

## ALPACA - THE FIBRE

Alpaca has been used as a textile fibre in South America for centuries. About 90% (three million) of the world's alpaca population is found in Peru. The quantity of alpaca fibre on the world market is very small compared with wool (about 0.1%).

With only a small herd in Australia it is generally considered to be desirable to value add to the fibre to maximise the returns to Australian growers.

### Fibre Characteristics

Inca legend tells that Mother Nature designed the ideal fibre for use by mankind and then placed it on the gentle Alpaca. Alpacas produce a coat with wonderful properties and many colours from pure white to jet black, through all the various shades of creams, fawns, browns and greys.



*Photo courtesy of Windsong Valley Alpacas*

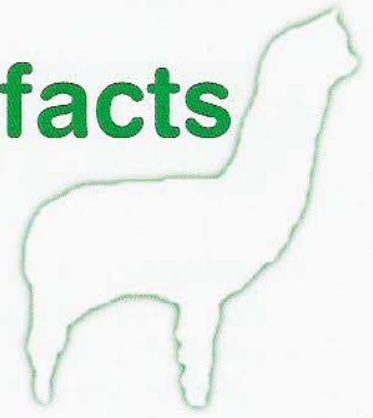
The fibre is unusually strong and resilient - strength is not compromised by fineness.

Evolution has provided alpaca fibre with more thermal capacity than most other animal fibre. It is wonderfully light, yet remarkably warm.

Alpaca has a natural, rich lustric giving 100% alpaca garments high visual effect, even more distinctive in the Suri type.

The fibre also dyes well, enhancing colours with its natural sheen.

## alpacafacts



Alpaca makes beautiful suiting cloth for men and women and can be blended with silk, cashmere and fine wool. A range of doonas, yarns, coats, pullovers and socks are readily available on the Australian market.

### Markets

Alpaca is making steady inroads into the Australian fashion industry and many garment manufacturers are describing alpaca as a luxurious fibre. "It's rare, it's got a great feel and quality. It has wonderful softness and handle, it drapes beautifully, it can be worn next to the skin. It has wonderful strength, it wears well and does not pill as readily as other fibres. It has got the best of both worlds. It's got glamour, softness and strength." (Carl Dowd, Maggie T Corporation.)

Until recently, the importers and consumers of South American alpaca tops, yarns, woven cloths and knitted garments were mainly Japan, Europe and USA. However in recent times the quantity of alpaca purchased by the Chinese has increased significantly. In addition the imports by Korea and its neighbouring countries indicate an upsurge in its use in the world garment industry.

In Europe mills use alpaca in the very finest cloth in the world. With the emergence of Asia as a consumer of quality fashion apparel, demand is increasing on a world wide basis. Australia is particularly well placed because of its superior quality controls and its long standing expertise in natural fibre technology.

This augurs well for the Australian alpaca industry as the relatively small alpaca population (both overseas and at home) means that production of alpaca fibre is low. Demand for quality alpaca fibre currently exceeds supply.