



The British Wool Marketing Board

Factsheet

- 1** At present (2014) there are more than 45,000 sheep farmers in the UK.
- 2** There are 60 pure breeds of sheep and as many cross breeds in the UK.
- 3** The average sheep farmer has a flock of 350 sheep.
- 4** Sheep are normally shorn every year between April and June.
- 5** Once the sheep have been shorn the wool is rolled and put into 'sheets' for its journey to the British Wool Marketing Board.
- 6** At the British Wool Marketing Board depot the wool is graded which means it is sorted, by hand, into different types and quality.
- 7** Grading is carried out by a grader. It takes a grader 5 years to learn how to do their job.
- 8** Graders look at the characteristics of the wool such as colour, strength, length and fineness.
- 9** After the wool has been graded it is put into bales and a 1kg sample is taken from it.
- 10** The sample is taken to a laboratory to be tested. The results are collected and sent to auction. These test results help people to know how good the wool is and how much it should cost.
- 11** An auction is held at the British Wool Marketing Board head office. This is where the wool is bought and sold. The bidding in the auction is all done on computers.
- 12** Because there are so many breeds in the UK, the price of wool can vary. Some grey coarse wools can be quite cheap but other, speciality wools, can be much more expensive.
- 13** When a buyer has bought his or her wool it can be exported to other countries. If it stays in the UK it will be processed to make it suitable for use.
- 14** If the wool is going to be used to make fabric it is carded then combed to align the fibres before spinning.
- 15** Wool is spun into a woollen yarn which is often used in carpets and knitting. It is quite a 'hairy' yarn with fibres sticking out of the yarn at different angles.
- 16** British Wool goes into many different products but mainly carpet, knitwear, bedding and insulation.
- 17** Of all the wool grown worldwide, British Wool is renowned for its warmth, durability, bounce and comfort.
- 18** Through the shepherd's crook symbol, the British Wool Marketing Board promotes UK grown wool at home and abroad as a prestigious 'natural' fibre.
- 19** The British Wool Marketing Board is a farmers' organisation, run on co-operative principles, to assist every producer to obtain the best price for his or her wool.