

FARMING FASHION

Wool

Processors are important bridges that connect raw material and finished product, as well as having the opportunity to match-make producers and designers and to facilitate the three-way conversations that are vital in supporting strong and transparent collaborations. Spinning mills process wool and other natural fibres into yarn for knit and weave. The following lists of questions appear in *Farming Fashion: Wool* in the section on Processing. These lists have been written as a starting point for farmers and designers interested in working with mills to process fibre for garments.

How Do Designers Brief Mills?

After using the raw material for fibre as an inspiration, designers can consider the below as they work closely with farmers and mills to create yarn or cloth for specific projects.

What to consider in advance:

- What is your proposed end product? Are you creating outerwear or something worn close to the skin?
- What breed of sheep does your fleece come from and is it appropriate for your desired end product?
- Has the fleece been sorted and graded in preparation for spinning?
- Do you need to produce woollen or worsted spun yarn?
- Is the yarn for knitting or weaving?
- If knitting, is it for machine or hand knitting and if machine what kind of machine?
- Have you discussed requirements with anyone involved in processing after spinning?
- Do you know what gauge or weight to spin to? How many plies?
- For both yarns and cloth, do you have specifications you wish the mill to match?
- Do you have a cloth sample of over 3 metres you can send the mill?
- Are you willing for your fibre to be blended with another, to improve quality or handle?
- Have you factored lead times into your production schedule?
- If you are working directly with a farmer, what is their timeline for producing fleece?
- Do you need the yarn supplied in balls, *skeins* or cones?

Make sure to discuss with the mill:

- Can you send or take in a fleece sample before committing to the order?
- How do they advise your fleece be processed? Does this match with your expectation?
- Will they charge for storing your fleece or finished yarn?
- What fibre do they keep in inventory for blending purposes? Is it traceable to farm?
- What is their current lead time? This may vary from what is stated on their website.
- What yield in finished yarn should you expect to receive?
- What will they charge for processing and what will be the final unit cost?

