

Choosing a Fleece

The Ideal Fleece: *The one you've fallen in love with and can't resist!*

- ✓ Is it suitable for your intended use?
- ✓ Is it (mostly) free from faults?
- ✓ Does it look good (bright, pleasing to eye, and the right color)?
- ✓ Does it feel good (the hand is appropriate to sheep breed and fleece is not too dry or too greasy)?
- ✓ Is it well skirted and an appropriate weight?
- ✓ Is it affordable?

Wool Grades and Their Uses

Wool Type	Count *	Diameter (microns)	Staple Length (inches)	Crimp per inch	Examples	Some Uses
Fine	60s+	17-23	2-7	10-30	Merino Cormo Rambouillet	Baby garments Next-to-the-skin garments
Medium	48s to 60s	22-34	3-6	6-11	Corriedale Columbia	General Purpose Knitting Gloves, mittens, hats, sweaters
Long	38s to 48s	31-41	5-10	1-6	Romney Lincoln Cotswold	Outerwear Rugs Upholstery
Down	----	24-34	Less than 4	Disorganized	Dorset Hampshire Shropshire Suffolk	Resists felting Socks Everyday wear
Coarse or Double Coated	Coarse outer coat Fine down		8-12	0- ½	Karakul Scottish Blackface Icelandic	Rugs Hard-wearing outer garments

* Also known as Bradford count. Refers to the number of 560 yard skeins that can be spun from one pound of fleece.

Things to Think about Before Buying a Fleece

Does it *Speak to You*?

Do you have an *Intended Use*?

Do you have an idea about the *Type of Yarn* you will make?

What kind of *Fiber Preparation* will you do?

- Process it yourself (Wash, Flick or Card or Comb)
- Send it to a mill

Fleece Faults to Consider

Uncontrollable Fleece Problems: Genetics

Uniformity/staple variation: changes in length and/or fiber type throughout the fleece

Color variation: may be a desirable characteristic

Controllable Fleece Problems: Sheep Care

Cleanliness: Vegetable matter / Dirt and manure / Parasites or insects

Tenderness/breaks in the fiber

Cotting or matting

Weathering/tippiness

Staining or yolking

Second cuts