



Icelandic Sheep Breeders of North America

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Separating and Using the Tog

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Historically, in Iceland, the fleece was usually separated to produce specialized yarns. The soft tog was used for next-to-the-skin clothing and very special mitts knit with multicolored very fine yarns. The tog spun from lamb fleeces might be used for fine lace shawls and embroidery. The stronger tog from adult fleeces might have been used for durable yarns in ropes, belts and ties, storage bags and snow socks to be worn over the light-weight shoes.

To separate the coats easily, the fleece should be washed first. Then you may simply pull out the longest tog from each lock by holding the lock in one hand and gently pulling on the tog with the other. I usually set these tog locks aside in a lock formation because I will probably prepare them in a worsted style later.

To prepare the tog for spinning you may use a dog comb and comb each lock, laying the locks in an alignment with all the cut ends together, ready for spinning.

Another method for preparing the fiber is to use small hand held wool combs and pull off a roving through a diz. You will need to put sufficient fiber into the combs to hold them in the tines.

A third method for preparing the tog is to load the fiber into a hand card. It is necessary to use a good wrist action to flip the long ends of the fiber back over the card in order to prevent them from tangling. Also, do not doff the fiber from one card to the other. Instead, change hands and begin carding at the bottom of the lock, gradually working up the card. Place the two cards with the handles in the same direction and the long tog fiber sticking out from the bottom. Begin at one side and gently pull the tog into a roving, working your way across the card and back until you have pulled out most of the fiber.

Finally you could use a drum carder and instead of putting the tog fibers through the licker-in, just hold them above the large drum and turn gently, picking up the fibers over a narrow area and letting the drum align them. Then turn the handle and let the small roller further align and smooth the fibers. They can then be removed in the same way that a batt is removed, but you will have a narrow formation which you can predraft to the size you want for spinning.

If you want a very sleek smooth yarn, keep track of the butt ends and the tip ends, by loading the card with the fibers all in the same direction. As you card, keep track of which end is off the bottom of the card and therefore which end you began to pull off first. Gently roll the roving around your hand beginning with the tip end, to make a soft fiber nest, with the butt end at the outside ready to begin spinning.

Spin using a worsted method, keeping the fibers aligned in the draft area and smoothing the twist into the yarn after you draft. By smoothing from the butt end you will be smoothing the scales on the fiber

and this will help to create a sleeker yarn.

If you do a complete separation of the tog, you will have many muddled fibers, which can be carded into a rolag and spun into a thick strong yarn for rug weaving. It will take some time to collect enough for this job so you may choose to save the britch area of the very strong fleeces and card and spin a firm yarn from the combined coats for this purpose.