WOOL — THE NATURAL FIBRE
Wool — the natural fibre

Australian Merino wool is a natural, **biodegradable** and **renewable** fibre.

**Natural fibre**
Natural fibres come from plants or animals.

**Biodegradable fibre**
Wool is totally **biodegradable**. Wool can decompose into soil in a matter of months (depending on soil moisture and temperature), slowly releasing nutrients back into the earth.

**Renewable fibre**
Wool is a completely **renewable** resource. Every year, after **shearing**, sheep grow a new fleece, is removed by **shearing** the following year.

**Synthetic fibres**
Fibres such as polyester, nylon and acrylic are synthetic fibres. Synthetic fibres are man-made mostly derived from **petrochemicals**. They are not natural, **biodegradable** or **renewable**.

**Other natural fibres**
The most common animal–based fibres include:
- wool (sheep)
- cashmere and mohair (goats)
- alpaca (alpacas)
- angora (rabbits)
- silk (silkworms).

The most common plant–based natural fibres include cotton, flax and hemp.

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**Did you know?**
- Wool provides better protection from UV radiation than most synthetics and cotton.
- Wool is safe for babies and woollen bedding can even help them sleep better.
- Wool is naturally fire resistant, doesn’t melt and stick to the skin, and even stops burning when the source of the flame is removed.
- Primitive humans clothed themselves in the woolly skins of wild sheep.
- World War I increased the need for wool to clothe soldiers. England bought the entire Australian wool clip for the duration of the war.
- In 2011 the Royal Australian Mint produced two commemorative coins to celebrate the Australian wool industry. The one dollar coin featured a shearer hard at work and the 20c coin depicted a wheel illustrated with a series of images representing Australia’s rich history of wool production.

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**Glossary**

**Biodegradable** — a substance that will decompose naturally.

**Petrochemicals** — substances obtained from mining petroleum (oil) and natural gas.

**Renewable** — a resource that can be replenished or regrown after it has been used.

**Shearing** — removing the wool from the sheep using specially–designed handpieces.

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**More information**
To find out more about natural fibres, take a look at:
- learnaboutwool.com
- Beyond the Bale magazine: beyondthebale.wool.com

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**Fun Facts About Fibres**

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**Primary Fact Sheet - Wool — The Natural Fibre**