
FIBER/BREED - CHEVIOT

RAW FIBER

SCOURED FIBER

PREPARATION: Commercial top

PREPARED FIBER

CHARACTERISTICS

Staple Length: 5 inches

Crimp: gentle, helical

Color: creamy white

Amount: 1 ounce

SINGLE

DRAFTING METHOD: Short forward, a bit of short backward

2-PLY UNFINISHED

Ratio: 7.5:1

PLYING METHOD

Ratio/Count: 6.2:1 / 4 treadles

Number of Plies: 2

2-PLY FINISHED

FINISHING METHOD: Soaked

YARN

OTHER

Grist: 1246 yd/lb

WPI: 9

Weight: worsted

Quantity: 74 yd/.95 ounces

NOTES

Easy to spin. It felt soft overall, yet as I was spinning it, crisp in my hand. The finished yarn is lofty, springy, and softer than I expected. It fluffed up a lot in the finishing. One of my favorite spun yarns thus far!

Cheviot are an ancient breed originating in the cold, wet, rugged Cheviot Hills on the border between Scotland and England. They were noted as early as 1372 and were initially called 'Long sheep' or 'White sheep' (in contrast to the Scottish Blackface). Before 1800, Sir John Sinclair chose these extremely hardy sheep for his estate in Caithness, North Scotland. The naming of the Cheviot breed is credited to him.

Norway imported Cheviots in the 1860s and crossbred them with their northern short-tail primitive sheep. Several modern Norwegian sheep breeds result from this, including Dalasau, Rygia, and Steiger.

Cheviots are classified as mountain and hill sheep in the United Kingdom. There are several recognized breeds: the North Country Cheviot or 'Northie' (Scottish Highlands), the South Country or Border Cheviot, and the Brecknock Hills Cheviot (Wales).

DESCRIPTION

Cheviots are described as an alert, active breed with erect perky ears, and Roman noses. They have bare faces (no wool). Cheviots are small-to medium-size sheep with rams averaging 160 to 200 pounds and ewes 120 to 170 pounds. Most cheviots are polled (hornless). They have short legs that are free of wool.

WOOL CHARACTERISTICS

Although not a true down breed, the fleece has been described as down-like.

The fine-medium wool has a micron count of 27-33. It has a helical crimp with a 4 to 5 inches staple length. Cheviot fiber is described as springy, lofty, bouncy, and resilient. Cheviot wool is often blended with other wools to add resilience and durability.

Most Cheviot breeds have only creamy white fleece. However, Brecknock Hills have a full range of colors. Some Miniature Cheviots are black, tan, or toned down color (mixed with white). There is also a "painted" Miniature



photo credit Donald Macleod from Stornoway, Scotland, via Wikimedia Commons

Cheviot that has patches of two or more colors.

The fleeces generally weigh in the 3 to 10 pound range. They are not overly greasy.

It can range from next to skin soft to crisp. Many spinners recommend Cheviot as an excellent sock yarn. It is also used for knitting or weaving mittens, hats, outerwear, and blankets. Cheviot was the traditional wool woven into Scottish tartans and tweeds.

It takes dye well and is felt-resistant.

PREPARATION

Cheviot's staple length and springy quality lend well to hand carding and rolags. Some fleeces have longer staple lengths and could be combed. It can also be drum-carded.

SPINNING

Short forward or short backward draw will produce a yarn with a nice bounce. Cheviot is also a candidate for woolen spinning. The yarn will be light and springy. Spin with a medium twist to avoid dense and prickly yarn.