

Washing Your Lamb

Your lamb can be washed in a tub of warm soapy water or by placing it on the trimming stand. Wash using either a shampoo or mild soap and a stiff brush, and rinse well using a hose. Hold the end of the hose next to the skin and move in a circular scrubbing motion. Pay special attention to the belly, under the legs and the crotch. Use livestock shampoo or clear mild dishsoap.

Remove excess moisture from the fleece with your hand or with a flat surface such as the back of a wool card. Dry the fleece with a terry cloth towel or carefully with your hair dryer or beef blower. Keep the hair dryer moving — it will BURN the skin if held too long in one spot. Keep the lamb in a clean, well bedded pen filled with plenty of clean, dry straw until show time. Cover the lamb with a blanket to keep the straw out of the fleece.

Blanketing

Blanketing your lamb helps to distribute the natural oil throughout the fleece and helps to keep your sheep clean. Before blanketing your lamb, use a curry comb or brush to remove surface dirt. A blanket can be made from a clean burlap sack or pillow case. Open a sack down one side almost to the corner, leaving 15-25 cm fastened together at the corner to fit over the sheep's brisket; then open just enough of the end for the sheep's head and neck. Put the sheep's head through the hole in the bottom of the sack. A twine loop or cotton string for the rear legs will hold the blanket in place.

Carding

The card is used for straightening the wool fibers so they can be trimmed evenly. Hook your thumb around the handle of the card with your fingers placed solidly along the back of the card.

Catch the top of the fleece with the hooks on the card and pull out. Do not catch too deep as this makes for hard work and is painful for the sheep. Do not catch too shallow or you will not do a good carding job.

Practice until you can card with a rolling motion of your hand and wrist. Set the heel of the card in the fleece first; then push the top side of the card into the fleece and bring the heel up and out of the fleece at the same time. Go slowly at first until you get the feel of it.

When the card fills with wool, it should not be cleaned by pulling one card over the other. Use a small rake which you can make by putting a ninety degree bend in the prongs of a discarded dinner fork.

How to use the wool card in fitting your lamb: (1) and (2) pat card into fleece; (3) roll card out of fleece. Never try to rake the card through the fleece.

The purpose of trimming a lamb is to remove fleece over the entire body to a desired length of about 0.75 to 1 cm. The last trimming should be done carefully so the fleece is smooth and ready for show. You will only need to dampen, card and trim off the rough edges the day of the fair.