



Choosing a Good Fleece

Sheep's wool has clothed man since ancient times. And with the variety of sheep breeds today, hand spinners and fiber enthusiasts alike have the opportunity to work with many different fleeces for a wide range of uses.

When choosing a fleece, look for the following qualities:

- Evenness of staple length and crimp throughout the fleece.
- Consistent handle (or feel) throughout the fleece.
- Strong fibers that resist being pulled apart.
- Well skirted and clean as possible (avoid excessive vegetable matter, bedding, manure or dirt).
- Luster (in the luster breeds).

Avoid the following fleece faults:

- Fleece that breaks (could be due to weather, stress, or poor nutrition).
- Cotting or felting on the sheep.
- Tips of fleece (the uncut, outer end) should not be dry, tender, or glued together with dirt.
- Excessive second cuts.
- Staining due to bacterial growth, wool rot, ink from marking harnesses, urine, grass, or feces.
- Fleece that is dry, brittle or excessively damp.
- Scurf, or dandruff (caused by mites).

