

# 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.

Australian Merino wool is grown by more than 70 million sheep that graze in paddocks across the country.

Australian woolgrowers use modern farming methods that protect the environment and keep sheep healthy.

### 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:

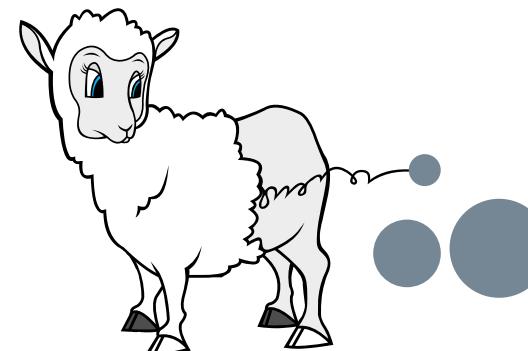
- wool (sheep)
- cashmere and mohair (goats)
- alpaca (alpacas)
- angora (rabbits)
- silk (silkworms).

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

## 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.



**FUN FACTS  
ABOUT  
FIBRES**



## 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.

## More information

To find out more about natural fibres, take a look at:

- [learnaboutwool.com](http://learnaboutwool.com)
- Beyond the Bale magazine: [beyondthebale.wool.com](http://beyondthebale.wool.com)