

NEWS UP DATE

Autumn

2007

BLUE TONGUE AND FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE

We would like to reassure everyone that we are still allowed to accept, transport, handle and process raw wool, mohair and alpaca.

But please contact us if you are in a Risk, Control, Protection or Surveillance Zone because your shearing dates may be significant.

In the interests of bio-security, you may prefer to arrange for collections to be made from the edge of your property or from a suitable location such as the local shop or a neighbour. This will avoid increasing the risks through carrier vans travelling from one place to another .

PESTICIDES

The latest tests done on effluent from scouring the fibre received show increases in Diazinon and Cypermethrin, both at over 100 micrograms a litre instead of the desirable 30-60 levels.

This suggests that some fleece had been treated with external pesticides, despite the care taken and the assurances given to us by customers. Please do ensure that your recording of the dates of application and shearing are accurate. We will continue to monitor regularly.

It's been a tough year for fly strike and welfare must take precedence. The usual options are closer monitoring, treatment of affected animals and not sending these fleeces. Garlic in the feed and aromatherapy fly repellents can help and the animals should be kept away from trees and streams – all easier said than done!

Contact us for information on fly traps which we have recently discovered. They appear to be both cheap and effective.

Over the winter Fridays between 2 November and 28 March knitters will be welcome at the mill in Launceston.

For £4 a session we will provide help, chat, yarn samples, patterns, ideas, tea and coffee - we hope visitors will bring their own cakes and biscuits.

It will , we hope, be an opportunity to share your own skills and learn some new ones.

The worsted plant is running well and the staff spent a week training with a mill in Holmfirth, the Yorkshire village featured in the Last of the Summer Wine.

Our thanks to Spa Spectrum Yarns for the privilege.

Meanwhile, the plant could do with some extra cans to carry the tops between machines. If anyone knows where to find some extra ones, please let us know by telephone or contact us via the website: thenaturalfibrecompany.co.uk



Expanded share schemes include alpaca

We have developed the share schemes further this year with more products and different designs using a wider range of fleeces.

All share scheme fleece contributors get 8% off their purchases of yarns and textiles.

The pictures show the latest throws along with some cushions. The throws are the usual size, 2 by 1.3 metres or 78" by 54" with purlled fringes. Contact us for details on how to make or buy the cushions.

A limited number of the pure Shetland shadow stripe and the Jacob/mohair transverse herringbone throws illustrated in the last issue are still available.

Winter Scarves

We have ordered a range of plain and striped winter scarves in both pure alpaca and Shetland.

They will be two metres (78") long and either 20 (8") or 25 centimetres (10") wide.

Plain white, thick organic scarves 25 centimetres wide and alpaca scarves and shawls will also be available.

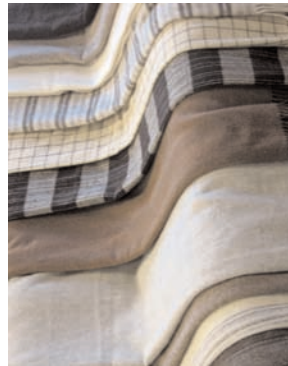
These arrive late in October, so please call for more colour and design details. Prices are included on the order form.

Blankets

The ever-popular Jacob-mohair striped blankets have



Mixed-breed throw with cushions



A range of 2 by 1.3 metre throws



Mixed-breed cushions. Contact us for manufacturing details

sold out and more have been ordered, which will be in stock soon. They can be cut and hemmed to suit: baby, knee, single or double. Let us know your requirements.

We still have some narrow stripe Shetland blankets in stock which again can be cut as required.

Approximate dimensions: double 90" x 100", single 90" x 70", knee 45" square, baby 30" by 40". For those that prefer metric read as follows: 1.2 x 2.5 metres, 1.2 x 1.8 metres, 110 centimetres square and 0.7 x 1 metre.

New schemes

We are participating in two new joint share schemes, one with alpaca owners in Cornwall and another for organic products. This last scheme is with Cornish Organic Wool (whose inappropriate acronym is COW!)

We are happy to undertake joint schemes with small groups. This includes an alpaca yarn scheme to enable alpaca owners to have the same benefits of colour variety as Shetland and Jacob producers.

Our next venture will be into dyeing. We plan to create and market a small range of seasonal colours to complement the natural ranges.

See the enclosed order form for share-scheme and own-brand textiles and yarns.



The Natural Fibre Company

Shows and visits

It was good to meet more of our customers at various shows through the summer, although we seem to have spent the last few months on the move. Some of our customers are even more mobile than we are.

We attended WonderWool at Builth Wells, the Woolfest at Cokermonth, WSD Summer School at Falmouth and Fibre Fest at Uffculme.

All were excellent and it was inspiring to see the skills, quality and range of goods available. They are all due to run again next year and the dates are listed at the bottom of the column on the right.

In July we attended a fleece day for the Jacob Society at Compton Caste near Paignton.

The society will be visiting the mill in October as will Launceston Farmers' Club and the Zwartbles Society. In November we will welcome the Cornwall RBST and design students from Bath Spa University and Falmouth School of Art & Design.

If you would like to arrange to visit, please let us know. It is usually possible to accommodate individual customers or small groups by appointment.

We will soon be launching our new and expanded website which will include links to our customers' sites to promote their products and services. Let us know if you would like to be included or have suggestions for helpful links



**Sue talking to the Jacob Society
at Compton Castle in July**

The volume of organic processing has been higher than expected and we expect to do even more next year.

Some customers have been so successful that they are returning with further yarn orders, an encouraging sign for the future.

Woven organic fabrics can now not only be made by Curlew Weavers, but also finished by Schofields in Galashiels.

There is as yet no organic finishing for blankets, but we are hoping ...

In our travels we have been able to recruit a small army of contract knitters, both for machine and hand-knitting.

Contact us if you want to join the army or are interested in using contract knitters.

Dates for 2008 wool shows:

WonderWool:

26-27 April

Woolfest:

27-28 June

Fibre Fest:

30-31 August

Contact us either by telephone or via the website: thenaturalfibrecompany.co.uk



The Natural Fibre Company

Jane Deane and Jill Morris' vehicle Cross-Eyed Chameleon is running a studio and classes in spinning, weaving and dyeing on weekdays at the mill in Launceston.

Please see their website www.cross-eyed-chameleon.co.uk for more information, or telephone. Wednesday is a good day.

We have decided to defer the plans for needle-felting.

Although there was some demand, it was insufficient to justify the expense which would have involved adding a mezzanine floor and re-positioning some of the machines.

As an alternative we are investigating buying in some needle felt to sell by the metre.

Please advise us if you might be interested. We will give you a progress report in the next issue.

Yes. Eventually you have to pay ... so we've made it easier and now accept credit cards by telephone or in person in addition to Paypal, cheques, cash and direct bank transfers.

Increasing numbers of customers are opting for Paypal or credit card, but internet banking is best.

Prompt, efficient payment saves us time and helps keep prices down.

PRICES HELD FOR 2008

We are approaching the end of our second year much stronger than when we started.

The business is about to strengthen its financial structure to fund the next phase of expansion.

Although there will be no profit again this year, we will be holding prices. Prompt payers, regular and large customers will also qualify for discounts and special offers.

Customers will also be encouraged to provide us with spinning work during the slacker months.

As there are many ways customers can save money, we have prepared a series of information sheets on weaving, yarn weights, lengths of balls of wool, washing fleece, yarns and knitwear and a vast range of other topics.

If you would like copies simply complete and return the enclosed order form. Much of this material will be available on the website which is in the process of being redesigned.

The new site should go live between now and the end of the year and be much easier to navigate for customers, potential customers and for anybody interested in learning more about wool, mohair and alpaca.

We will update all the information sheets and are planning to add files on moths and other destroyers of wool (the horror movie, including a guest appearance of the Tumble Dryer), dyeing (the colourful sort) and uses for rubbish (the fibre best left out when spinning).

Dangers of sunlight

When some fleece was stored in one of our polypropylene sacks in a polytunnel, the sunlight received through the polytunnel cover caused the sack to disintegrate. Picking bits of polypropylene from fleece is a long task, so please store our sachs away from direct sunlight.

Naturally-coloured wool is 'colour fast' as far as washing is concerned and unlikely to fade in general use. But sunlight acts like a strong bleach and makes the natural colour fade, something you will have noticed in the animals themselves.

Remember to dry woollen things inside out if you are drying outside, and turn throws and rugs regularly if they are anywhere near direct sunlight.