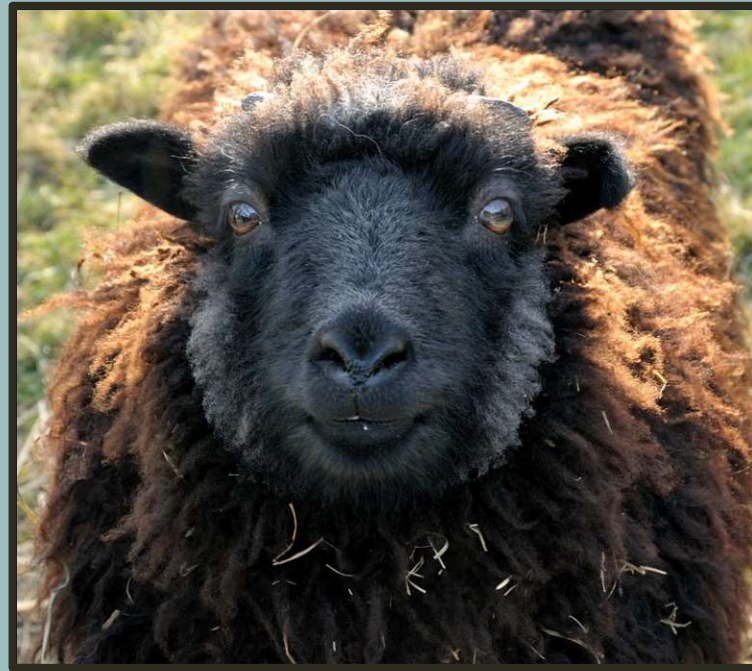


BASICS OF WOOL PROCESSING



Learn to process your own wool:
from washing and drying to carding
and combing.

FLEECE CHARACTERISTICS

How does it look?

color?

length?

crimp (tight, loose, or none)?

veg contamination?



FLEECE CHARACTERISTICS

- breeding markers?
- dung tags?
- second cuts?
- moths or other bugs?
- scurf (dandruff)?



FLEECE CHARACTERISTICS



FLEECE CHARACTERISTICS

How does it feel?

greasy, or tacky?

staple length intact, or broken?

brittle tips?

- matted?
- fine-textured, medium, or coarse?

FLEECE CHARACTERISTICS



FLEECE CHARACTERISTICS

The qualities in the fleece you select will, to some degree, impact the way you'll need to process it.

Greasiness: high-grease fleeces will require washing at higher temps, and perhaps multiple washes.

Length: very long fleeces are difficult to card (unless they are cut). Better to use combs or flick card. Very short fibers cannot be combed very effectively, but work just fine on carders (hand or drum).

FLEECE CHARACTERISTICS

Color: if multicolored, do you want to blend for uniform color, or preserve the different shades?

Vegetable Matter (VM, or veg): some veg may be removed via hand-picking, but you'll get best result from combing.

Discoloration: can skirt out of fleece, or dye the wool.

Matted or weak tips: will require skirting out or trimming of affected areas.

SKIRTING

Remove any kemp and/or hairy fiber, dung tags, matted wool, second cuts, wool less than 1.5 in length (you're probably not going to want to spin anything shorter than that).



SORTING

Sort the remainder into categories (good, better, best) if you want to use these different grades of wool for different things.



WASHING

- **Cold Water bath.** Effective at releasing dirt. Will not remove lanolin. Much like leaving wool out to be washed by rainwater. If a fleece is really dirty, this is sometimes a good pre-wash.
- **Fermented Suint Bath:** same cold water bath used over many times. Fermented suint substance from the wool in previous baths takes on detergent-like role in degreasing and cleaning fiber.
- **Hot Water** (loose, in bags, or layered)

COLD WATER BATH

Effective at releasing dirt.

Will not remove lanolin.

Much like leaving wool out to be washed by rainwater.

If a fleece is really dirty, this is sometimes a good pre-wash.

FERMENTED SUINT BATH

Suint (soo-int, or swint): dried perspiration of sheep deposited in the wool and rich in potassium salts

- Same cool water bath used over many times.
- Fermented suint substance from wool in previous baths takes on detergent-like role in degreasing and cleaning fiber.
- Very stinky
- May spoil in hot weather.
- If the bath is very strong, may damage fibers if left in too long.
- Resources: <https://mkburns.com/fsm/>
- <https://www.ravelry.com/discuss/fiber-prep/685730/1-25>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u2ze7rpWORE>

HOT WATER BATH

- How to organize wool for washing? Range of techniques from “not at all” to “carefully placing individual locks into little bundles”

Water Temp? 120-140 (some say hotter)

Cleanser? dishwashing soap (nothing with bleach or enzymes, though), wool wash, Orvis paste? Many specialty products out there for washing wool, but they can be significantly more expensive. **Never** use anything with bleach in it on wool. Bleach will damage wool.

HOT WATER BATH (PROCESS)

Submerge wool. No agitation. Swooshing around a smidge to ensure water penetration is ok.

Soak for 20-40 minutes

Pour off wash water

Rinse in progressively cooler water until rinse water runs clear (or almost clear).
No dramatic temperature changes (may cause felting)

HOT WATER BATH (PROCESS, 2)

Rinse again. Most fleeces will require a couple of rinses, but most will come clean with one wash. You might need to repeat if fleece is very greasy (or your water wasn't hot enough).

Note to Septic Owners: **You do not want to send a bunch of lanolin into your septic system.** While you might not wash enough fleece for this to ever become an issue, a large amount of lanolin re-solidifying in your plumbing and or septic tank might be a real problem. Most of your dirt and grease is going to come out in the wash water. Water from subsequent rinses probably won't hurt anything.

DRYING



Spin as much water out first (washing machine works well), then dry in indirect sun (if you can find it this time of year!).

Do not handle too much while wet, as fibers are more easily broken. An old window screen works well to provide good airflow for faster drying.

PICKING

Opening locks, either

- manually (simply teasing locks apart) or
- by machine -swing picker (above) , box picker (below).

This will release some VM.

Mechanical picking may damage finer fibers, though.



CARDING

Carding is best for short to medium length fibers and is specifically called for in prepping fiber for “woolen” spinning.

Carders separate and align fibers, but do not screen out second cuts or VM.



CARDING

Flick Carder (or dog brush)

- Remove veg and second cuts, dry tips, etc.
- Good for spinning from the lock., or prep for drum carding
- Also good for cleaning drum carder!

Hand Cards

- Make rolags to spin woollen-style!
- Use hand card as burnishing tool for drum carder.

CARDING

Drum Carder

- Many styles available, hand turned or motorized.
- Very important to have adjusted properly for transfer of fiber between drum and ease of turning.
- Drums should be about an index card thickness apart.
- Try to keep fiber out of axles.
- Longer fibers can sometimes wrap around small drum and be difficult to remove.
(may need to cut)
- Can use hand card as burnishing tool, to smooth batt.

COMBING

- **English Combs:**

- Two pieces with handles and table mounting assembly.
- Usually 4 or 5 “pitch” (rows of tines).
- Can be quite heavy.
- Potential for personal injury, fairly high. “Don’t drink and comb.”

COMBING



COMBING

- **Viking combs:** One or two rows of curved tines. Can be used one against the other (one in each hand), or with one mounted on a base (fastened to a table or some other object).
- **Mini combs:** significantly smaller and lighter than English combs. Designed for hand use with small amounts of fiber.

MISCELLANEOUS EXTRAS

Diz

for pulling combed fiber off in a nice, continuous stream. Any concave object with a hole in the center will do. The size of the hole will determine the diameter of your stream of fiber.

Doffer

to help peel carded wool off drum of drum carder.

OTHER THOUGHTS

Or, you can spin right from the comb. This is mostly done in Eastern Europe from paddle shaped combs

Heck, you can spin right from the lock if you want!

You don't even have to wash it first, if you like to work "in the grease".

You have complete control. That's the beauty of it.