

Merry Meadows Farm, Inc.

Washing Instructions



Hi, from Patti

This is how I do it.

WOOL WASHING INSTRUCTIONS

Instructions for washing approximately 3 pounds raw wool in the bathtub.

Divide wool into 8 lingerie bags.

Before starting, turn your hot water heater to the hottest setting. Allow water to reach maximum temperature. Fine wools, such as Merino and Cormo, have a lot of lanolin, or grease. In order to remove as much grease as possible, the wash water must be as hot as possible.

There are four essentials to washing wool successfully.

- 1) Water must be extremely hot.
- 2) Detergent must cut the grease.
- 3) Rinsing must remove all traces of detergent.
- 4) And perhaps the most important: NO AGITATION!

Optional pre-soak: If wool is especially dirty or has muddy tips, a pre-soak is recommended. It is not necessary for this to be in pure hot water. Fill tub with warm water and submerge wool (in bags) in water. Let soak undisturbed for 1 hour or even overnight. Lift bags from water, empty tub. Place wool bags on drain racks while you drain the tub. Allow as much dirty water to drain from wool as possible. Don't squeeze!

1) Wash: Fill tub with hot water. Add 1 cup Dawn dish detergent (I prefer Dawn Complete). Gently stir water to blend the detergent. Place wool bags in a single layer in the water. Gently press bags down into soapy water. DO NOT AGITATE. Place racks on top of wool bags to keep them submerged. Let wool soak undisturbed for 30 minutes. Place wool bags on drain racks while you empty and rinse the tub.

2) Rinse: With wool bags on the drain racks, gently rinse with hot water using hand-held shower attachment. As long as the wool does not shift around, it will not felt while you rinse it this way. Do not move or lift bags while rinsing. Let dirty water drain from bags for a few minutes while you fill tub with clean hot water.

3) Wash: Add 1 cup Dawn dish detergent to hot water in tub. Stir to blend. Gently press wool bags down into soapy water. DO NOT AGITATE! Place wool racks on top of wool bags to keep them submerged. (The cleaner to wool gets, the more inclined it will be to float.) Let wool soak undisturbed for 30 minutes.

4) Rinse: Lift wool bags from water and place on drain rack. Repeat Step 2.

5) Rinse: Place wool bags into clean hot water. Place racks on top to submerge wool. Let wool soak undisturbed for 30 minutes.

6) Final Rinse: Drain and rise wool as in step 2. Fill tub with hot water and 1 cup white vinegar. Let soak for 30 minutes. Remove wool bags to drain racks. Empty tub. Thoroughly rinse with hot water using hand-held shower attachment.

7) Let water drain from bags. Wool may be dyed at this point if desired.

8) Spin: You will be using your washing machine on spin cycle only. Place bags of washed wool in the washing machine. Set machine at final spin cycle. No water should enter during the spin. If necessary, turn off the water to the machine.

9) Dry: Remove bags from washer. Gently shake bag to loosen the wool inside. Hang bags in a clean warm place until dry. In the summer, I hang the wool bags from the roof of my deck. In the winter, I hang them near my woodstove. Depending on the weather, drying may take from one day to several days. I do not touch the wool until it is completely dry.* When wool is completely dry, I hand comb each lock using a small slicker brush (i.e. dog brush). This step removes traces of dirt, vegetable matter, and neps, and is key for making a smooth, worsted-type yarn. This process takes approximately 1 hour per ounce.

After the fleece has been combed, I measure 1.1 ounces and feed it into my Pat Green electric drum carder. This takes approximately 15 minutes per ounce. Your wool is now ready to spin or felt! Have fun with your wool! *Some people prefer to pull the locks apart to hasten drying. Others hand fluff (pick or open) the dry locks prior to spinning. These are the steps I take to wash a fleece. They work well for me, and I hope these instructions are helpful to successfully process your fleece. There are as many ways to prepare a fleece as there are spinners and felters. As you learn by doing, you may find variations that work better for you. That's okay! Have fun with your wool!

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