

Good to Know

Pure wool textile is marked with a 'wool mark' that confirms the quality of new and pure wool. This mark also differentiates it from blended wool with inferior wool fibre or cotton that may look-like pure wool.



Test your learning outcome

1. Name two natural animal fibres.
2. Why is more crimped wool fibre preferred?
3. What is kemp? Why is kemp not used as wool?
4. What makes the wool a good insulator?
5. Why is lamb's wool better than the wool of an adult sheep?

Rearing and Breeding of Animals for Wool

Sheep, lambs and other fleece-yielding animals are reared by **shepherds** in many parts of our country. These animals graze on **grass** and **leaves** from shrubs. They are also fed on **seeds, grains** and **oil cake** since these **protein-rich** foods provide nutrition for better growth of **the fleece**. Breeding is practiced between a **sturdy** cattle and of a superior variety which yields more and better quality of fleece.

Processing of Fleece

Most of the sheep bear **cream-coloured** wool while a few bear **brown or black** fleece. The six steps involved in processing of fleece to obtain wool are:

1. **Shearing:** This is the process of removal of the fleece from the skin of sheep. Fleece is generally **shorn (sheared)** once a year in the spring season before the onset of summer. This enables the animal to live comfortably during warm months without fleece on its body. Fleece is sheared along with the uppermost layer of the dead skin with mechanical or electrically-operated shears to obtain maximum length of the fibre without causing pain to the animal. Normally 4 to 5 kg of fleece comes from a single sheep. After shearing, the animal is bathed or dipped in a tub full of antiseptic solution to save its tender skin from infection.

2. **Washing or Scouring:** The fleece when on the body of the animal is covered with an oily layer, called **yolk**. The fleece is then washed to remove dirt, dried perspiration (called **suint**), and the yolk. This is called scouring. After washing, small fluffy fibres called **burrs** are removed manually from the fleece. These are the same burrs that you sometimes see on your sweaters.

3. **Grading or Sorting:** The variety of wool differs with the different breeds of sheep. Also, the fleece obtained from the different parts of the same sheep differs in length, fineness (softness) and structure. The wool obtained from the shoulders and underside of the animal is superior to the wool at its back. Thus, after scouring the fleece is sorted and graded by hand into separate piles of similar nature.

4. **Carding or combing:** The fibres after sorting are untangled. They are passed through the rollers. The rollers are covered with fine sheet of cloth having thin wire teeth. The teeth on rollers untangle the fibres and roll the fibres out into a flat sheet called the web. The web is then drawn into narrow ropes of fibre (silver).

3 Spinning: The narrow strands are passed through spinning machines where the strands are twisted and made into yarn. Yarn is a continuous thread of fibre made from a number of fibres. It is used for either weaving or knitting.

6 Dyeing: Creamy wool fibre may be dyed in different colours as desired. Black or brown fleece is used as such.



1. Shearing of sheep



2. Washing



3. Sorting of fibre



6. Dyeing of fleece



5. Spinning



4. Carding of fleece



Fig. 3.3 Processing of fleece