

RAW WOOL TERMS

Fleece - Describes wool straight off of the sheep's back. It has been sheared and sorted but no further processing has occurred.

Breed - Commercially raised sheep are described as purebred or crossbred. We describe our wool by pure breed since each breed has staple, yarn count, yield, handle and color characteristics that combine in a unique way to describe the sheep's breed.

Color - Used to describe the appearance of wool. The technical descriptions include white, demi-luster, lustrous, super-luster, dull and black.

Handle - A subjective description of the "feel" of the wool. Terms used are soft, crisp and harsh. Soft is generally reserved for only the finest wool with very high spinning count.

Yield - Describes the amount of wool fiber in the original fleece. Greasy fleece contains items including lanolin, dirt and vegetable matter. While processing wool, there is the scouring yield, the top yield and even the yarn yield as in each process there is some loss in weight and volume, with the most loss in the scouring stage.

Staple - The configuration in which wool grows on the sheep. Fleece comes in staples.

Staple Length - Describes the average fiber length in fleece or processed wool.

Spinning Count - A description of the number of hanks of yarn that can be spun from a pound of wool. The more hanks that can be spun, the finer the wool. Spinning count is also known as yarn count.

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Micron - A unit of measure (one millionth of a meter) that describes the average fiber diameter of a staple or lot of wool. During the late 1970s it evolved to be the dominant term used commercially, replacing the yarn or spinning count as a description of wool's fineness. Micron is determined by objective measurement when wool lots are tested for sale or upon processing. Most wool ranges in the 18-40 micron range. The human eye can discern only 3 microns.

- The 18-24 micron range describes what is commercially recognized as Merino wool.
- The 25-32 micron range describes medium wool used in blankets and knitwear apparel as represented by the "Shetland" description. The sheep breed most identified with 25-32 micron wool would be Corriedale; however, most crossbred-style sheep breeds produce wool in this micron range.
- 33-40 micron wool is most often used in the carpet industry. New Zealand Romney dominates this market commercially, but almost any country's meat-style sheep breed produces wool in

this micron range. The coarser end of this area is generally represented by what is recognized as more primitive sheep breeds or those that are grown primarily for meat.

- Wool micron is a selective breeding trait, and leading Australian producers are making wool clips as fine as 13 micron. Semi-processed luxury fibers such as cashmere and camel hair range in the 14-20 micron range.

PROCESSING TERMS

Scoured - Wool that has been washed commercially so that grease and vegetable matter are removed.

Carded - Wool is put through a carding machine composed of drums covered with metal pins. The pins grab the wool and place the wool fibers in a parallel configuration. Commercial carding machines are very large. Smaller carding machines are available for smaller-scale use. Hand cards, which are flat, paddle-shaped instruments dotted with metal pins, are popular with hand spinners.

Roving - A form into which carded wool is processed. Wool is drawn through a tube that rolls the wool together and pulls it out. This helps the fibers become parallel to one another. Roving is also known as sliver.

Sliver - A form into which carded wool is processed. Wool is drawn through a tube that rolls the wool together and pulls it out. This helps the fibers become parallel to one another. Sliver is also known as roving.

Combed - A process whereby shorter fibers are pulled out and remaining fibers are "combed" into an even position. The staple length of top is usually very even.

Top - Wool that has been scoured, carded and combed.

Bump - Describes a unit of measure for larger quantities of processed wool. Bumps are processed with a hole in the middle as a result of the fiber being wound into cans at the end of the combing process.

Ball - Describes a unit of measure for larger quantities of processed wool. Balls are processed so that the fiber is wound around its own middle, forming a solid mass of wool.