



O~wool™

frequently asked questions

**Why buy organic?**

Organic products are free from pesticides, herbicides, and other potentially harmful substances that can cause cancer, immune system suppression, nervous system disorders, reproductive damage, and hormone disruption. Babies and children are even more at susceptible because of their limited immune systems. Organic also keeps farmers safer, as they are not constantly exposed to these harmful chemicals. The animals and plants in the surrounding ecosystems near the farms are not disturbed and harmed by chemical application of pesticides. The water supply is protected - pesticides and massive animal waste from overfarmed/factory farmed areas are not running off into the ground water.

**Why does organic cost more?**

Organic standards for livestock production prohibit overgrazing. If the price of wool is low, the difference cannot be made up by simply increasing production per unit of land, as is commonly practiced by many livestock producers. Organic farmers have higher labor, management, and certification costs. The organic wool industry is very small relative to the overall wool industry and does not have the economies of scale and resulting efficiencies of its conventional counterpart.

**What is USDA certified organic wool?**

The feed and forage of the sheep must be certified organic - the land they graze on (which undergoes a 3 year transition process) and any supplemental feed they consume. Use of synthetic hormones and genetic engineering is prohibited. Internal, external and pasture synthetic pesticides are prohibited. Sheep cannot be dipped in parasiticides (insecticides) to control external parasites such as ticks and lice, and organic livestock producers are required to ensure that they do not exceed the natural carrying capacity of the land on which their animals graze.

**Where does O-Wool™'s wool come from?**

O-Wool™ starts with the highest quality USDA certified organic merino from farms in South America and Australia. The sheep are free range and non-mulesed. Mulesing is a cruel practice performed on Merino sheep that involves cutting strips of flesh off their hindquarters without anesthesia, in a barbaric attempt to control "fly strike".

**Why doesn't O-Wool™'s wool come from the USA?**

Wool production (particularly USDA certified organic wool production) in the USA is an extremely small industry. In 2005, 19,000lbs of USDA certified organic wool was grown in the USA, and little to none of it was Merino. This is only about 4 times the

amount of wool currently in the O-Wool™ warehouse.

### **Where is O-Wool™ produced?**

The USA! Our yarn is spun in either Massachusetts or Wisconsin, and skeined and dyed in Philadelphia, PA, just down the street from our warehouse. We are extremely happy to support what is left of the once thriving Philadelphia textile industry - and to minimize our carbon footprint by reducing our shipping impact and... driving down the street to get our product.

### **How is O-Wool™ cleaned?**

Our scourer/comber is GOTS (Global Organic Textile Standard) accredited, and processes O-Wool™ according to the GOTS standards. It is scoured with biodegradable soaps and combed to remove vegetable matter - conventional wool is "carbonized" where vegetable matter is burned out in an acid bath. Because our wool is combed, short fibers are removed which dramatically reduces the amount of pilling in your finished handmade item.

### **How is O-Wool™ spun?**

O-Wool™ is spun according to the GOTS standards - these standards include using vegetable based spinning oils (biodegradable) as opposed to synthetic, and clearing all conventional wool from machines before processing to prevent contamination.

### **How is O-Wool™ dyed?**

Given the extremely limited set of commercially available sources of natural dyes, we have chosen to use low-impact acid dyes as the next best thing (recommended by the Organic Trade Association). These dyes do not contain heavy metals and have a high absorption rate. Less water is required to rinse out these dyes, and less dye-stuff is left in what waste water is produced. The waste water at our dye house is tested regularly to ensure minimal negative environmental impact.

### **O-Wool™ is Merino wool - why doesn't it feel softer?**

It may not feel buttery soft right now... but just you wait. O-Wool™ it is minimally processed. The majority of commercial hand knitting yarn producers chemically soften their yarn - that plush, buttery, amazingly soft feeling is actually mostly... chemicals. The final step in processing is in the knitter's hands. While knitting with O-Wool™, the warmth, touch, and oils from your hands will begin to subtly soften the wool. When you are finished knitting, wash your masterpiece by hand in a gentle detergent like Soak (<http://www.soakwash.com> - biodegradable, non-toxic, and has eco-friendly packaging) or Dreft (<http://www.dreft.com>) - it is formulated for babies so it is gentle.

### **What else goes into/on O-Wool™?**

Nothing. The majority of commercial hand knitting yarn producers bleach their yarns to achieve clear, bright colors. We don't - our dyers use their skill and knowledge to achieve beautiful colors without additional chemical application.

### **Why doesn't O-Wool™ bear the USDA certified organic logo?**

At this time, the USDA NOP (National Organic Program) only certifies livestock and produce production - it does not certify textiles. Our wool is USDA certified organic, but at this time our yarn cannot be.

www.o-wool.com

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