



Mohair 10-12" long fibers

## ***Mohair, Tibetan Lamb or Viscose***

# that is the question...

by Deb Wood

***An informative article about the different kinds of fiber and how they are best suited for our figurative art.***

It can be a bit overwhelming to consider because there is so much to choose from. What fiber would best be suited for a doll that is 12" tall, as opposed to one that is doll house scale? The mind boggles... but really, it's not that hard to figure it out.

First of all, the fibers we select also have a scale. Some are heavier fibers than others, some have more curl. Some have no curl and some are extremely fine in texture, much finer than human hair. Which fiber you choose for your work will depend largely on what size doll you are making and what you want your end result to be.

With the popularity of the Fantasy Fairies we have seen over the past decade, the long, softly curled mohair became very popular. That sort of "wild fae" look with the wispy long curls was certainly in vogue. But

this long, silky fiber has been around for centuries, and has been used in creating the wigs for the antique porcelain dolls. Long before it was popular in the Fairy culture, it was used for wefting, which was then made into the classic style doll wigs. It has also been used to weave fabrics for garments and rugs.

Mohair comes from an Angora goat. Some think it comes from sheep, but that's not the case, we get wool from sheep and I will talk more about that in a moment. Mohair is shorn from the goat about twice a year, without harming the goat. These goats are raised for their coats. Younger goats produce a finer mohair and as the animal ages, the mohair grows longer but it also becomes more coarse. In essence, the longer the fiber, the larger the doll it would be suitable for since the scale of the actual fiber is larger. What a perfect match!

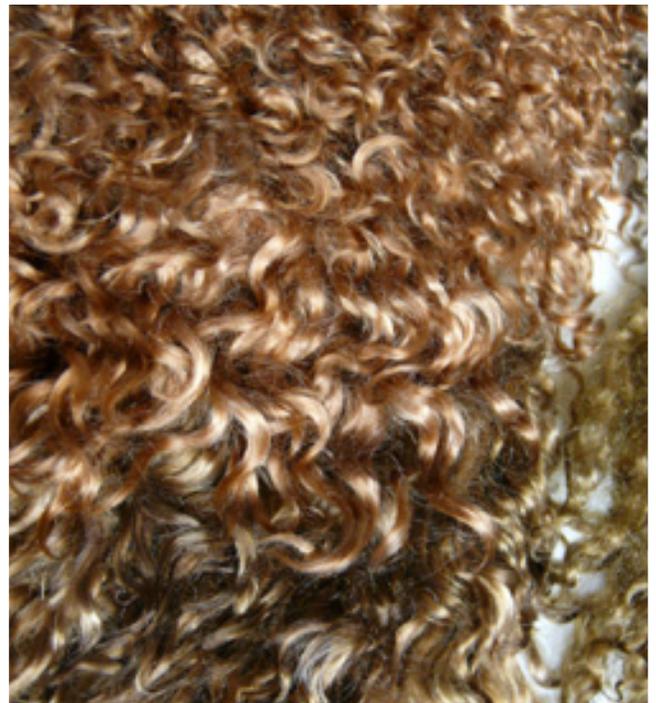


Mohair 6-8" long fibers

But even in the longer lengths, the fibers of mohair are still finer than a human hair. Thus they make an excellent resource for wig making for dolls. Below is an example of a medium length, medium texture mohair. It has been cleaned, brushed and bundled and is ready for dyeing.

Younger goats produce a softer, shorter and usually curlier fiber as shown here. This type of mohair would be suitable for a short hairstyle on your doll. These samples were white but have been dyed.

Mohair 4-6" long fibers





The above photo shows several bundles that have been colored and /or dyed. These can now be used to make wigs for dolls. You could take two colors that are close in hue with different intensities and mix them if you wanted a wig with highlighted shades. Very pretty and very fun to do!

## tibetan lamb wool

This fiber is softer, curlier, shorter and much finer than mohair. It is best suited for small scale dolls because the fiber is so fine. While it is called Tibetan, it comes mainly from China. It also comes with a fair amount of controversy since it is sold on the skin/leather. In other words, the animal has been killed and the coat/wool conditioned for sale. The meat from the animal is also used to meet dietary needs of the culture where these sheep are raised.

You can purchase Tibetan lamb wool in a pelt, by the piece or in what is called a 'plate'. A plate is several prime pieces of wool sewn together to make one piece of leather and is generally about 2' x 4' in size. Care should be taken when dyeing this wool, since the leather will react to heat if you are using a hot water bath to dye the wool. It makes an excellent fiber for wiggling the smaller dolls, for example, 3" - 8" in size.



Here are several samples of dyed Tibetan Lamb wool. The maximum length of the fiber is about 6". The average length is 4-5".

In this photo you can see the size of the doll in comparison to my hand. This doll is wigged with Tibetan Lamb wool.

You can see that the size of the curls are a good scale and are appropriate for this size doll.

I am conditioning the fibers with mousse to tame them down a bit.



# viscose

The last fiber I will talk about is viscose. This is a product made from natural fibers in wood, bamboo or cane, believe it or not! It is a semi synthetic fiber, much like rayon, that is used in our clothing. The fibers of viscose are the most fine and delicate of all and is the perfect size for miniature scale dolls. It almost feels like silk. At one time I was told it was silk, and I believed it.

It is sold in roving, which is a manufacturing process by which thousands and thousands of fibers are laid out in a staggered fashion, creating a fat yarn. You can pull pieces

out of the roving and use them for wiggging. (see photos below)

It also is a little easier to style into wigs for dolls. You have to be careful with it though, if you get it wet with water, it gets kinked and matted and is generally rendered useless. Instead, use a piece of soft cloth dipped in rubbing alcohol (isopropyl alcohol) to gently brush on the fibers to moisten them so you can set the style. Alcohol evaporates quickly and doesn't cause the damage that water will to the viscose.



You can see in the photo below how fine this fiber is. These pieces were pulled from the roving, (photo, left) and are prepared for application in the wiggging process. Below, pig tails are made easy by using the viscose fibers. Which brings me to another point, the beautiful long fibers of mohair shown in the first section of this article are also quite resilient so they resist styling, more so than these fine fibers of viscose. There is a lot of 'spring' in mohair. You can curl mohair, but it will resist it.

Tibetan lamb is less resilient, and viscose is the least resilient of the fibers discussed in this article and curls extremely well.

I hope that you have found this informative and when you go to make your next sculpture's wig, you will be prepared with good information so you can make the right choice for your doll.

