

Wool: Should it be Your First Choice in Cold Weather Wear?

As a consumer, you have many options in your winter wear. Depending on where you live, during the cold, winter months, you'll want to be layered as much as possible, for optimum warmth. An option for clothing that can be worn during the colder weather is wool.

What is Wool?



Sheep are the primary source in the growing of wool fibers.

Basically, wool is the fur coat that sheep grow. This helps keep them warm and can also keep you warm. Centuries ago, our ancestors learned how to shear fur from these animals. They then took that fur and transformed it to what we know today as yarn. That yarn can be weaved into sweaters, blankets, and other items to help keep us warm.

Other animals can also be used in the making of wool. They include goats and camels.



Above you will find someone holding wool just after being sheered from a sheep.

How is it Made?

Wool, as with other fibers like cotton, linen, and silk, are stretched and woven together. The longer the wool fiber is, the coarser it is, being as long as 14 inches. For fine wools, the wool is shorter, being about 1.5 inches to 3 inches long. Wool is a coarser fiber than cotton, linen, or silk. Wool fibers typically are colored as white, but can also be brown or black. As you look at a wool garment, you may see waviness in that garment. This is because the fiber, when woven can have as many as 30 waves per inch.

Wool is resistant to breakage and is very flexible when stretched. However, wool is susceptible to breakage when it is wet. Wool garments have an ability to retain their shape and do not wrinkle as many other types of fibers, like cotton. Wool garments, based on their woven fibers, are considered very light materials.

There are many countries that make wool. They include:

- Australia
- Russia
- New Zealand
- Kazakstan
- India

The United States categorizes wool that has never been used as virgin wool as other countries call it new wool. Overall, the world has a short supply of wool and is continually working to reclaim formerly used wool or wool that has been processed, but never used. Virgin wool or new wool has the best durability over wool that has been reclaimed. Reclaimed wool tends to have inferior quality because it is damaged during this process. The best wool to use is always the virgin wool.

How is it Worn?

Wool is unlike any other wearable substance. Most likely, you are looking at wool to be worn as a sweater, especially during cold weather. Wool is also woven to make fine fabrics and blankets, along with being used in rugs and home furnishings. Wool is very durable, and resistant to moisture. At the same time, wool fibers retain heat-insulating air, allowing you to remain warmer in cold weather.

According to the Encyclopedia Britannica, wool retains 16 to 18 percent of its weight in moisture. Because of this, when you wear wool and sweat, that sweat is absorbed into the wool fibers. With other fabrics, your sweating is noticeable and is felt. With wool, the fact that your sweat is absorbed, allows better comfort in wear. The sweat isn't as noticeable while wearing wool. A bonus is that in cold weather, wool garments retain the moisture longer, allowing for release of the moisture over slower periods of time, drying out more slowly. When you sweat and the garment dries too quickly, your body gets colder quicker.

Major consumers of wool include:

- United Kingdom
- United States
- Japan

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Conclusion:

If you are making decisions about the types of clothing to purchase for cold weather, think about purchasing wool garments. The material is made from sheep and other animals that depend on that same material to keep them warm. What can keep them warm has the ability to keep you warm too. Wool is resistant to breakage, traps heat-insulating air in its fibers, and slowly releases trapped moisture. All of these items allow for wool garments to keep you warm in the winter. These factors should all play into your decision on the purchase of wool garments to help keep you warm.