

at once. Machine carded mohair does not hang together in batts or roving very well but it is a dream to spin.

TO SPIN

Mohair yarn is wonderful to spin and not as difficult as it is often reported to be. The mohair fibre has fewer scales than a wool fibre which allows the fibres to slide easily past each other. For this reason it is best to reduce the tension on your brake, to just that necessary for winding on the yarn. Use one hand as much as possible when spinning mohair - keep your other hand from smoothing in the ends. This will make a fluffier yarn. Yarn may be brushed while in skeins, but natural wear will also cause the yarn to produce a fuzzy halo. Kid mohair is softer, but coarser mohair produces a shiney, hairier look.

Before using, mohair yarn should be washed and blocked. This allows the differences in spin to even out and makes knitting and weaving much easier.

Mohair blends very nicely with other fibres - wool, silk, llama, alpaca, or angora. Experiment!

Mohair also takes dyes exceptionally well.

For further information contact :

Cloudspun Angoras
Sharon Chestnutt
P.O. Box 408
Monroe, OR 97456
(541)847-5536



Mohair

A HAND SPINNERS GUIDE TO MOHAIR

The angora goat is the proud producer of mohair - a luxury fibre admired and desired the world over. This beautiful fibre is prized for its luster, softness and strength.

A good mohair fleece will be characterized by locks or bunches of mohair fibres held together by the curl of the fleece, with a light sheen of oil and a good long staple. Angora goats produce as much as an inch of fibre per month, so fleeces have a four to six inch staple.

The oil in a mohair fleece helps to protect the fibres from the dust and sun and rain. Too little oil in the fleece results in a fluffy, dull looking fleece, often with poor lock formation. Too much oil gives the fleece a black look and the yield of clean fibre and ease of washing will be poor. A light coating of oil keeps the shine in the fleece, protects from the weather and felting, and helps to hold the locks together. The oil in a goat fleece is not lanolin.

Mohair ranges from very fine and soft to coarse and scratchy. Kids produce the finest fibre and the first shearing or fall kid is the finest of all. These fleeces generally have very little oil, are very soft and have poor lock definition and are in the range of 20 - 24 microns. Spring kid is the second clip and is more readily available as the goats are starting to produce a quantity of fibre. Spring

kid fleeces will have well formed locks with a light coating of oil and more sheen than fall kid. Progressively as the animal ages, the mohair gets coarser - meaning the average fibre diameter increases. Bucks tend to get coarse faster than does but produce considerably more fleece. Wethers do not coarsen as fast as bucks and produce heavier fleeces than does. Of course, individual animals differ and some produce fine mohair long after their herdmates have coarsened. The reason this is so important is that handspinners tend to appreciate the soft, finer fleeces. Doll hair customers prefer slightly coarser adult fleeces that retain their curl and lock definition.

Mohair fleece comes in several styles and now even in several natural colors! There are four different styles - a ringlet shaped lock, a flat wavy lock, a web which is intermediate between the ringlet and the flat lock and the sheepy or undefined fleece. The sheepy or undefined style is undesirable. Very fine fleeces often have poor lock formation and this is acceptable in first kid fleeces but these fleeces tend to felt especially in the rainy weather.

Freedom from kemp is an important consideration when raising mohair for handspinners. Kemp fibres are coarse, stiff and often short. They may be opaque white in a white goat or heavily pigmented in a colored one. The main problem with these fibres is that they stick out of yarns and are scratchy. They also do not take pigment readily in the case of white fibres and often shed. Some goats have a long coarser fibre in their fleeces also. These may be medullated fibres which are less than 60% hollow (kemp fibres are more than 60% hollow). The difference is they are longer so they do not shed out, they are generally more heavily pigmented than the finer fibers around them, and they are not as stiff or hairy. For a serious breeder of hand spinning fleeces they remain undesirable.

Other important considerations are freedom from vegetal matter, urine and manure stain, second cuts and tender spots or breaks. Fleeces should be skirted of stain and manure as they are shorn to prevent any further staining.

Mohair is now available in white , shades of red, tan and brown, silver, grey and black.

WHAT TO DO WITH YOUR MOHAIR FLEECE

The first step is to sort through the fleece and remove any second cuts or bits of straw. Do not open up the locks to any great degree to remove little bits as this will encourage felting in the washing process, and they are more easily removed when the fleece is clean anyway.

TO WASH

Mohair is easily washed in mesh bags which reduces the handling of the fibre and helps the lock stay intact. However the bags do make it a little harder to get the fleece clean. Soak the mohair - in bags or loose - in plenty of hot water. I wash 4-6 pounds at a time in a laundry tub. This soak allows the fibre to soften, much of the surface dirt floats off and the natural saponins in the mohair oil start to work to clean the fleece. After a soak of ½ hour to one hour, spin out the excess water from the fleece in the spin only cycle of your washing machine. Then return the fleece to hot soapy water this time. Add 1/4 cup of dishwashing detergent per pound of raw fleece to the wash. A tablespoon of Borax per load may be added for a very dirty, smelly fleece. Soak the fleece in soapy water for an hour or two, but not long enough to let the water cool down. If the water gets too cool the oils and soap form a thick scum which may redeposit on the fleece and is very difficult to remove. Spin out the fibre again and return to clean hot water. If the fleece does not appear clean enough, add up to ½ the quantity of soap and Borax used in the first wash and repeat. Spin out the fibre again and rinse. A small amount of vinegar or hair conditioner may be added to the final rinse. While the fleece is soaking, squeeze the fleece to loosen the dirt, but do not agitate it as it may felt.

Dry the mohair on racks out of direct intense sun or in a warm room in the house.

TO PREPARE FOR SPINNING

Now your clean, soft and fluffy mohair is ready to prepare for spinning. The first step is to open up the locks and this may be successfully done with a good picker or by hand. I do recommend hand picking open fine kid and ringlet fleeces as they may knot when put through a picker. After picking or teasing it is best to let the fibre rest and reduce any built up static.

Mohair may be successfully spun from picked or teased fibres, making a delightful textured yarn. Or they may be hand, drum or machine carded. Regular wool carding cloth is adequate on your drum carder however the two rollers may need to be further apart to prevent too many fibres being picked up