

# Wool in Schools

## Fact sheet

### History of New Zealand wool

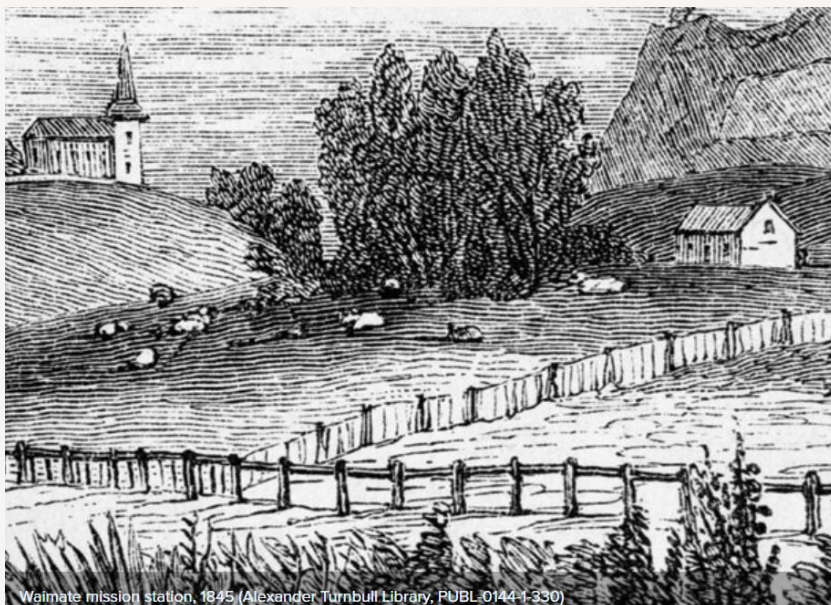
Wool has been synonymous with New Zealand since settlers made shore over 200 years ago. Yet, New Zealand's wool history has not always been plain sailing.



### The early years

During his second visit to New Zealand in 1773, Captain James Cook released a ewe and a ram in Queen Charlotte Sound. Unfortunately, they only survived for a few days because they were in very poor condition.

More sheep were introduced by early settlers in subsequent years and by the 1850's, sheep farming was well established and playing an important role in New Zealand's economy.



Waimate mission station, 1845 (Alexander Turnbull Library, PUBL-0144-1-330)



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### Symbol of a nation

From the early years until the 1980's, sheep symbolised New Zealand as a nation. The backbone of New Zealand's economy centred on meat and wool exports. The sheep population peaked at just over 70 million in 1982 but by 2020, numbers had dropped to 26 million after profits declined. Consumers became avid users of cheaper alternatives to wool such as synthetic carpets and polyester fabrics. This left wool in a bad way and as the value of the fibre dropped, growers were forced to move to more profitable farming practices.

### A wool renaissance

Due to global influences such as the Covid-19 pandemic, ongoing trade negotiations and international environmental agreements, people are moving back to natural and renewable fibres such as wool. This renaissance in wool is seeing a growth in demand which is beginning to increase the value of wool again.



Wool is on the rise!

