



Information for customers

including Terms & Conditions for fleece processing

Placing an order

Firstly, please contact us by phone or email to discuss your fleece and make a booking. Unfortunately, we are booked up for over a year in advance, so please plan well ahead!

We have a minimum charge of £90 + VAT per individual batch, which equates to around 1.5 kg incoming weight for alpaca fleece to be spun into yarn, or 3 kg for fleece to be made into rovings. Sheep fleece tends to lose a lot more weight in washing, so we'd need at least 2 kg for yarn and 4 kg for rovings. We can, of course, process smaller quantities, but the minimum charge will apply to the batch, so for smaller fleeces, you might want to just hold onto them to process along with the next year's fleece – they'll be fine for a year (or even two) providing they're completely dry, stored at a reasonably even temperature and kept safe from moths or mice.

Bookings and processing dates

Although we work very hard to try to keep to the target dates for processing that we have agreed with you, please note that this isn't always possible (for example, if an important piece of machinery is unexpectedly out of action and we need to arrange repair). If there is a specific date that you need your yarn by, please let us know when you make your booking and we will do our very best to meet this date. Please also advise of any changes to bookings as soon as possible.

Preparing your fleece

Before processing, your fleece needs to be **sorted** – separating the long, soft 'blanket' and neck fleece from the shorter, coarser fibre from the belly and legs; and **skirted** – carefully picking through to remove any remaining coarser fibre and as much vegetable matter or other contamination as possible. We can only make beautiful yarn from good quality alpaca fibre – not from bags of thirds, or from hay, seeds, twigs, toenails, or alpaca poo! Our processes can remove a certain amount of guard hair and vegetable matter but we can't work miracles; so if your fleece is very contaminated, so will your yarn be. (Or to put it more positively, the better skirted your fleece, the better quality your yarn will be and the higher the return rate.)

For tips on how to do this, please see the **Preparing your Fleece** section on our website or download our **Five simple steps to prepare a fleece for processing**.

If you have asked us to sort your fleece, or if you send us unsorted fleeces that include fibre unsuitable for processing, we will remove coarse or short fibre at a cost of £10.00 + VAT per kg of rejected fibre. However, this service does not include removing vegetable matter.

Fleeces with a lot of vegetable matter, will need to be skirted by hand to remove the worst of the contamination at a cost of £35.00 per hour. But this won't remove every last bit, so there will almost certainly be some vegetable matter in the finished yarn. And we may be unable to process a fleece which is excessively dirty or contaminated with vegetable matter, in which case we will return it to you at your cost or dispose of it. Unfortunately, this can often apply to cria fleeces, unless you are able to spend the time skirting it yourself.

Sending us your fleece

Please send your fleece to us a couple of weeks before your processing date – we'll send you a reminder if necessary. Put the fleece into a plastic bag inside a box or strong bag (stuff it in as much as you can – it won't come to any harm for a short time) and send it via post, Parcelforce or other courier to:

The Border Mill
Unit 3, Station Road
Industrial Estate
Duns
TD11 3HS

Please include an order form for each batch of fleece to be processed separately (but there's no need to include all the contact details on each one if you've got several batches).

Processing your fleece

We take great care with every fleece we process and do our very best to maximise the return rate without reducing the quality of your yarn. Return rates for alpaca fleece will vary from less than 50% (rarely, but it can happen) for very coarse fleeces (which we appreciate may be from much-loved older beasties) to over 80%. Our pricing system is designed to take into account the weight lost in tumbling, washing and fibre separating. The average return rates are about 75% for alpaca and 60% for wool (although this does vary a lot by breed) and most of the weight lost is dirt, grease, debris, vegetable matter, short cuts and guard hair (i.e. not the sort of things you want in your yarn) – very little of the weight lost is 'good' fleece.

We're very proud of the yarn we make, and agonise over anything that doesn't come out as well as we would like. But you need to be aware that the downside of having equipment small enough to process an individual fleece is that we don't make 'perfect' yarn – there may be some variation in thickness or colour, the occasional slub or knot, and some bits of vegetable matter (moss in particular is really difficult to remove, as it clings to the fibre). We do, however, make beautifully soft yarns with great character and impeccable provenance.

The average yarn weights that we specify are indicative only – every fleece is different and there will be variation in the yarn weight between batches (for instance, darker colours often spin out heavier than white fleeces). We're getting pretty good at judging the right weight for different yarns and aim to be within 10% of the average, but we can't guarantee to achieve a specific weight.

We occasionally find that a fleece is 'tender', meaning that there are weak points along the length of the fibres causing them to break easily. We try to identify these fleeces before we start processing, but it isn't always possible to identify them in advance. Sometimes these fleeces can still be spun, but there will be small slubs or 'pills' in the yarn. Others can't be spun at all: if this happens, we will only charge you for processing up to the stage at which the problem became apparent.

Invoicing and payment

On completion of your order, we'll email your invoice for fleece processing, including delivery and VAT. The prices charged will be as advertised on our website at the time that we start work on your fleece, plus VAT at the rate applying at the time of invoicing. Your yarn or other products will be dispatched following payment of this invoice, which is due within 15 days. We reserve the right to apply interest charges of 5% per calendar month to any invoices outstanding after 30 days.

We prefer to receive payment by bank transfer if at all possible, but you can also pay by cheque.