



SHEEP SHEET

by Dr. Lyle G. McNeal, Executive Director, Sheep & Wool Specialist

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Every sheep producer is aware that when a USDA Choice lamb is sold, butchered and retailed across the counter, the carcass is divided into many cuts, each cut differing from the others in price, according to which section of the animal it originated. Stew meat costs less than loin chops, and ground meat less than an American Leg of Lamb, etc. The price received by the producer, however depends solely on the weight, condition and grade of the lamb - the better the lamb, the higher the price.

A similar situation exists with wool - there are 11 kinds of wool on one fleece (*fine and medium woolled breeds*), all differing in value to the end user. According to the American Wool Handbook, no two fleeces even from the same type of sheep and from the same area are exactly alike in quality and quantity.

If the manufacturer were to use a fleece in its original form he/she could only produce medium or coarse yarns respectively, and the resulting fabric would never be of the highest possible quality. Prior to processing it is necessary to divide the fleeces or pieces into their respective spinning qualities so that they may be used for different grades and/or styles of fabric.

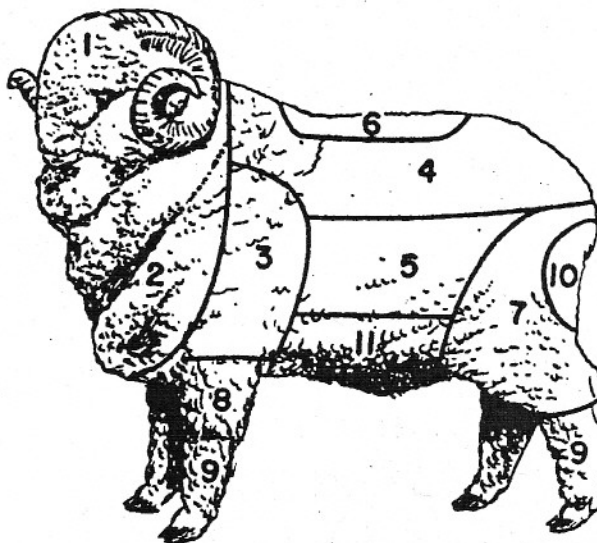
Unless the wool clip has been table skirted, classed and/or graded prior to leaving the sheep producers operation, grease wool must be sorted and segregated along some point in the process from sheep to shawl. "Wool Sorting" is the first process which grease wool undergoes when it is purchased by the manufacturer. The wools are evaluated according to fineness (fiber diameter), length of staple, soundness (freedom from tenderness and/or breaks), color, the amount of dirt and vegetable matter. This places all the fiber with a definite or equal character into one group, enabling the manufacturer to produce out of this

Wools Come in Different Sizes

Sheepdex W-5

sort, yardage or fabric for which it is best suited.

If the fleeces have been sorted and classed at the ranch, upon arrival at the mill sorting becomes more advanced and somewhat simplified. Sorting may require classifying the fleeces into lots or sub-sorts.



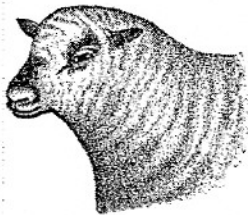
The drawing shows a fine-wooled Rambouillet or Merino, which identifies the various parts on the animal that carry the different sorts possible from any one type of wool fleece. The name of the parts and prevailing wool is:

1. **TOP-KNOT:** Consisting of very light, short moiety, and inferior wool.
2. **NECK WOOL:** Very light conditioned and a long-stapled wool, also containing coarse, matted lumps of inferior wool on the folds.
3. **SHOULDER WOOL:** The best wool

grown by sheep is obtained from the shoulder. Sheep judges usually take the shoulder wool as a standard, and see how the wool on the other portions of the sheep compare with it.

4. **FLEECE WOOL:** Consisting of good average flock wool, usually free from vegetable matter.
5. **BREAST WOOL:** Similar to shoulder wool, usually a little heavier in condition.
6. **BACK WOOL:** This wool is inclined to be open, weathered, and musky.
7. **BRITCH WOOL:** A coarser wool than the other portions of the fleece and in many cases inclined to be kempy; the wool can also be matted and/or cotted with burrs and seeds.
8. **ARM PIECE:** Consisting of a very short wool surrounded by fribby edges; burrs or seeds collect heavily on this portion of the fleece.
9. **HAIRY SHANKS:** Hairy or kempy fibers containing very little wool; they are used for the manufacture of low quality goods such as rugs etc. when blended with other wools.
10. **STAINED WOOL:** This wool will not wash white and is very heavy in condition.
11. **BELLY WOOL:** A good bulky wool heavy in condition, and usually very burry or seedy.

ADDITIONAL NOTES:



*For more information write:
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