

Washing Your Own Fiber

IMPORTANT

It is important **NOT** to agitate or abruptly change the temperature of wet wool. If either occurs, the wool will become felted (matted) and will be impossible to process further.

Prep the fleece!

Skirting is necessary even for coated sheep since the fiber near the belly, on the legs and rear of the animal tends to be short, full of vegetation and other nasty bits, and brittle.

Pulling out the fleece -- dirty picking, or pre-wash fluffing. Dense clumps of fiber hold lanolin, dirt, and vegetation, so pull the fleece into fluff or small locks. Watch for second cuts, shorts, and bits of debris (hoof trimmings, seed heads, thistle, blackberry twigs) you can easily grab and throw out.

FIRST WASH

Fill your empty washing machine with **HOT** water (for high lanolin at least 140F) to the level needed for the pounds of fiber. Add Power Scour and stir to mix. Turn the machine to spin and OFF -- THEN place the fiber in the washer. Submerge it by pressing it down with a plunger, wooden spoon, or your hand (protected by a rubber glove). Allow it to soak for 30 minutes. Be sure the washer is set to SPIN and turn it back on to let the water spin out.

2 lbs wool and goat	3 lbs wool and goat	4 lbs wool and goat
small load	medium load	large
1st wash -- 1/4	1st wash -- 1/3	1st wash -1/2 if heavy lanolin
2nd/3rd wash -- 1/4	2nd/3rd wash -- 1/4	2nd/3rd wash -- 1/3

Cut soap in half for alpaca and llama.

RINSING

After the washer has spun out the wash water, REMOVE the fiber from the machine. Refill the washer with hot water -- set to large for full water rinsing. When the washer begins agitating (being full) shut the machine off and set to rinse, but still off. Replace the fiber, let it soak for 30 minutes, and spin the water out.

SECOND WASH and THIRD WASHES

Repeat 1st wash process and water amounts, adjusting the Power Scour to amounts in the chart. Repeat the rinse step twice. Sometimes a third wash is required for merino.

DRYING the FIBER

Spread out on screens or racks to dry. Clean wool should feel like cotton and leave no shiny film on your fingers when the ends are rubbed between your fingers.

*Dawn may work, but it is not designed to be gentle on natural fibers. It is great for dishes and motor oil, but would you use it on your own hair? How much conditioner would follow?