out or sheared twice a year to collect the fine undercoat. This process carries risks: if animals are handled carelessly, this can lead to stress, injuries or removing too much coat, leaving goats to suffer the cold. Our goal is to source only fully Good Cashmere Standard-certified cashmere products by 2028. This standard sets strict animal welfare requirements in line with the Five Domains.

¹ [Animal Welfare Assessment Framework - FOUR PAWS - Animal Welfare Organisation](#)

We do not sell products containing **angora wool**, due to concerns about animal suffering in its production.

Finally, HEMA recognises the use of recycled wool (Global Recycled Standard (GRS)) as best practice. Although GRS itself is not an animal welfare standard, the use of recycled down and feathers prevents the need for new down from animals. This indirectly contributes to animal welfare.

Fur

We do not sell fur because animals are often kept in small cages for it, unable to display natural behaviour. They are also often killed in painful and stressful ways purely for their coat. Our choice is recognised by the international Fur Free Retailer -programme, which identifies retailers committed to a fur-free policy.

Down and feathers

We use only recycled down and feathers (Global Recycled Standard (GRS)). Although GRS itself is not an animal welfare standard, using recycled down and feathers prevents the need for new down from animals. This indirectly contributes to animal welfare. The use of 'new' down and feathers is not permitted.

Leather

We do not sell products originating from exotic or endangered animal species. This means we limit ourselves to leather from cattle, sheep or pigs. We use only leather that is a by-product of the meat industry. For leather, there is currently no industry-wide label that independently safeguards animal welfare across the entire chain from farm to end product. There is little visibility into the chain, which makes improvement a challenge. We continuously investigate plant-based alternatives to leather and consciously make the choice to limit the use of leather in the HEMA assortment to a few product groups with a long lifespan.

Meat

In meat production there is a risk that animals have insufficient space and stimulation to display natural behaviour. That is why we choose a clear minimum: all the meat we sell is certified with at least one star Beter Leven or an [equivalent label](#) for meat that does not originate from the Netherlands. Only types of meat that are excluded from the Beter Leven label (see the prerequisites for Beter Leven Products in the BLK regulations) or foreign meat specialities can be exempted from this requirement after approval by the unit manager.

With the Beter Leven Label, animals get more square metres and a better living environment thanks to daylight and, for example, bedding. With this we work on better animal welfare and choose production systems with less pressure on nature and the environment. At the same time, we recognise that one star Beter Leven does not fully meet the Five Domains of animal welfare in every respect. For example, the space is not yet sufficient to fully display natural behaviour. For us that is not the end point, and we continuously investigate whether we can take a further step in this. We know that animal production always has an impact. We are working on a future-proof assortment with a better balance between the sale of animal-based and plant-based proteins.

Fish

We distinguish between wild and farmed fish. We sell only farmed fish with the ASC label (Aquaculture Stewardship Council). In this way we set requirements for the welfare of farmed fish. There are standards for sufficient living space, good water quality and limiting stress. In addition, ASC pays attention to responsible feed, the prevention of diseases and limiting the use of medicines and antibiotics.

For wild fish we use the MSC label (Marine Stewardship Council) as the minimum for sustainable fisheries management. We are aware that animal welfare is included less explicitly in it. However, it does require, for example, that catching fish does not harm other fish.

Dairy products

For cows in the dairy sector there is a risk that they spend too little time outside and have insufficient space to rest and graze. Our dairy products are organic or Weidegang (pasture grazing) certified. Organic animal husbandry gives animals more space and access to the outdoors, allowing them to display natural behaviour. The animals receive organic feed and may not be treated preventively with antibiotics. The Weidegang label requires that the animals are in the meadow for at least 120 days per year, 6 hours per day.

Cosmetics

At HEMA we believe it is important that cosmetics are safe for people and respectful of animals. That is why we do not test cosmetic products or ingredients on animals, neither during production nor on the end product. All our cosmetics comply with the European regulation that prohibits animal testing, regardless of where the product is made or sold.

Cosmetic ingredients used by a company must comply with the requirements of the REACH regulation, which is legislation in the area of chemical safety. This sometimes requires additional research into raw materials. Within this legislation, no animal testing is required to demonstrate the safety of an ingredient for humans. Any additional required research mostly concerns small organisms used to check whether substances are safe for the environment (ecotoxicity). On the website of the [Dutch Cosmetics Association](#) you can find more information about this.

The fact that beauty products are cruelty-free does not automatically mean that they are also vegan. However, from 2026 our beauty products (make-up, facial and body care) will be vegan.

Transparency

Each year we map out our progress on labels per material. This way we can monitor whether we are actually meeting the requirements we have set.

Are you worried about a possible breach of our animal welfare policy? Then you can send your report to sustainability@hema.nl. Your report will be treated confidentially and we will not share your identity with others, inside or outside HEMA. More information on how we deal with complaints and reports can be found [here](#).