

Wool is produced by the sheep every year and offers opportunities to create greater income from your existing flock. There are a number of ways in which this can be achieved. They are outlined here with links  for more information .

For an explanation of some of the technical terms of wool, this link will take you to the British Coloured Sheep Association.

You will leave this website. To return, use your backbrowser.

www.bcsba.org.uk/fleece/technical-terms/html



The Fleece

The good deal of the value of the fleece lies in its quality and the skill of the shearer. It should be clean of hay and straw, bits of dung (dags) and, with a good shearer, there should be minimal second, short, cuts. As the animal ages so the fineness of the fleece reduces.

For more detailed information about the quality of fleece, follow the link:



Sell the Fleece

You can sell the fleece to the Wool Marketing Board, they have pickup points throughout the country. Or you can find local spinners who would make good use of your fleece.

There are a number of regulations about this. For details follow the link.



Processing by Someone Else

There are a number of firms and individuals who will process your fleece and produce yarn, cloth or finished articles for you to sell.

DIY

You can process your own wool, and although time consuming, if you can do it well, it will add value to your fleece. You will need to sort, clean and wash the fleece, then card it and either spin or make felt. These skills are nurtured by various organisations who would be only too willing to teach and give advice.



The Fleece

Back to intro



Remove 'dags' or dung soiled fleece at rear end and on belly.



Breech wool

The wool on the back legs tend to have hairs in it rather than pure wool.



Quality of wool

There are four elements in the quality of the wool.

Length of Staple, basically how long the fibre is, usually 4 inches or 10 cm in Jacobs

The Character: the general appearance of the fleece: the crimp (the waviness), the handle (does it feel soft or harsh/wiry), and the colour, the black and white being a breed characteristic.

The Strength: A sound fleece will not break when a thin strand of fibre is tugged firmly. 'Tender' fleece will.

Purity: this is freedom from the hair like fibres called kemp.

Preparing a Fleece

If you are using the wool to make a rug then you can use all of the fleece, but if you are making cloth then the fleece with kemp should not be used as it will give a scratchy feel.

Tip: Wash the sheep in rainwater before shearing to raise the nap, preferably on a dry windy day to ensure they are thoroughly dry prior to shearing. Avoid exposing to hay and straw if possible

Shearing. Make a note of which sheep the fleece is from, more valuable lambs wool as distinct from an old sheep.

Trim the dags and remove the straw / hay

Store in a paper sack in a cool dry, vermin proof place

The fleece should keep for a year, but if it gets damp then it will rot and smell mouldy or sour. Time to compost!

The Fleece - selling

Back to intro



Local Craft Centres

Throughout the country there are a number of suppliers of wool and wool products. They can be interested in your fleece. Contact and take one along and they will soon tell you about your fleece. This is also a good way to find out more about the nature of your wool



Raw Fleece

Spinners and Felters

The Guild of Spinners, Weavers and Dyers has numerous local branches of enthusiastic workers with wool as well as other fabrics. Visit their web site to discover the contacts for your local branch. Members are very helpful and are often interested in acquiring wool, again, if it is good quality.

E-bay

Yes you can buy raw fleece on e-bay, at very interesting prices. There is scope here for selling

Ravelry

Ravelry do a classified sales listing, including in the UK, which could offer possibilities. See contacts.

The Wool Marketing Board



Technically:

If you own 4 or more sheep then the wool technically belongs to the Wool Marketing Board (WMB) and you should have it collected or taken to a collection point.

There are exceptions, primarily in you intend to work the wool in a 'non-mechanical' craft process then you can apply for exemption which is usually granted up to about 3000 kgm

If you sell it to the WMB, then you will be paid according to the breed and the quality: you will receive the money in two parts. For details, including the current prices, see the WMB web site. It is generally not the most lucrative outlet for the small sheep keeper.



DIY

Back to intro



There is an accepted series of processes and like all such work, these are adapted to the individual style and technique.

Clean raw wool.



Felting

A vast world of ideas



Carding.

You can hand card, comb or use a drum carder. The first two are a labour of love and quite hard work. The drum carder can be quite expensive if you are doing a small quantity of wool.



Spinning

You can use a drop spindle or a spinning wheel. Again the first is laborious and the second more expensive but much quicker and wheels last for years if cared for.

Peg loom

Use raw or carded wool to create a simple rug.



Weaving

There is a huge range of possibilities here from simple peg looms to complex professional ones.

Knitting.

A traditional and straightforward method of creating garments from yarn.

Felting

Back to intro

