



British Wool

Press briefing pack 1.1





Contents



Click on the buttons to navigate through the document.

Overview

Topics and key messages

References and resources



About British Wool

British Wool is a farming co-operative, owned by approximately 35,000 sheep farmers in the UK. It collects, grades, sells and promotes British Wool to the international wool textile industry for use in flooring, furnishings and apparel.





The role of British Wool

British Wool is involved in all sections of the wool supply chain. Our main objectives are to provide a high level of service to our members, wool producers and to maximise the value of their wool. British Wool's role includes:



Shearing and wool handling training

As the approved training provider for shearing and wool handling courses in the UK, British Wool

has a training programme in place to support the next generation of shearers and wool handlers in learning and developing vital and traditional rural skills. Every year British Wool trains up to 900 shearers.



Depot network

British Wool has a network of 100 drop off locations which provides a service to all farmers regardless of type and quality of wool

produced, volume or location. These depots are open 12 months of the year and provide an important service to to our members.



Grading

Once the wool has been delivered, every fleece is hand graded, which determines the grade and quality. Grading every fleece adds value

for our farmers. Separating into different qualities creates grades for a diverse range of applications e.g. coarser wools for carpets and insulation and medium grades for beds and bedding.



Testing

All British wool is independently tested for micron, colour and dry yield (the weight left after the wool is scoured and washed)

before it can be sold at auction. Testing the wool to international standards gives buyers confidence in the high quality of British wool and in the product they are buying.



Auction

The auction system is a tried and tested method of selling products off the farm. British wool is sold across 20 auctions throughout the

year, which enables us to feed wool onto the market in a controlled way to maximise its value and reduce the risk around price volatility in the global market.



Marketing and promotion

Increasing demand for British wool secures the long term future of the fibre. As an organisation, British

Wool works collaboratively with manufacturers and retailers to raise consumer awareness of the unique characteristics, benefits and features of British wool.



Facts and figures



Number of members
35,000



Volume of wool
23 million kilos



Number of depots
8



Number of auctions each year
20

British wool uses

Carpets	52%
Knitwear	25%
Clothing	14%
Beds/Bedding	7%
Other	2%

Markets by geography

UK	50%
China	25%
Europe	15%
Other	10%

Global fibre consumption (Textile Exchange 2021)



Synthetic fibres	62%
Cotton	24.2%
Other plant fibres	5.9%
Manmade cellulosic fibres	5.9%
Wool fibres	0.94%
Other animal fibres	0.65%

World wool production (IWTO 2021)



Australia	18.3%
China	17.1%
Turkey	4%
New Zealand	6.8%
Argentina	2.1%
UK	1.5%
South Africa	2.6%
Uruguay	1.2%
Rest of the World	46.4%

Board of directors

The Board consists of nine non-executive regionally elected producer members and two non-executive independent members which make decisions on behalf of its members.

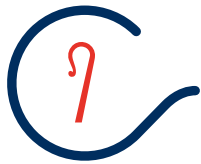
The independent members are publicly appointed with input from British Wool to bring relevant business skills and experience to the business.

Find out more about our directors [here](#).





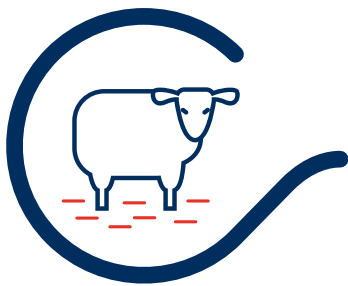
Topics and key messages



Who is British Wool?

Spokesperson: Andrew Hogley, CEO

- Our mission is to **drive sustainable demand for British wool** in order to maximise returns for our members.
- British Wool is a farmers co-operative working on behalf of 35,000 UK sheep farmers.
- British Wool collects, grades, sells and promotes British wool to the international wool textile industry for use in flooring, furnishings and apparel.
- Our purpose is to **champion British wool and the farmers** who produce this amazing, natural fibre, whilst promoting every aspect of wool production and usage.
- There are **six key principles** to British Wool that not only make it unique, they offer buyers peace of mind that the product they are purchasing is truly the right choice.



KIND TO
ANIMALS



ENVIRONMENTAL
SUSTAINABILITY



QUALITY
ASSURED



TRACEABILITY



SOCIALLY
RESPONSIBLE



NON-MULESED
WOOL



Grading/Quality assured

Spokesperson:

Billy Hewitson, Head of Operations

- **Every fleece received by British Wool is graded by hand.**
- British Wool's grading system ensures that our wool **meets the highest standards of quality assurance.** Every fleece is hand graded by our team to determine both the style and quality of the wool. This process takes into account the handle, micron, colour, staple length and strength to ensure that our premium types are free from grey fibre, kemp, and vegetable matter contamination.
- Each of our fully qualified graders has **trained for a minimum of three years** and been through a **rigorous assessment process** to ensure we deliver our customers a consistent, quality product year after year.
- In addition each lot is fully **independently tested** to IWTO standards by the Wool Testing Authority Europe to certify yield, micron, colour and vegetable matter.
- This ensures the supply chain can **trust the quality of the wool** they are using, which in turn helps create durable and stunning products.
- In the UK we have the most diverse range of sheep in the world, with more than 60 native breeds and numerous cross breeds.
- We grade all of the wool we receive into approximately 100 different grades, these unique grades allow buyers to ensure the wool they are purchasing and using in their products is fit for the end application.



Our purpose is to champion British wool and the farmers who produce this amazing, natural fibre...

Socially responsible

- **British Wool is a member led organisation** that works on behalf of its members under co-operative principles, handling wool from all UK wool producers regardless of type, location and quantity.
- **The Board consists of nine farmers** who oversee activities and ensure members best interests are served at all times. As well as marketing and selling the wool on behalf of its 35,000 members.
- **British Wool also provides a powerful voice for its members** and supplies value added services such as shearing training.
- **British Wool's mission is to drive sustainable demand for British wool** in order to maximise returns for our members. This is our reason for being and drives all of our actions.





Traceability

Spokesperson: Graham Clark, Director of Marketing

- Traceability and the provenance of products are becoming increasingly important to an ever more socially and environmentally conscious consumer.
- To meet this growing demand British Wool has a 100% traceable wool scheme that traces the origin of the wool from the farm gate to the shop floor.
- Our scheme allows consumers to fully understand where the wool in the products they are purchasing is from. It also gives them peace of mind that the producer has received a premium payment for their wool.
- British Wool invested in a seamless QR code traceability system in order to keep the origins of the raw wool as it travels through grading, bailing and into the auction.

- British Wool offers **different levels of traceability** to suit clients demands.

1. Supply chain verification – All British Wool licensees have been through a thorough third party verified supply chain audit process to ensure that the wool they are using in their products is sourced through the British Wool scheme and also that the correct levels of British wool are being used. This also helps to ensure the wool being used is to **the brands exacting requirements**. This scheme underpins all of our traceability.

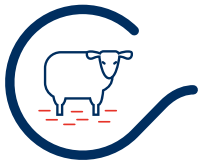
2. All from British farms – All wool handled by British Wool comes from British farms, **we do not grade and sell wool from anywhere else** so all wool can be traced to British farms.

3. Regional traceability – British Wool has eight Grading Depots across the UK, **all of the wool sold can be traced back to a specific Depot** and give regional traceability.



Supply chain verification and all from British farms.

Supply chain verification, all from British farms, regional traceability and farm traceability.



Kind to animals

- British Wool has been leading the way on Animal Welfare for 200 years.
- **Animal Welfare** has been an integral part of British farming for centuries and the UK has led this area globally for many years and today have the strictest animal welfare laws in the world. UK legislation includes all of the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE)'s animal welfare standards.

- **The Five Freedoms** is a framework that was originally developed in the UK in the 1960s which has since been adopted globally and forms an integral part of the 2006 Animal Welfare Act.

- All UK wool comes from **non-mulesed sheep**.

Farming and agriculture

Spokesperson:

Jim Robertson, Chairman

- **Farmers around the world contribute to the natural carbon cycle** by influencing the amount of carbon stored in plants and soils and by managing agricultural animals. Good management practices can increase the carbon stored in pastures and agricultural soils and thus make a positive contribution to mitigating climate change.
- **Around 65% of farmland in the UK is best-suited to growing grass rather than other crops.**⁽¹⁾
- The UK sheep industry is set out in a 'stratified system'. This system is unique to the UK, and perfectly designed to play on the strengths of different breeds, and the environments and habitats of our hill, upland and lowland terrain.
- As well as creating beautiful landscapes, **sheep also support wildlife and plant biodiversity**. Without sheep, our grassland, and upland land in particular, would become overtaken by scrub and coarse vegetation.



Wool is **100% biodegradable**.

Environmental sustainability

- The diverse wool types on offer in the UK mean that British wool can really provide a truly sustainable solution for every application.
- **Wool is 100% natural and renewable** as sheep in the UK grow between 1 and 3 kgs of raw wool annually that must be sheared for the health of the animal.
- **Wool is also 100% biodegradable** and therefore does not contribute to micro-pollution in the ocean or on land.
- **Wool uses less energy and water than other fibres.** As an example wool uses 18% less energy than polyester and nearly 70% less water than cotton to produce 100 jumpers.⁽²⁾
- Wool products have a long lifespan, meaning they are **used or worn longer than other textile fibre products**.



Wool uses nearly **70% less water** than cotton to produce 100 jumpers.



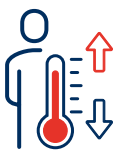
Sleep

Spokesperson: Julia Robinson, Head of Sleep

- **40% of Brits are unaware that mattresses need to be cleaned regularly** and 22% had never attempted to clean one.
- **One of the main benefits of wool duvets and mattresses is its self-cleaning properties.** Wool is well-known for its ability to remain dry and clean. Cleverly absorbing moisture and making it difficult for any bacteria or fungus to set up camp.
- This means **you only need to deep clean wool bedding products every 6-12 months to maintain a hygienic sleep** environment. Compared to other duvets and mattresses which need to be cleaned more often.
- Wool has natural insulating and breathable properties that help to keep you warm or cool depending on the season. Wool fibre is naturally breathable, absorbing moisture from the atmosphere, and then releasing it when the atmosphere is drier. So, if you experience interrupted sleep from temperature change or if you suffer from night sweats and hot flushes, **wool bedding can help you sleep better and longer** by maintain a balanced and even temperature during sleep.
- Wool's naturally soft, supportive fibres provide the ideal 'snuggle' factor, great for a perfect night's sleep! Wool mattress pads and topper can provide additional relief from painful pressure points as you rest. People suffering from chronic pain such as arthritis, fibromyalgia and bed sores often find comfort with wool.

Menopause

- Research, conducted by British Wool (May 2022) to mark its **"In Bed With The Menopause"** campaign, found that 64% of women didn't know the menopause could affect sleep until going through it.
- The research also took a wider look at the effects of the menopause, and while 63% said they were happy to no longer have periods, one in two (53%) struggled to deal with the symptoms.
- These included hot flushes (68%), night sweats (62%), difficulty sleeping (58%) and experiencing a low mood or anxiety (53%).
- Almost a third (32%) said a lack of sleep, caused by the menopause, has been a huge problem, making them feel exhausted all the time.
- Yet while 46% tried sleeping with the window open, 36% bought a lavender pillow spray and 35 % slept naked, eight in ten (81%) had NO idea that using wool duvets, pillows, toppers, mattresses and blankets can **help regulate the body's changing temperature**, and therefore help with a better night's sleep.



Wool has natural insulating and breathable properties that help to keep you warm or cool depending on the season.

Hypoallergenic

- Wool is **naturally resistant to mold, mildew and dust mites**. It quickly absorbs and releases moisture, and thus doesn't allow the damp condition for bacteria and fungus to thrive, meaning wool is a great choice for anyone suffering from allergies or breathing conditions.
- Unlike some synthetic bedding, wool bedding is chemical and bleach free, therefore many people who suffer from allergies and chemical sensitivities find wool the cleanest choice.



Anti-fast-fashion

Spokesperson: Haldi Kranich-Wood, Business Development Manager

- It is estimated that one polyester fleece garment produces over 1,900 fibres per wash.⁽³⁾ This is crucial in the fashion industry as it is estimated that **20-35% of the micro plastics in the ocean are from clothing.**^(4/5)
- **Wool also requires less washing**, merely hanging a wool garment up after you wear it allows the moisture to evaporate, taking the odour with it.
- **As a nation, British shoppers buy more new clothes than any nation in Europe.** With people buying twice as many items of clothing as they did a decade ago.
- **‘Fast Fashion’ has dramatically increased the effect of plastic pollution.** Figures show that three in five items end up in landfill or incinerators, while the wildlife in our rivers and seas ingest mouthfuls of the synthetic fibres, as fibres get dislodged during washing.
- The Government Environmental Audit Committee recently announced plans to work closely with major fashion chains in order to reduce plastic waste and encourage recycling and are calling on the fashion industry to **create a demand for longer life garments, along with a ban on dumping clothes in landfill.** As a result, these are two key actions could see the increase in using natural fibres, like wool.
- **Wool is recyclable – Products made out of synthetic fibres can take up to 40 years to degrade. While wool degrades in a fraction of that time.** This is because wool is made of keratin. A natural protein similar to the protein that makes up human hair. Keratin can broke down naturally without causing an environmental hazard. Wool will also reduce waste to landfill as it decomposes in soil in a matter of months or years and slowly releases valuable nutrients back into the earth.
- **Wool lasts longer** – This incredibly complex natural fibre, provides many attributes that plastic fibres just can't match. Its natural crimp and elasticity can endure constant wear and compression without becoming hard and flat. And resists crushing and matting, helping it withstand continuous wear.
- **Wool needs less washing** – Wool naturally absorbs moisture when the atmosphere is damp. Only releasing it when the atmosphere is dry. Which means that **wool requires less frequent washing and prolongs the lifetime of garments.** Simply airing outside on a dry day for a couple of hours can help to refresh woollen garments.
- British Wool conducted research with over 2,000 consumers to see how sustainably Brits are shopping and to remind consumers of all the sustainable credentials that come naturally to British wool products.
- While fashion conscious Brits have an average of 76 garments hanging in their closets, as many as 83% could not tell you where a single item originated from. A further 85% had no idea what materials their outfits are made from, that's despite 31% claiming they try to buy more sustainably.
- At British Wool, we work with a number of ethical fashion outlets that pride themselves on sustainable sourcing and production. Our **What on Earth are you Wearing?** campaign was to highlight to consumers how British wool can be part of the solution to a sustainable wardrobe that doesn't cost the earth.



Products made out of synthetic fibres can take up to **40 years** to degrade. While wool degrades in a fraction of that time.



Safe and sustainable living

- Wool is a complex, natural fibre which has a diverse range of properties suitable for a wide variety of different products. Did you know that choosing wool interior products such as carpets and home furnishings can actually **help to remove potentially harmful pollutants from your home environment?**
- Volatile organic compounds (VOCs) can get into our homes from products like cleaning fragrances, paints, glues and furniture. A number of these including formaldehyde are now recognised as carcinogens and are associated with health conditions such as Sick Building Syndrome (SBS), where the toxic pollutants in your home or work environment can lead to headaches and allergic reactions.
- A team from Bangor University carried out research to assess the ability of wool to absorb these harmful chemicals. The team exposed wool to a range of VOCs, emitted by materials such as MDF, chipboard, limonene (found in cleaning products) and toluene (found in paint thinners). **The results demonstrated that wool was able to absorb all of these chemical types and bound them to its internal structure and out of the air.**
- Graham Ormondroyd, Head of Materials Research at Bangor University said: "The research demonstrated that wool, a natural and sustainable material. Is able to absorb a range of potentially harmful chemicals from the indoor environment. The more wool you have the more it can absorb".⁽⁶⁾
- **The longer lifespan of wool products**, means less impact on the environment. Wool garments often last longer than those of other fibres due to the garment quality and lower washing frequency. Wool textiles can be used many more times than those of other fibres, especially when well cared for. The longer garments last, the less resources are needed to create new ones which reduces the impact on our planet.
- All textiles shed fibres, but wool fibres biodegrade in soil and water (salt water as well as fresh) and do not contribute to microplastic contamination.
- Keep warm and lower your energy bills – naturally. During the summer British sheep's wool insulation slows the movement of heat into the building and **keeps your home cool as well as insulating against the cold** in the winter months.
- British sheep's wool insulation is **safe to install, safe to live with, breathable and itch free**. Improving the comfort of your home and maximising energy efficiency.
- Wool is a natural and sustainable fibre which, when made into insulation does many more things than just **prevent heat loss; improving indoor air quality; regulating moisture balance and helping provide sounds insulation** in the home.



As we decarbonise our energy sources, the carbon locked up in our building fabric will become an important factor of our overall environmental impact.

Mark Lynn, Thermafleece





Reference

- (1) Farming Statistics: Provisional crop areas, yields and livestock populations at June 2019 – United Kingdom, Defra/National Statistics, 2019.
- (2) Woolmark – <https://www.woolmark.com/environment>
- (3) Browne, M.A. Crump, P. Niven, S.J. Teuten, E. Tonkin, A., Galloway, T. Thompson, R. 2011. Accumulation of microplastic on shorelines worldwide: sources and sinks. *Environ. Sci. Technol.* 45, 9175-9179.
- (4) Chinasamy, Jasmine, “A monstrous disposable industry: Fast facts about fast fashion”, *Unearthed*, 12th September 2019, <https://unearthed.greenpeace.org/2019/09/12/fast-facts-about-fast-fashion/>
- (5) Guilbault, Laure and Kent, Sarah, “Kering Chief to Present Industry Sustainability Pact to G7”, *Business of Fashion*, 23rd August 2019, <https://www.businessoffashion.com/articles/news-analysis/kering-chief-to-present-industry-sustainability-pact-to-g7>
- (6) Mansour, E., Curling, S, Stéphan A and Ormondroyd G (2016). Absorption of volatile organic compounds by different wool types. *Green Materials*, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1680/jgma.15.00031>





Further resource

Click on the following links to find out more about the benefits and features of British wool. For more information, email marketing@britishwool.org.uk

The benefits of British wool



Carpets



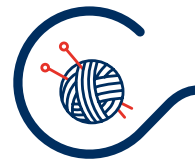
Beds and bedding



Apparel



Upholstery



Yarn

[Image library](#)

[Meet our sheep](#)





For further info contact:

General press enquiries

Britishwool@prohibitionpr.co.uk

General enquires

marketing@britishwool.org.uk

Agricultural publications

Gareth Jones

Member Communications Manager

07590 355885

garethjones@britishwool.org.uk



@BritishWool



@BritishWool



BritishWool



British Wool



BritishWool



@BritishWool

britishwool.org.uk



THE CAMPAIGN FOR WOOL
Patron: The former Prince of Wales