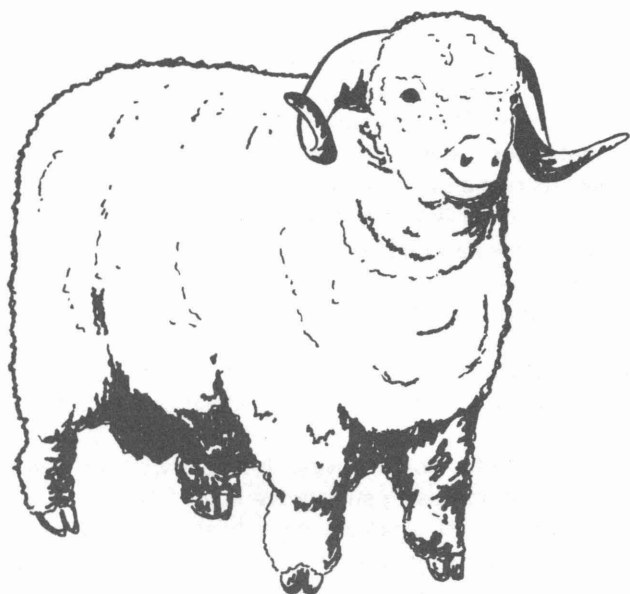


# *Texas Wool— Versatile Fashion*



Texas Agricultural Extension Service • The Texas A&M University System

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# TEXAS WOOL — VERSATILE FASHION

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Wool is popular for woven or knit garments ranging from classic suits to contemporary sportswear. This adaptive fiber is used to produce knitting yarns, blankets, upholstery and other household items. Wool clothing in classic designs is an excellent investment. Other styles can easily be updated because the fabric is long-wearing and easy to alter as fashions change and the garment design allows.

## *Characteristics*

From lightweight, sheer summer fabrics to heavyweight coatings, versatile wool provides year-round wear in any climate. Because of its natural fiber crimp, much of the volume of wool fabric is air that acts as insulation, allowing comfort without adding bulky weight.

Wool fashions are truly an investment in quality and long life for greater value. When buying wool garments, consider the cost per wearing. To do so, divide the total cost by the number of times you plan to wear the garment. The total cost includes alteration and drycleaning costs anticipated for the life of the garment. Because wool fabrics are durable, resist tearing and often do not show wear, wool classic suits are a wardrobe investment which last season after season.

Wool, a renewable natural fiber, has other characteristics that make it a premium fiber. Wool resists burning, does not produce toxic fumes and chars but does not melt. Another feature is that it does not transmit static electricity. Wool is easily dyed for seasonal color and retains color without fading. Because it resists moisture, it is excellent for outdoor wear. It retains its shape, resists wrinkling and drapes or hangs beautifully.

Wool is a favorite for home sewing. It tailors well and can easily be shaped by pressing and using supportive inner fabrics.

For many years, wool products have been required by law to be labeled. Common terms include:

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- **Lambs wool** is very soft, of superior quality and comes from an animal 7 months old or younger.
- **Reprocessed wool** has never been worn but is remanufactured from fabric scraps and is usually of lower quality than virgin wool. It is often used in blends.
- **Reused wool** has been remanufactured from items used previously and is usually of lower quality than reprocessed wool. It is often used in blends.
- **Shearling** is soft wool pile on one side and sheepskin on the other. It is often used in coats or slippers.
- **Virgin wool** has never been used before. The term does not indicate quality.
- **Woolens** are fuzzy fabrics such as tweeds and are made of short fibers.
- **Worsteds** are smooth, crisp fabrics such as gabardine and are made of long fibers.

Wool may be blended with other fibers to obtain fabrics with the best qualities of each fiber. These fabrics may have reduced cost or enhanced care, appearance or wearability. Fabrics with at least 50 percent wool behave much like wool. Wool tri- or multi-fiber blends are popular today. Wool is often blended with mohair, cotton, silk, nylon, polyester or acrylic.

## Care

Proper treatment keeps wool looking fashion-right for many seasons. To minimize care, keep closures closed and store garments properly. Wool naturally springs back to shape with wrinkles often disappearing. This makes wool a favorite for traveling.

Allow about 24 hours for garments to “relax” after wearing. Steam pressing can also renew their appearance. Press with a moderately hot iron using steam and a press cloth or a dry iron and a damp press cloth. The press cloth reduces garment shine. Leave wool slightly moist after pressing.

Garments often require dry cleaning but many may be hand or machine washed. Follow garment care instructions and look for performance finishes. When laundering, turn the garment wrong side out, use lukewarm water, a mild detergent and short agitation or a gentle machine cycle. Wool is weaker wet than dry so move wet garments carefully. Rolling them in a towel removes excess moisture. To maintain garment shape, draw the garment’s outline on scrap paper before laundering, then shape the damp garment to its original size.

Remove all stains promptly. Refer to a stain removal chart for solvents that remove common spots and stains. Never rub to remove spots or stains because the fabric's surface may become matted. Brushing the surface with fine sandpaper may make it look less matted and remove scorch. Remove surface balls or pills by brushing or carefully shaving the garment with a safety razor.

Store out-of-season garments clean and in airtight containers because wool attracts moths and carpet beetle larvae. Always follow product directions when using insect preventives. Destroy insects by laundering or dry cleaning.

## ***Production***

Texas is the number one wool producing state in the U.S., with nearly 2 million sheep and lambs. In 1982, 18 million pounds of Texas wool accounted for 17 percent of the nation's supply.

Seventy-five percent of the wool raised in Texas is a fine grade. Texas wool accounts for almost 50 percent of the nation's fine grade wool. Wool grades are determined by the diameter, length and other factors. Fine grade wool is desirable in quality fabric and clothing, with coarser grades used in carpeting, upholstery and other textile items. Texas producers constantly upgrade herd quality through selective breeding and crossbreeding. Climate and grazing conditions also effect wool quality or grades.

Texas sheep are shorn once a year, in the spring. Wool is then transported to warehouses which sell the fiber to mills for further processing. During processing, the lanolin that makes wool soft and waterproof is removed from the fleece and used in cosmetics, drugs and other products.

The \$120 million Texas wool industry employs about 10,000 Texans and includes fiber production, warehousing and some processing.

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