FIBER PROCESSING DECISIONS

An overview of choices

Fiber producing animals: yak, sheep, alpaca, llama, musk ox, rabbit, and goat to name a few

As a fiber producer a big part of the decision process is deciding the following: Do you want to pay for the fiber to have value-added at each step and then sell it? It is often easier to market if the product is a value-added product, but the costs will be higher. Each step the fiber takes away from the animal adds a cost to the final product. Ideally, there is a buyer and value to your raw (unwashed) fiber for one price as well as another buyer and value to your end products to cover the costs you paid to get through each processing step.

CHOICE 1. SELL RAW FIBER

separated from the animal either through combing, shearing, or a combination of

CHOICE 2. DECIDE TO KEEP OR PROCESS

Do I want to process to add value by working with a mill?
Do I want to keep my fiber to experiment with on my own or store until I have more volume?
How do I want to market this product?
　　Online marketplaces or farm website, farmers markets, on
　　a brick & mortar display/shelf

CHOICE 3. CLEAN THE FIBER

All animal fibers will have some dirt/dust/manure (bm)/vegetable matter (vm) that will need cleaned out of the fibers before they can be used. Even if fiber is sold "raw", a clean fiber has more value. Whether using a mill or DIYing it make sure to skirt (pull the worst of the vm and bm out) the fiber before it gets washed.

CHOICE 4. ORGANIZE THE FIBER

Done at a mill or by hand process at home, pick and/or dehair, card, comb or other additional preparation depending on your desired product. Each fiber type will require different machinery and/or processes. Each step in the preparation will add another cost (in time and/or money) to the process.

CHOICE 5. PROCESS THE FIBER

There are a multitude of end products that various mills may or *may not* be able to complete. It is possible that to achieve your chosen end product, you may need to work with multiple processors. Just a few ideas: felt, batting, yarn, roving, weaving, knitted or crocheted item, blanket, rug, rope, saddle pads, insoles, etc.

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