Mohair qualities

Mohair

Angora goats produce a very beautiful, luxurious and incredibly durable fibre called mohair. It is one of the warmest natural fibres known and one of the most versatile. Angora goats took their name from Ankara, an ancient Turkish city where they originated. Although the goats were farmed for their fibre from early times it was not until the 16th century that export of the goats was permitted. The first exports were to France and Spain. They later spread to many countries, reaching the Americas in 1849 and Australia in early 1900s. South Africa currently produces more than 60 percent of the total world production of mohair. Australian production totals approximately 250,000 kg. World production is 5 million kg per year.

It is a wool-like textile fibre ie it is a protein fibre. It has a smooth cuticular scale pattern on the surface that imparts lustre and it has low felting capacity. This scale is different to the wool fibre scale and consequently is not 'itchy'. The mohair is generally shorn from the animals twice a year. The mohair grows rapidly at about 2 cm per month. The fibres range from 23 microns in mean diameter at the first shearing to as much as 38 microns in older animals. The wide range of uses of mohair fibre is a result of the range of diameter of the fibre produced. Mohair from young goats (kid mohair) is used in knitwear, from intermediate age it is used in suiting materials, and the stronger 'fine hair' types are used in coating and rug manufacture.

Mohair is prized for its unique qualities:

- Insulating - Mohair's hollow fibres do not conduct heat like wool and provides good insulation, even when wet.
- Durability - Mohair can be twisted and bent without damage to the fibre; it is the most durable of animal fibres.
- Comfort - Mohair does not irritate the skin, even for people who are sensitive to wool.
- Strength - Mohair is stronger than steel of the same diameter.
- Shrink resistance - Mohair fabrics shrink much less than wool because mohair's smooth fibres do not felt.
- Elasticity - Mohair is very elastic; it can be stretched up to 30%, and will spring back to shape; mohair garments resist wrinkling, stretching, or sagging.
- Moisture transfer - Mohair easily absorbs and releases moisture, moving perspiration away from the skin. It is comfortable to wear in cold and hot weather.
- Luster - One of mohair's most important qualities is its ability to take dye and to display brilliant colours that resist fading by time or hard wear.
- Lightweight - Mohair's smooth fibres can be made into fabrics that have a cooling effect. It is ideal for summer garments.
- Non-flammability - Mohair will not burn unless it is exposed to a direct flame.
- Easy to Wash - Mohair does not felt or shrink.

Chemical use

It is important to look at how the fibre was produced, as some animal treatments can leave chemical residue in the fibre. Post shearing treatments are also a cause for concern. Organically grown fibres are often treated with stain-resistant, mould-resistant, and moth-proofing chemicals that can cause health problems. Make sure that any scouring or treatment of the fibre uses organic cleaning and treatment agents and herbal extracts.