

## Mohair

Mohair is the fiber or wool of the Angora Goat. The fleece on an Angora grows approximately 1 inch per month. Angoras are shorn every 6 months. Fleece weights vary from 2 - 10 pounds, averaging 6 pounds for a mature adult doe. A goat's age, sex, genetics and the environment, all effect the quality of the fleece. Healthy animals raised on pasture, hay and a little grain will produce better quality fleeces than livestock that are stressed and managed poorly. Angora goats thrive in a variety of climates. They originated in the Ankara region of Turkey.

Mohair is renowned for its strength, warmth, durability and its ability to resist shrinking and wrinkling. It is most noted, however, for its beautiful luster and ability to be dyed into brilliant colors. It can be blended with almost any other fiber to create interesting textures, colors or feelings or simply to increase bulk and elasticity. Mohair can also be used on its own, which accents its halo effect. All animal hairs (fibers from all animals other than sheep) have similar properties of elasticity, crimp, grease content and epidermal scale structure. The epidermal scales have little overlap, are smooth and lie closely along the fiber. The smooth scales account for mohair's ability to resist felting and shrinkage.

Mohair is graded into six main categories with several subcategories available within those. The six main categories are based on the fiber's diameter or micron count. The micron count (or fineness) of mohair ranges from about 18 to 40 microns. The lower the micron count the finer the fiber. Kid mohair is the finest and some of the finer grades of kid mohair can compete with the fineness of cashmere. Kid mohair is best suited to fine knit or woven fabrics, where a soft handle is important, such as sweaters worn next to the skin. Yearling mohair has many of the same qualities of kid mohair, yet is more durable or hardwearing. It is a great choice for luxurious cardigans, shawls, throws or woven suits. Young adult or young goat grades are slightly coarser than the first two categories, but is still an excellent choice for durable knit or woven fabrics where good wear is important. It is well suited to socks, mittens, outerwear jackets and blankets. Adult mohair is also great for outerwear, upholstery fabrics and other fabrics that are not intended to be worn next to the skin. The coarsest mohair is from mature bucks. This hair is great for doll wigs, Santa Claus beards, carpets and rugs. The last grade of mohair is stain, which is not generally used by the handspinner.

The coarser grades of mohair are most often used for making doll wig locks. This mohair has often got more character than the finer grades and is easier to work with. Many people ask us why we don't use the curly kid locks for doll wigs, and the answer is that kid mohair is just too fine to use in this manner. The locks often don't stay together,

putting some of the yarn into 1 jar and the rest in the other. Then you can use Navajo-plying to produce a yarn with distinct color changes.

Mohair is a slippery fiber to spin compared to wool. It will require a tighter twist with less tension on the brake band. You can spin with a worsted method to produce firm sleek yarns that will stand up to heavy wear, or with a woolen method to produce softer fluffier yarns. Worsted spinning is best used on finer gauge yarns. If used on bulkier yarns it tends to make for a heavy yarn. Even a woolen spun yarn will be heavy for a bulky yarn. It is best to add at least 30% wool to your blend if you want a bulky yarn. Mohair lends itself well for use in many textured yarns. Try your hand at producing a boucle, using the mohair for the loops and a fine wool as the core and binder. To make it really special use a fine silk singles as the binder. You can also produce a brushed type yarn by inserting tufts of mohair as you ply. Brush the finished article (whether knit or woven) with a soft bristled hairbrush, to produce a soft halo. This technique works especially well with kid mohair yarns knitted into soft hats, sweaters and stoles. With practice it is possible to produce mohair yarns that rival anything available on the commercial yarn market.

### **Complaints about Mohair**

The two biggest complaints about mohair are that it's scratchy and that people are allergic to it. Scratchy garments can be caused from the following:

1. Using too coarse a grade of mohair for garments worn next to the skin
2. Kemp
3. Overprocessing can strip away mohair's natural oils and leave it feeling harsh & brittle. When commercial processors wash Mohair, they use chemicals, which can cause the finished fiber or garment to feel coarse and scratchy.
4. Blending with a coarse wool or other fiber.

True allergies to mohair are extremely rare. Studies have shown that the majority of people who believe they are allergic to natural fibers are not. Reactions can occur from the dirt and grease in the fiber and from nickel, copper, tin and other chemicals used in dyeing and processing the yarn.

### **Important Attributes of Mohair**

1. Luster - The sheen of a quality Mohair fleece adds tremendous appeal to its beauty.
2. Strength - Mohair has incredible strength compared to other animal fibers. Rugs made from Mohair are very durable and can last forever.
3. Dyeing - Mohair accepts dyes more readily than other wool. Dyed Mohair will be deeper in color and more lustrous than most dyed wool fleeces.
4. Durability - Mohair resists shrinking, wrinkling and felting.

5. *Various Grades* - Mohair comes in varying grades. A fleece should be selected according to its intended use.
6. *Versatility* - Mohair is used in weaving the fabric cushions of theatre seats. It is also fine enough for making a baby blanket.
7. *Renewable resource* - Every 6 months there is another crop of Mohair to be harvested. Mohair is a fiber, which is not man-made or dependent on oil processing.
8. *Angora Goats* - The treasured producers of one of the most luxurious fibers in the world. We wouldn't have Mohair without them.