

# *Fiber A-Z in Simple Terms*

## *By Mary B Donaty*

*January 2013 Rev 1B*

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*Fiber A-Z From the animal to the finished product*

*Mary B Donaty*  
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[www.paradisefoundfiber.com](http://www.paradisefoundfiber.com)

*January 2013*

*Topics covered*

*Shearing; When to Shear; Prep work; Preparing the shears; Your working area; What your processor wants to see in the fiber you send to them; Know your animal; As you shear fiber care; After you shear care for your fiber; Sorting/skirting fiber for show and/or for processing; Hand Dehairing; Finished goods; How to price goods; How to market; Where to market; Advertising.*

*Videos and web items throughout this package.*

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*Fiber A-Z in simple terms By Mary B Donaty January 2013*

*Intro:*

*I am often asked many questions on various stages of fiber handling; I guess it is about time while my brain is still functioning somewhat clearly that I write some of this information down.*

*For me it all started in Carnation, WA in 1980 when I obtained my first spinning wheel, an Ashford traditional single drive, sin-*

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*gle peddle, and began to learn the craft of spinning. Walking & chewing gum can be a challenge but in time I learned to spin. By no means am I a technical spinner. I spin for the joy of accomplishing something and taking the fiber from the animal to a finished sellable product that anyone can afford and will wear with a fond memory of a farm visit.*

*I learned to spin with wool and very shortly thereafter Angora rabbit, then went to llama and eventually into the Alpaca & Pygora goat fibers. At heart I really am comfortable with the hair fibers.*

*So now that we have established that I am old and have been around fiber for a while I will try to capture on paper in simple terms what I have learned and put into practice over the years.*

*I will start with some items I copied off the internet as a guide for terminology and a technical description of what a micron is, also taken from the internet. No sense in reinventing the wheel. You will find links throughout this document which further explain each topic.*

## *Terminology:*

<http://www.ext.colostate.edu/pubs/livestk/01400.html>

<http://kws.atlantia.sca.org/terms.html>

<http://www.tactilefiberarts.com/glossary>

<http://www.textilelinks.com/author/rb/blterms.html>

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<http://www.gatewayalpacas.com/alpaca/alpaca-fiber/fiber-glossary.htm>

*Micron counts explained:*

[http://www.wildfibres.co.uk/html/fibre\\_size.html](http://www.wildfibres.co.uk/html/fibre_size.html)

<http://www.bellaonline.com/articles/art51996.asp>

[http://internationalfleeces.com/docs/IF-Fiber\\_Fineness.pdf](http://internationalfleeces.com/docs/IF-Fiber_Fineness.pdf)

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wool\\_measurement](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wool_measurement)

*Getting started:*

*If we want positive results we need to do our homework and do proper preparation.*

*I am starting this on the assumption that we are starting this process with an animal in hand and are readying ourselves for the shearing process working towards a finished product.*

And something I must say before I say another word.

There is NO 100% right way or wrong way to do anything; it is, after educating yourself on a given subject, what works best for you. And always, safety first, for you and the animal.



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### *Shearing talk:*

*Suggestions to gain confidence:*

*If you have not sheared before, first Google and watch a video or help a friend shear and or just watch a friend shear or tag along with local shearer and learn all you can no matter what type of animal they shear; you will learn. Go watch a dog groomer, sweep the floors for them, whatever it takes to learn. Then take that knowledge and do what works best for you with the animal you have.*

### *What I do:*

*For Pygora goat I use electric shears. My choice is Double K.*



*Double K Clippers*

*They are small, the motor is external and they are fairly quiet. I like a wide medium blade or a number 10 wide.*

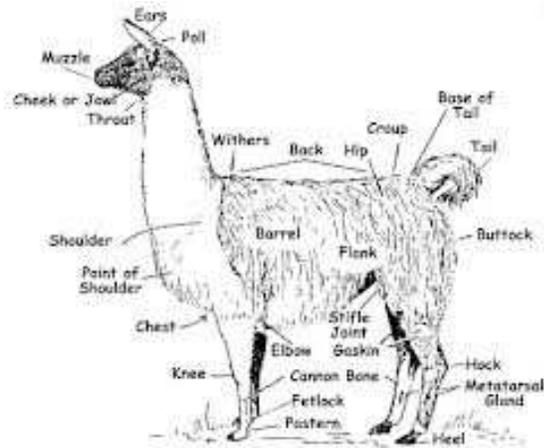
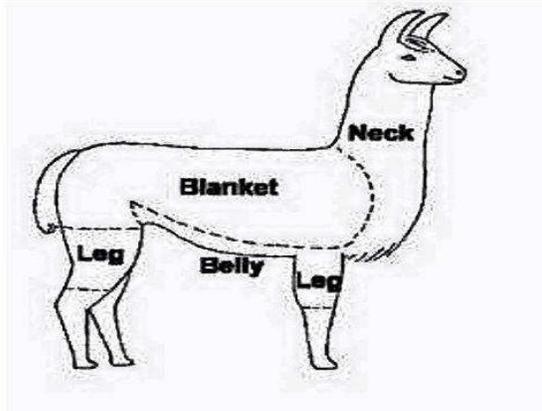




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For alpaca I call a professional shearer. Every square inch of the alpaca needs shearing. Every shearer I have used uses the tie down method. It requires 3 folks to be on hand to do the job and it goes fairly quickly. The alpaca also has very thin skin, so one must be cautious at all times. The alpaca has a grading system for its fiber, the blanket or saddle is considered a #1 grade, the neck is a #2 grade and the legs are a #3 grade. You might find any one of these grades on a different part of the body. Not all are created equal. The grade difference is the Micron count, guard hair, and length of fiber. Both the Suri & the Huacays alpaca should be sheared every year. I have provided a few links and a diagram to offer additional information.

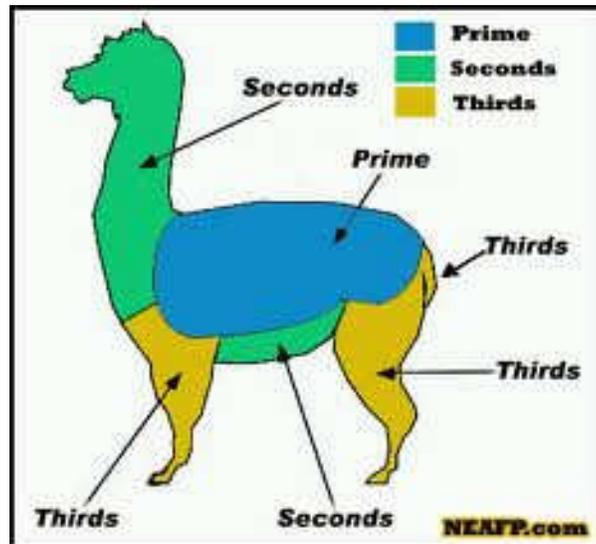


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<http://www.mountairyalpacas.com/alpaca-shearing-movie.html>

<http://www.gatewayalpacas.com/alpaca-farming/alpaca-shearing/alpaca-shearing-blows.htm>

### **BEFORE YOU GET STARTED**

#### Prep work:

*Identify the animals you plan to shear on a given day, get your supplies ready and in working order:*

*Shears, scissors, stripper comb, bags for collecting the fiber, bag for trash fiber, blower, recording sheets, index cards, marker and pen, toe nail clippers, and if you are doing annual shots and/or worming, are the meds in date and do you have all you need to perform the job? If you find lice do you have what you usually use to take care of that problem?*



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*I always put an index card in each bag with the animal's name on it with large marker print and the date of shearing so I can easily read it through the bag. Eventually I also weigh each bag and record that data so I know what my loss is after all is said and done. I put that info on the index card and on my recording sheet which I keep with my copy of what I send to the processor so I have it all at the ready when the fiber is returned.*

### *When to shear*

*In the spring in the PNW we shear as early as we can, weather permitting, usually the very end of May or early June. This is so the animal has the chance to grow fiber for the coming winter for the llama & the alpaca. For the Pygora in most parts of the country you are looking at Spring & Fall shearing so again the animal and the weather will tell you when it is time. If you see your goats starting to rub, don't wait if you are in the window of opportunity; shear. If you are not close to the 6 month mark check for external parasites.*

### *Preparing the shears*

*Before you get started are your blades sharp and is your equipment in working order? Do you have your coolant or whatever blade cleaner you like to use?*

*I will be inserting comments from professional shearers for additional information on the care & feeding of shears. Here are a few more links with very useful information.*

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<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DJ78YSMHGY>

[http://www.dogchannel.com/dog-grooming/grooming/article\\_2030.aspx](http://www.dogchannel.com/dog-grooming/grooming/article_2030.aspx)

<http://reviews.ebay.com.au/How-To-Maintain-Your-Shearing-Clipper?ugid=10000000020287182>

*The photo is just a sample of the possible types of tools one might use.*



### *Your working area*

*Be sure your work area is safe, clean and secure for you and your animal. I always have a broom and a trash bag in a bucket, for ease of moving it around as I work, and make it a point to keep it all clean for each new animal. Is your restraint equipment in place and in working order?*



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## *What does your processor want to see?*

*Cuts even in length, clean, well skirted, well identified fiber. I have asked a few fiber processors to comment and here are their words:*

So what I like to see when fiber arrives...

By Wendy Hallman

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### **1)Fleece in good condition**

Shear your goats when their fleece is a good length and before it starts matting. Fleece that is between 3 and 6 inches long is ideal. Shorter is okay for "C" fiber, but fleeces much longer than 6 inches, may have problems running through some machines. Soft matting is okay as long as you can easily pull the fiber apart by hand, otherwise it is too matted to run through the machines. Nice healthy fleece which is strong and supple is important for a good outcome. If your goat has been stressed, ill or riddled with parasites chances are the fleece will be dry or brittle causing breakage and not the nicest end product. Do not send a mill your moth infested fleece unless you have cleared that with them FIRST.

**2)Skirted fleece.** Before sending/taking your fleece to a mill skirt it (unless you want to pay for that service). Take out any large twigs, brambles, blackberry canes, any areas where there is just guard hair( perhaps the breeches or along the spine), or areas where there is excessive urine stains/matts. Remove second cuts. Many people will trim hooves at the same time the goats are on the stand for shearing. Please make sure you either do the hooves first and sweep up before shearing or pack up the sheared fiber before trimming the hooves. Pieces of hooves in amongst the fiber plays havoc with the teeth on the machines. Try very hard to make sure there is not any hoof trimmings in the fleeces. Skirting your fiber well will save you money (why pay for the stuff that is just going to get tossed?) and you will get a much nicer end product on return.

**3) Clear instructions of what you want done with your fiber.** Fiber processing is not a black and white art. There is a lot of grey area and decisions that the processor needs to make. In order for them to make the right decisions, talk to them and let them know what you are looking for in the finished product. There



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comes a point where in order to get more guard hair removed from the fiber, you will start losing good fiber too. What is more important to you, exceptionally clean fiber with a lower yield, or clean fiber with a higher yield? Good communication will keep you both happy.

Wendy Hallman [whallman@sunflowerpygoras.com]

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## *Getting the most from your fiber processing dollar*

*Preparing your fleece for processing and refinement.*

*By Chuck Armstrong*

*Processing refines your raw fleece and prepares it for products or gifts, either woven (yarn/knit) or non-woven (felt and felt fabric). This processing adds value to your fiber. I do everything I can to make your fiber the best it can be. But I have to be practical and cannot take so long as to delay other clients. So, I can use some help from you.*

*I ask that your fiber has been skirted. That means you have handled your fiber and removed, on a gross level, undesirable matter. What does this mean?*

*Remove foreign matter like poop, mud clumps and muddy tips, straw/hay and other veggie matter, grain pellets, rocks, toe nails, sticks, clothespins etc. Remove undesirable fiber matter like belly hair or large clumps of guard/primary, or matted fiber and shorts. Remember the old saying 'garbage in, garbage out'. The less I start with the less there will be in what I return to you.*

*Skirting can save a little of your processing dollar since initial processing fees are based on INCOMING weight. But, more significant, is the quality of the processed fiber. If veggie makes its way through to the end it can negatively affect whatever its end value.*

*Some tips to get the most out of your fiber.*

*Cria tip if at all possible.*

*Remove or mitigate veggie and dirt contaminants around the barn, stall, paddock and pastures. Minimize pasture areas under trees. Sweep out stalls and rake paddock areas especially when getting close to shearing time.*

*Clean the animal prior to shearing. It is a lot easier to get a lot of "stuff" out of the fiber while still on the animal. Just before shearing some people use a leaf blower (do this outside the barn). We like to use a shop-vac and do it inside the barn. Either of these gets significant dust, dirt and veggie off the fleece. BTW, your shearer will thank you too!*



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*Already shorn. Either use a fiber sorter or do a quick skirt.*

*Sweep or vacuum the shearing area between animals.*

*Tips up. Look for muddy tips, excessive guard/primary hairs, and of course veggie matter.*

*Cut end up (tips down) look for short cuts, skin or skin flakes. I like to grab a bunch of fiber and gently pull at the cut ends with my fingers. Shorts come right off.*

*Then, finally, when getting ready to bag up to send to processing, handle all the fiber. Quick and easy way is grab handfuls (not too much) and squeeze. You will be surprised how easily you can find veggie (crunch- crunch) or other stuff that you missed on visual inspection.*

*Remember to make sure the fleece has dried and is not wet before you tighten or seal the bag. If long term storing I like to put a dryer sheet in each bag to help deter moths, bugs.*

*Bagging your fleece. I prefer clear plastic bags. Not the milky white or black garbage bags. For some reason the milky white bags create a lot more static than the clear ones. And I want to see what is in the bag.*

*Put your name, animal name and any pertinent other info on a sheet of paper or 3x5 card in the bag so I can easily see it from the outside. Over communication is good. So if you want to write info on the bag also, great!*

*If shipping or transporting you can save a lot of space by removing as much air from the bag. Shipping charges are based on space more than weight. USPS Parcel Post seems to be the most economical in my experience.*

*Hope this helps. Feel free to contact us with questions or to discuss further.*

*Now sit back and your (even more) beautiful fiber will be coming back to you soon!*

*Chuck*

*Evergreen Fleece Processing, LLC*

*Chuck at Evergreen [info@nofiberleftbehind.com]*

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## *Your animal and getting started*

*This is a great time to observe your animal and to have a close encounter of the positive kind. I chat to my animals all of the*



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*time and keep as calm a presence as I can no matter what is going on so they take my lead in being at peace with the process. Look them over. Identify if your goat has wattles; if it is one of your boys ID the exact location of personal parts; if it is a llama, figure out their comfort zone before starting.*

*Next I blow the animal (remember I do not show, show shearing will follow in this commentary) I start at the back bone and work my way down the sides, always head to tail or tail to head never in circles unless you want matts/knots. I have found serious blowing really helps in every step from here on out. You can use a leaf blower, an animal blower or even a hair dryer on cool. I like to have the tool made for the job whenever I can so I use my Circuiteer Hot Blower/Dryer. The animals seem to really enjoy the experience once they realize the blower is not going to eat them.*

*Some say not to blow because you lose the crimp. You can not permanently blow the crimp out of the fiber. It is part of the fiber; a spritz of water will return the crimp when needed.*

*After blowing and checking the animal I am ready to shear, bags & index cards ready and off I go a shearing. Mark each bag as you go along. You will NEVER remember who is who by the 3<sup>d</sup> critter no matter how good you think you are. I never shear solo; I always have someone there to assist. You never know what might go wrong and it is always good to have backup.*

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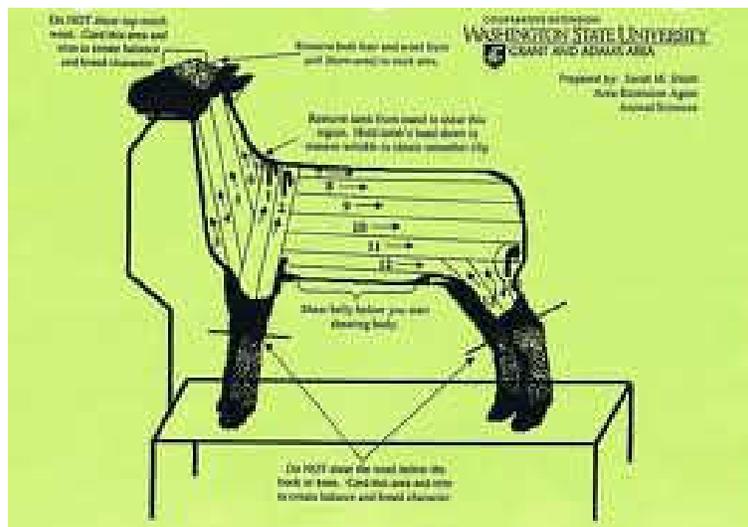
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*Safety first. !*

### Shearing

Start at the top line and often that is a toss fiber. Many have a great deal of guard hair there in the goat or VM on the llama that the blower will just not do justice to. Then I go down each side and review how all is going, if I have a fidgeting goat then I mix it up and do a leg then the belly then another leg and or the neck etc. If the fiber is at all damp do not tightly seal the bag until you know the fiber is dry. Storing on a cement floor only adds moisture to the bag. Processing as soon as one can is advisable but not always possible. Just keep it in as dry of a place and critter (moth etc) free as possible until you can get to the processing stage. Never put fiber tightly in a plastic bag; it needs air and too tight can cause friction and agitation which can cause felting. In other words handle with reasonable care.



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*When I do the llamas I use just scissors because it works best for me and I really prefer to keep 1/2inch of fiber on the animal. Llamas have a very thick hide but they also sunburn very easily. If I have a moving llama I just go with them. We use a restraining chute, so I have them in one place but they can still bob around. Sometimes it can be an interesting adventure. But the fiber is worth the trip.*

*For alpacas here we have a professional shearer do the job, my Double K would not do the job and it is more extensive than I am willing to take on. And I want the fiber in the best shape as possible.*

## *Shearing for Show:*

*Since I do not show fleece I asked someone that does to supply the following:*

*Pygora:*

*How do you prepare a Pygora goat fleece for competition?*

*By Linda Garrett*

*Showing your own goats fleece in a completion has a lot of personal satisfaction. Your presentation is as important as your fleece. First start off with clean fleece. The less disturbed with blowing and combing the better. You always want to show the natural condition. Make sure that you shear or clip in uniform strokes. Remove any second cuts. As you shear/clip lay out your beautiful fleece on a flat surface until ready to box. Place the entire soiled extra fleece in a plastic bag that will be included in your presentation. You want to show the entire yield from that goat.*

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When it is time to box your fleece you need to be very selective. In the bottom of the file box place the bag of the not so perfect fleece. Make sure that the bag is flat and evenly placed. Second start to layer each section of fleece that you have sheared/clipped making sure that they are all going in the same direction. This will take some time but it will pay off in points with the judge. Once your box is filled with the beautiful Pygora fleece write a note that states that the entire fleece is in the box including the plastic bag on the bottom. This will show off the yield of the goat. I always hold out some beautiful curls and place them on the top of the fleece. Now you are ready to show off your Pygora fleece.

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My only words of wisdom would be – no washing - skirt for any mats or large vegetable matter – put it in a large enough box that it is not overly compacted – weigh your fleece even if entry forms do not state to, quantity per animal is also important - when shearing, watch for 2<sup>nd</sup> clips

I know you know all of these things and so much more but of all tips, I would say these would be the ones that could put you at the bottom or top quickly ☺

*Lisa Grzeskowiak*

*Greystone Homestead*

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*Llama for show:*

[http://www.lamaregistry.com/Downloads/ShowDivision/FleeceArticles/ILR-SD\\_FA700\\_Fleece\\_Article-1\\_Preparing\\_Your\\_Fleece\\_for\\_Showing.pdf](http://www.lamaregistry.com/Downloads/ShowDivision/FleeceArticles/ILR-SD_FA700_Fleece_Article-1_Preparing_Your_Fleece_for_Showing.pdf)

*Alpaca for show:*

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k7z3-Mlbsf8>



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## *As you shear fiber care:*

*I decide with every cut, what is good and what is not, so I am doing some of the skirting as I move along the shearing process.*

*The fiber that has lots of guard hair in the goat fiber I toss, the matts toss, the over-stained fiber put in a separate bag you can work on that later, some of it just needs a prewash before use.*

*Check* *with your processor first, some will accept prewashed fleece some will not or will rewash it anyway for their fee.*

*I lurk on a yahoo chat line where the fiber processors visit and recently there was a lot of chatter on fiber NOT being properly pre-washed to their standards. I can not stress enough, find out what those standards are for your particular processor or do not be surprised if you are billed for washing anyway. They have very expensive equipment and maintenance and cleaning are constant. A fleece not properly cleaned can really gum up the process in a flash.*

*For washing fleece for my personal use, I use Dawn or Ivory dish soap and a drop or two goes a long way in my hand spun yarns. Your hair fibers react differently than wool. You can use hotter water for hair, the trick is NO agitation and no wringing; press & squeeze is OK. Rinse, Rinse, Rinse!!!! I personally do not send fi-*

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*ber prewashed to the mill; I do not feel I would do a job to satisfy their equipment needs.*

### *After you shear, care for your fiber:*

*Preparing Raw fiber to be processed: Weigh, Name, and record every bag, on the bag, in the bag & in your record keeping.*

*I use my index cards here and mark the card and insert the card into the bag with the writing showing through. I can then see at a glance which bag has which fiber in it.*

*I have several ways to weigh my fiber; I am fortunate to own an animal scale and I have an old baby scale, either work well for large bags of fiber. For my day to day yarn weighing etc, I have a kitchen scale.*

### *Next step:*

*Sorting/skirting fiber/weigh and record*

*If you sort as you shear you are part way there, but I find sometimes with a moving beast I do not do as good of a job as I would like. There is no perfect system or I have not developed one yet.*

*I have a blowing box that I use for a skirting table and then can blow the fiber in the same location.*



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*This box is inexpensive to make and is in place of a \$tumbler\$. Mine is made of 2x2's & plastic mesh and is on legs. Here is a link to another type of the same box. I prefer mine elevated and you could use saw horses for legs as well.*

<http://tcllamas.wordpress.com/2012/12/08/preparing-your-llama-or-alpaca-fleece-with-a-fiber-blow-out-box/>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kLULrhINexc&NR=1>

*The name of the game is what you send in to your processor is a direct reflection of what you get back. The processor does NOT work miracles and should not be expected to do so.*

*Skirting; lay out the fleece or part of the fleece on a screen table or in your mesh blowing box. Look it over, remove all non fiber items and odd bits of fiber that do not conform to the quality of the fleece in front of you.*

*If it is Pygora, you are looking for large clumps of guard hair or extremely discolored urine stained bits, matts etc., anything that you missed in the shearing process. For alpaca I am looking for shorts (second cuts) and mostly hairs that do not conform to the overall fine fleece. For llama at this point I also hand dehair.*

*HOW to dehair llama. Start with raw undisturbed fiber. If you hold a clump in your hand having the part that was sheared from their body close to the palm of your hand the extended hairs will show you 2 lengths. The soft down and the coarser*

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*unmistakable guard hairs. Hold the clump tightly and pull the guard hair from your holdings. You will be amazed by this process and will enjoy the lovely down. Yes this is time consuming. Option B is to find a mill that does dehairing with a dehairing machine. What can you do with the guard hair? If you know a fishing lure maker they will enjoy some of it but a little bit goes a long way; the rest I just toss.*

*I have yet to try hand dehairing Pygora, I recently downloaded a working with combs video book but have not had the chance to play with or even watch the video, so perhaps more on this later.*

*Next I blow the fiber to remove chafe and hopefully some of the guard hair and certainly dirt. If you have never done this you will be amazed at how much blows out of the fleece even though you have blown the animal before shearing. Do not blow into a matted mess. Blow from all sides and blow from the bottom. The purpose is to open up the fiber and release as much unwanted material as possible. This is a few seconds process. Wear a mask.*

*Next Bag, tag, mark, record, weigh this item for your records, and at this point start your process deciding which fleece you are pairing up with which fleece for processing. Only you can make those decisions. Choices: like colors, fiber type, grade OR are you blending to create a unique color, mixing white & black to give you a grey etc. Or do you want your processor to give you*

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*a roving of a section of one color then a section of another color then repeat the process. Be creative and work with your processor. COMMUNICATE with your processor, and if you have one that does not communicate find another one that does.*

*A few helpful bits on the subject:*

<http://www.spinderellas.com/skirting.html>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ovj3hH6qmsw>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wc4p49mmGYw>

<http://delphialpacas.com/evaluating-alpaca-fiber.php>

*Your fiber is now ready for processing. Have you made your wishes clear?*

*I strongly suggest in LARGE print on bright color paper inserted in your bag; what is in the bag and exactly what you want the processor to do for you; speak the same language. Date it, have all of your contact info there and indicate how you want the bag marked in return. Remember your bag might sit at the processor for weeks, more likely months in this state. I always double bag to help avoid puncture of the bag exposing the contents of the bag to the elements. Then also create an itemized list for your records and one copy for the processor that shows all that you are leaving in their care. You cannot nor can you expect them to remember 3-6 months down the road what*



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*took place on the day of drop off or shipping of the goods. Leave NOTHING to Chance.*

## *Jan 2013 update – Hand Dehairing – Pygora*

*I personally have not tried to hand dehair so I went to the professionals and then the individuals who have done so. The following is what they each had to offer, along with input from a mill on dehairing.*

*Robin Russo has a wonderful video which I bought myself for Christmas this year. It is well worth the small investment and your time to learn about combs. Since her video did not address Pygora I contacted her directly and asked her to advise how she would go about it. The following is her explanation on the how to hand dehair Pygora.*

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Mary:

Dehairing Pygora by hand is tricky and time-consuming. It depends on "how long the hairs are". I have seen a wide range! I found a fleece that seemed like the hairs were long enough to come out easily. After I washed the raw fleece, I put a handful at a time on a table with a good light. I then picked out the hairs which were dark and shiny. Then, I put the fiber on a set of double row Louet mini combs and combed the fiber. It was then easier to see (and pick out) the fibers I had missed. I went back and forth on the combs a couple of times and always found a "few" more hairs. I then spun the fiber directly from the comb. Even then I found a few hairs as I was spinning, which I pulled out. So.....it can be done, if you have lots of time and a set of very fine combs. If you use larger combs with a larger diameter tine, your loss of "good" fiber will be too great. Good luck and I am glad you like the video.

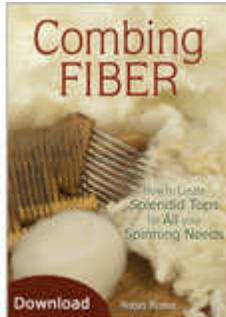
Robin Russo



# Fiber A-Z in Simple Terms

## By Mary B Donaty

January 2013 Rev 1B



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*Interweave store*

*The Woolery offers many helpful tips and they are helpful when contacted. Check out their video on Combs:*

<http://www.youtube.com/user/TheWoolery>

*I then also asked the Pygora population if you dehair, how do you do it? Here are a few replies:*

*Hi Mary,*

*I have been dehairing my own fleece because I only have two goats and don't want to go through the expense of sending it out to be processed.*

*What I do is sit down with 3 bags and a dog slicker brush (wire teeth, like a carder), in front of the TV or outside if the weather's nice. One bag has my sheared, unskirted fleece, the second bag is for waste hair, short cuts, and yucky stuff (this is usually a paper bag with the top folded over so it stays upright and open), and the third bag holds cleaned up fleece. I grab a small amount of raw fleece, arrange it so it's going in the same direction, and hold one end over the waste bag while I brush out the other end gently with the slicker brush. Then I grasp the end of the fleece I've just brushed and do the same to the other end. The shorter guard hairs will generally come out in the brush, as will any hay, dirt, flakes of skin, etc.*



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*Then I clean out the brush and examine what I've got left and pick out any longer guard hairs that remain in the fleece. That goes into the fleece bag, and I start again. It is a time-consuming, dirty process (I wear coveralls when I do it!) but it works really well with minimal waste.*

*Then I pack it loosely into a mesh laundry bag and submerge it in warm water and a bit of Dawn detergent in the tub to get it clean. I air dry it in the bag as well so it doesn't felt up from too much friction. I don't know if this is overkill but I don't want to mess it up, so I'm super careful with it when it's wet.*

*Oh, another way to get out the hair without a brush is to grab the lock of fleece from the top (the end that was nearest the animal when it was attached, and bend the lock around your finger. The shorter guard hairs stick up and can be pulled out pretty easily. I was doing it this way at first but found that it doesn't work well when you have dandruff in the fleece like I did for a couple years.*

*One thing that I do with any waste from skirting or dehairing is to use it as mulch in the raspberry patch. It helps to keep down weeds and keep moisture in. Any organic matter is a fertilizer bonus. Keeps it out of the trash as well!*

*Chris Pellerin  
Montague, MA*

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*I asked the mills to give me a simple explanation of what a dehairing machine does. They were happy to explain and supplied a great link.*

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*Hi Mary-*

*The principle behind the technology is centrifugal force. There are drums that look similar to the carders, but one/two of the rollers goes very fast, throwing off the heavier and longer fibers, i.e. hair and VM. This machine works best with cashmere, qiviut, pygora, camel, wolf, llama, etc. as it really does throw off the hair and the downy fibers are left. We find the fiber truly has to be a double coated fleece to justify the cost of running for our customers. The process does take a long time, (thus the cost) and up to 5-6 passes is sometimes required to rid the fibers of the hair, but what is left is luscious*

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*We have not seen much in the way of separating with alpaca due to the fact that much of the primary and secondary fibers are thrown off in the waste bin. Too much loss, and with our micron testing of alpaca, do not see much difference....less than .5 of a micron. We have a report on our website about our findings; though we are planning more tests with other fibers, just do not have the time. Also have a video on the website too of Dirty Hairy!*

*Blessings*

*Jim and Lynn Snell*

[www.spinderellas.com](http://www.spinderellas.com)

801.668.0563

<http://www.spinderellas.com/cardermovies.html>

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*Now it is time to work on other things fiber.*

*Dyes:*

<http://www.pburch.net/dyeing/proteindyes.shtml>

<http://www.wcushing.com/documents/AcidDyeInstructions.pdf>

<http://www.jacquardproducts.com/assets/jacquard-site/product-pages/dyes/acid/Acid%20Dye%20Instructions.pdf>

<https://www.dharmatrading.com/html/eng/9257685-AA.shtml?lnav=information.html>

*Felt making:*

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lkdGCiu7Tzk>

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<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cev9MKLzecs>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vxeLGw1gGqA&NR=1>

*Know your wheel and learn to spin videos:*

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xY5YWre-op0>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cfCzBLoqDV5>

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FrZcr7\\_qXFY](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FrZcr7_qXFY)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tDecQQjCqR8>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?NR=1&v=j46E58DM-fo&feature=endscreen>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g9Q4jKficJ4&NR=1&feature=endscreen>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s01JVb2eaz4>

*Dehairing machines*

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4oWYzQqj54s>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=obirtUOb7wc>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=syWp8Nku2uU>

<http://www.spinderellas.com/cardermovies.html>

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## *Identifying you, and Marketing your goods:*

*Roving, Spinning, felt, finished goods?*

*This is where you have to decide, what is your expertise, time allotment to offer, wants, likes, and dislikes. What is your fiber strength? What is your goal? What do you enjoy? What do you want out of any of this?*

*Raw material:*

*This is where I will throw in a word of caution; Pygora & Llama fibers and any fiber that needs dehairing, are not fibers you want to put out there unless it is put in the hands of an experienced fiber person. To an unknowing person it will become a negative and word of mouth can be a killer for you and the critter type. If you really want to do this, then you need each sale to have a complete "how to process this" from its raw state accompanying it, to protect yourself. Just because you explain it to them only about 2% of the conversation will sink in to a person new to the product. The good is quickly forgotten, the bad impression seems to have a long life.*

*Whatever you choose presentation, presentation, presentation is the key. Just because you have something does not mean a thing. It is how you offer it and how well prepared you are and how knowledgeable you are on your product is that will make it sell. Don't just talk the talk, walk the walk. You have to be a*

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*people person and be willing to answer the same questions over & over again. When you sell you are a teacher. And remember everyone has different learning skills, express all in several ways to get your thoughts on all subjects to your target recipient.*

*Where to sell?*

*You need to explore what your local and internet options are and what you are willing to put into it. Farmers Markets, craft fairs, travel to fiber events and be a vendor, local business, local yarn store, co-op, guilds, spin-in's, the list can be endless but every part of the country has different ways to offer these opportunities. Research your area, your costs to be part of each, and assess if it is worth your time. What type of traffic do these opportunities pull in? And what is the mix of that number, what is the type of clientele? Maybe the number is high but perhaps the mix is not right for your venue. Internet, etsy, facebook groups, your own web etc.....all personal decisions. And keep them current.*

*For me what is working now: I have tried it all, Farmers markets, on line, in shops, events, shows, spin ins. Etc... What I provide is a package deal and do it here at the farm. I give an educational farm visit and talk all about the animals, which is followed by a trip into my world of fiber called the Fiber Shack, where I have hundreds upon hundreds of items I make by hand from our fiber producing animals. In the end this is where my path led me. I also live on a destination for vacation Island, a getaway trip*

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*for the city folk, and these visitors provide me with my biggest sales.*

*Once you figure out the how and where, they will lead you down the path of walking towards your desired goal of success.*

*Then MARKET it! You need to advertise, you need to get known, and you need to do it wisely. Link your web to others, many, many newspapers, have free event advertising pages, if you qualify you can get yourself out there that way. The thing to look for is how frequently will your ad be displayed, newspapers with a one time shot are usually NOT worth the \$ but any web links, Ravelry links/contacts, Facebook etc. will keep you visible on a more frequent basis. Keep it clean and to the point.*

*KISS - Keep it Sweetly Simple.*

*You usually have 3 times of someone seeing something before they take the 30 seconds to actually read it. So make it memorable and clear. Be sure to be part of fiber groups in your area, even if you cannot attend the gatherings, do something to be part of the group.*

*Do you have a web? You should. Make it clean and user friendly and keep it current. I cannot stress that enough.*

*If you are participating at fairs/events etc. have handouts, again clean and to the point. The very BEST tool is a simple striking rack card. It has the most possible places to be used. Design a*

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*business card and an unmistakable logo and use it. ID recognition is important. I have been at this in this location for nearly 15 years and I still have locals pop in and or drive by and say wow I wondered what this was all about, how long have you been here? And this after I have been interviewed by many a newspaper and on the radio; hold 3 events here a year, etc. etc... the point being you never get to stop promoting. And get to know the people in your community who can open doors for you.*

*Back to the subject of presentation. Offer selection, well displayed, and all items marked with detail of what it is. Establish a pricing system that covers your cost. Remember you are teaching and educating and you want as many as possible to experience what you have to offer, so price accordingly. Keep commitments, be prompt and honest.*

*How to price:*

*If you are product singular then all costs associated in creating that product needs to be taken into consideration for you to establish how much your costs are vs how much you are willing to sell the goods for, based on what the market will bear in your area. And this all goes back to what is your end goal. If you have a varied product base then all of your costs rolled together will give you more leeway to make more profit on some items and sell others for less to meet the market you are dealing in and hopefully balance out. It is not a perfect world and there is NO*



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*rule, it is all your choice and all based on what and why you are doing what you are doing this for.*

*Here I have a 3 animal base and roll it all together and that is what works best for me. Keep good records, document, document, document, no guessing games; be sure of what you are doing.*

*Things to remember:*

*You have to keep identifying your area and what is available to you; things change. For me it is a 24/7/365 effort. And finally after years and years I can see a light at the end of a tunnel and I do not believe it to be an oncoming train. I also do this for the love of it all, and the rewards of caring for my animals and in return getting back their lovely fiber which I can convert into something a perfect stranger wants to own and wear proudly.*

*That is what makes it all work for me.*

*There is no magic button, no quick way to make it happen. You have to do your homework and then make the most of what you have to work with and what is available in your area and LOVE what you are doing.*

*I hope these words help some in the how to get from A-Z in your world of fiber.*



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*I am always available to answer any questions. I do not profess to have all the answers but I will give it a go or point you in a direction to find the answer for your particular need.*

### Books:

*There are sooooo many out there but a few worth noting:*



*And there are so many dye books as well*



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*Magazines of note:*

*Spin-Off, Wild Fibers, CQ Camelids, Alpaca Culture*

*Happy Fiber trails and Critter hugs to all, and to all a good day!*

*Mary B Donaty*

