

FLEECE PREPARATION - SKIRTING

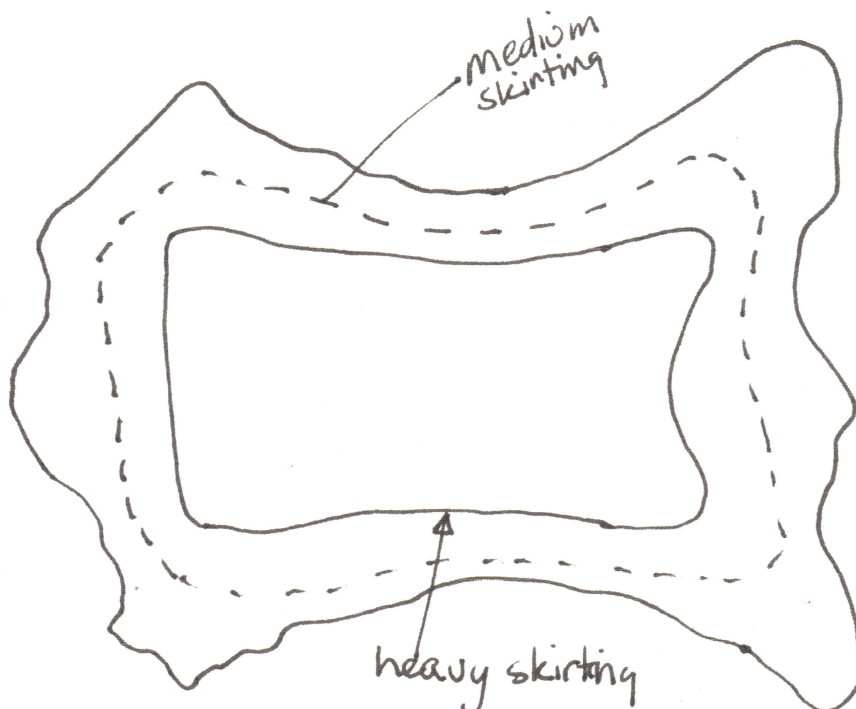
AFTER SHEARING, THE FLEECE IS LAID OUT WITH THE CUT SURFACE DOWN (IT WILL LOOK LIKE A PELT) ON A FLAT SURFACE AND SKIRTED. YOU CAN SPREAD THE FLEECE OUT ON A LARGE TABLE OR SHEET OR TARP; A SKIRTING TABLE MADE WITH A SLATTED OR CHICKEN WIRE SURFACE MAKES IT EASIER TO SHAKE OUT 2ND CUTS AND DEBRIS.

SKIRTING IMPROVES THE QUALITY OF THE FLEECE BY REMOVING ALL INFERIOR FIBER.

TAKE A LOOK AT THE FLEECE - SOME FLEECES WILL REQUIRE VERY LITTLE SKIRTING AND SOME WILL REQUIRE MORE. OFTEN SKIRTING WILL REMOVE ABOUT 2-3 INCHES ALL THE WAY AROUND THE EDGES BUT YOU MAY ALSO HAVE TO REMOVE FIBER ALONG THE BACKBONE AND AROUND THE NECK AREAS.

WHAT TO REMOVE FROM THE FLEECE:

- BELLY, LEG WOOL, TOP KNOTS, ETC. (OFTEN THROWN ASIDE BY SHEARER)
- FIBER CONTAINING A LARGE AMOUNT OF VEGETABLE MATTER (VM)
- STAINED FIBER (FROM DUNG, URINE, BLOOD, PAINT, ETC.)
- MATTED OR FELTED FIBER
- SECOND CUTS (THESE ARE SHORT PIECES MADE WHEN THE SHEARER CUTS THE SAME AREA TWICE)
- BRITTLE AND/OR FELTED TIPS



NOW YOU WANT TO CHECK FOR CONSISTENCY AND STRENGTH OF THE FLEECE.

TEST STRENGTH BY TUGGING ON A LOCK WHILE HOLDING BETWEEN TWO HANDS. A FLEECE IS TENDER IF IT BREAKS EASILY; THE LOCKS OF A TENDER FLEECE WILL BREAK EASILY ANYWHERE, THE LOCKS OF A FLEECE WITH STRESS BREAK WILL HAVE A NOTICEABLE PLACE WHERE THERE IS A CHANGE IN SHAPE OR CRIMP AND WILL BREAK RIGHT THERE.

TENDERNESS OR BREAKS IN THE FLEECE CAN BE CAUSED BY MANY FORMS OF STRESS INCLUDING: ILLNESS, CHANGES IN NUTRITION, TRAVEL, ANIMALS, ETC. *A TENDER FLEECE SHOULD NOT BE ENTERED IN SHOWS OR SOLD AS A HAND SPINNING FLEECE, BUT IT IS FINE FOR FELTING AND STUFFING, ETC. YOU CAN HAVE IT PROCESSED TO BE USED FOR FELTING OR QUILTING BATTS OR YOU COULD SELL IT AT A LOWER PRICE FOR THAT PURPOSE.*

TO CHECK FOR CONSISTENCY, ASK THESE QUESTIONS

- IS THE STAPLE LENGTH THE SAME ALL OVER?
- IS THE CRIMP CONSISTENT OR ARE THERE OBVIOUS DIFFERENCES?
- IS THE COLOR CONSISTENT? (ALL WHITE EXCEPT FOR A YELLOW AREA?)
- DOES THE FLEECE FEEL THE SAME EVERYWHERE OR ARE THERE SOFTER AND COARSER AREAS?

IF THE FLEECE IS NOT CONSISTENT, YOU MAY WANT TO SEPARATE AND SORT ACCORDINGLY DEPENDING ON WHAT YOU WILL BE DOING WITH THE FLEECE.

ONCE YOU ARE FINISHED SKIRTING YOUR FLEECE, YOU WANT TO STORE IT. FOLD ONE SIDE OVER THE LONG WAY SO THE FLEECE IS IN HALF TAIL TO NECK. ROLL THE FLEECE UP FROM THE TAIL END TO THE NECK. IDEALLY, FLEECES SHOULD BE STORED IN A DRY PLACE AWAY FROM SUN AND EXTREME HEAT. THIS IS BEST DONE WITH THE FLEECE STORED IN BOXES, LARGE PAPER LAWN BAGS OR PAPER GRAIN BAGS OR WRAPPED IN SHEETS. FLEECES CAN BE STORED IN PLASTIC BAGS FOR A SHORT PERIOD OF TIME BUT MAKE SURE THEY ARE OUT OF THE SUNLIGHT.

IF YOU ARE KEEPING RECORDS, YOU WANT TO WEIGH THE FINAL FLEECE AND MAYBE WHAT YOU HAVE SKIRTED FROM THE FLEECE. USE INDEX CARDS AND LABEL THE FLEECE WITH THE DATE OF SHEARING, ANIMAL'S NAME/NUMBER AND WEIGHT OF FLEECE. YOU'LL ALSO WANT TO RECORD THIS SAME INFORMATION IN A SEPARATE NOTEBOOK ADDING THE WEIGHT OF SKIRTINGS AND ANY SPECIAL NOTES. AND YOU WANT TO BE SURE TO TAKE SOME SAMPLES THAT YOU CAN USE FOR AN EXHIBIT OR TO HELP SELL; PLACE THESE IN A SMALL ZIPLOC BAG WITH THE NAME, DATE AND WEIGHT.

IF YOU ARE PREPARING YOUR FLEECE FOR A SHOW, CHECK TO SEE HOW THE FLEECES ARE BEING JUDGED. SOME FLEECE SHOWS JUDGE FOR HAND SPINNING FLEECES AND FOR THESE SHOWS YOU WILL WANT TO DO HEAVY SKIRTING; OTHER SHOWS JUDGE FOR THE BREED TYPE AND WILL WANT TO SEE A FULLER FLEECE.

IF YOU WANT TO SELL TO HAND SPINNERS, REMEMBER THAT THEY WILL WANT THEIR MONEY'S WORTH. YOU WANT YOUR CUSTOMERS TO BE HAPPY AND TO BUY FROM YOU AGAIN AND SPREAD THE WORD ABOUT YOUR FIBER.

IF YOU HAVE A SPINNING GUILD IN YOUR AREA, YOU COULD CONTACT THEM TO SEE IF YOU COULD BRING SAMPLES OF YOUR FLEECES. SHOWING YOUR FLEECES IS A GOOD WAY TO GET YOUR NAME OUT THERE. THERE ARE SOME FIBER EVENTS THAT WOULD LOVE DONATIONS OF GOODIE BAGS OR FLEECE. IF YOU EXHIBIT YOUR ANIMALS AT FAIRS, MAKE SURE TO HAVE SAMPLES OF FLEECE AT YOUR DISPLAY. IF YOU CAN WASH SOME FLEECE, YOU COULD INCLUDE RAW AND WASHED WITH YOUR SAMPLES. AND IF YOU ARE ABLE TO SPIN A SMALL AMOUNT OF THE FLEECE, YOU COULD ALSO HAVE THAT WITH YOUR SAMPLE.

SAMPLES ARE AN IMPORTANT PART OF SELLING YOUR PRODUCT; PEOPLE LIKE TO SEE AND FEEL THE FIBER. SOMETIMES SEEING BOTH RAW AND WASHED FIBER, OR SEEING WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE SPUN IS WHAT SELLS THE FIBER.

YOU CAN ALSO SHOW SOME SIMPLE FINISHED PROJECTS, LIKE A NEEDLE FELTED TOY OR A SMALL KNITTED SQUARE.

CONSIDER OFFERING SMALLER AMOUNTS FOR SALE, PEOPLE DON'T ALWAYS WANT TO BUY A WHOLE FLEECE SO YOU MAY WANT TO PACKAGE SMALLER AMOUNTS, LIKE A POUND OR 1/2 POUND.