



The Natural Fibre Company

NEWS UP-DATE

Spring

2007

MARKETING: While many Natural Fibre Company customers sell all the knitwear, knitting yarn, woven goods and other craft items they make from the fleece we process, others are looking for more sales opportunities.

We often receive enquiries for yarns and finished goods and would like to link these with those of you who have goods to sell.

The result is The Natural Fibre Company Marketing Network which can match our customers' goods with potential new markets.

Information from those customers who join the network will be passed to all telephone and email enquiries; it will go with us to the shows we attend and be available for the frequent visitors to the mill offices at Launceston.

If you are interested in selling your goods in this way, please contact us and provide information on what you want to sell.

Network members will have their details included on the NFC website which is currently being re-designed to accommodate it. If the network takes off as we hope, the NFC website will create links to your own web address and eventually make provision for direct sales.

The Natural Fibre Company is also prepared to hold samples or small amounts of your stock and send it out for you. Customers can also be put directly in touch with you via the website.

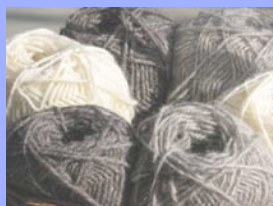
If we hold samples or stock we will make a small storage charge: £5 year plus VAT for samples. We will charge 10% commission on any sales we make plus VAT.

The Natural Fibre Company Marketing Network
Joining fee: £10 plus VAT, a total of £11.75
Annual membership fee:
£30 a year plus VAT, making £35.25

We have changed the newsletter format from A4 to A5, not for design reasons, but because of dramatically higher postal charges.

In this case necessity truly was the mother of invention

Please send us comments and suggestions, an article or case history. Future editions will follow a similar formula with the outside cover including Natural Fibre Company news and ideas and the loose sheets inside containing knitting patterns, customer profiles (please send us yours) and other information in what we hope is an easy-to-file format.



**For share scheme
update see inside**



The Natural Fibre Company

Time has flown so quickly that it scarcely seems a year since we launched our first production run.

Although we have done plenty, we have also been slower than planned in getting our de-hairing service and worsted spinning working.

We are delighted to announce that de-hairing is now available, while the final worsted installation and commissioning of machinery is scheduled for April and May.

At the beginning all we seemed to be doing was putting everything into a large empty box.

We had no desks or chairs when the bank came to see us for the first time. Although the size of the building and the nice new carpet impressed them, it was probably the real coffee in a flask that did the trick.

Lighting and power cabling had to be installed in the mill and water and gas supplies laid on for the scouring machine.

The staircase and railings we built around the fleece storage area in a mezzanine space above the office were the subject of lengthy negotiations with the building regulations officers.

With the large empty box now full, it's quite difficult to imagine what it looked like before.

Finding the premises was difficult. We looked everywhere from derelict shunting yards to old milk parlours.

Being at the far end of an industrial estate wasn't our first choice, but it had advantages.

We have neighbours who can repair castings, wheel in welding machines, supply spare parts, small tools and sandwiches. Our electricians,

plumbers and computer services are all local businesses.

There have inevitably been changes. Staff and contractors have moved on as we learned as we went.

Looking back it's clear now that we wasted some effort in the learning process, but no sharp learning curve was ever skid free.

Never mind – we have developed a strong presence in Launceston and over the year we have:

- Built a database from over 2000 live enquiries;
- Served a customer base of nearly 200 organisations and people;
- Enjoyed around 300 detailed visits a month on average to the website;
- Attended two major and three minor shows
- Hosted five visits from breed societies along with countless individuals and conducted mill tours for customers;
- Gained organic processing accreditation and processed over three tonnes of organic fibre; and
- Processed over 10 tonnes of fleece into nearly seven tonnes of yarn.

In the second year we will introduce a de-hairing service; commission our worsted equipment; research needle felting services for larger volumes; upgrade the website to network with customers; buy in fleece for larger, trade commissions; and continue upgrading and improving our production facilities and equipment, but only when the right items are available at the right price.





2006 Share Scheme woven fabrics



Shetland throws



Jacob/Mohair and Shetland blankets



Jacob/Mohair throws

The wool has just been spun for two more share schemes, one for Jacob the other for Shetland yarns and fabrics.

We are very pleased with the results - some of the blankets are pictured left - but there were some practical problems.

Ensuring we made the best use of the fleeces, took a lot of time in terms of planning and design.

Most customers want similar yarns for designs, but there is always a minority who would have preferred something else.

The variety of colours and specifications was inefficient in production because of the need to prevent colour contamination between batches.

We also find that delays can cascade and cause problems meeting deadlines so we are making further changes.

Pooled stocks

Unless specifically instructed by customers, all fleece submitted for future share schemes will be pooled with existing NFC stocks.

So that we always know how much you sent, fleece will continue to be stored individually in named sacks until used.

This will create a 'credit account' so that you will be entitled to a proportionate amount of yarn at spinning cost only.

For all other customers there will be a higher price to cover the cost of the fleece.

We will make and hold stocks of yarn in a range of colours for Jacob, Hebridean, Shetland, Manx, Black Welsh Mountain and Ryeland.

These will be spun to fit around our normal production schedules. We will also introduce blends, alpaca, worsted and organic yarns on the same basis.

The yarns will be made to a quality for prices between £25 and £55 a kilogram including VAT, and will be supplied washed either on cone by weight or as 50 gram balls in bags of 10.

We will also carry a small stock of woven goods. These will be in the most popular designs, plus a few new ones each year.

Customers wanting specific designs will need to give us plenty of notice.

These changes should enable us to keep prices as low as possible yet still maintain a consistent quality and to supply in good time for Christmas and shows.

We will need to buy in some fleece from customers and are interested in hearing from those with quality fleece for sale in any breed.



The Natural Fibre Company

The WORSTED PLANT is due to be installed later this month. To get the mill ready for production in May we have upgraded one of our carding machines to cater for longer staple fibres.

As with our wool launch last year, we will start the clean machines with an organic run, and welcome fibre for this.

To celebrate the move into worsted, we will be launching with special offer prices of £1 off the worsted spinning price for fleece received for between 1 April and 31 May.

The normal prices will be £23, £24 and £25 a kilogram for singles, DK and Aran/Light Aran respectively.

Set-up and finishing charges are as for all other fibres and woollen spinning. An updated price list will be available shortly.

We have recently had several enquiries for NEEDLE-FELT and have located equipment that could make this possible.

It will be around 1.2 metres or 48 inches wide and as long as customers require it, thick or thin, dense or light in weight.

As with all our products, it can be made to organic specification.

Depending on the end use, felting is an excellent way of either creating something special with good fibre or adding value to lower quality fibre.

Needle-felted non-woven fabric can be used as wadding for patchwork quilts, stuffing for cushions, heavy interlining for curtains, mattress toppers or table protectors.

It can be cut into bags, hats, mittens, jackets, cushion covers, slippers and indoor boots.

Felt can be dyed or used to create panels and shapes for embroidery, appliqué and collage work. It can be combined with knitted yarns to add collars, trims and pocket flaps to garments, using the same breed or a contrasting breed or fibre.

The fibres are less mixed up than when preparing for spinning, so it's possible to stream varied colours into the mix to create abstract natural coloured patterns, all of them unique and unrepeatable.

Felt can either be made of fibre or felted on to a net scrim which adds strength and eliminates stretching.

To help us decide whether to invest in the necessary equipment, please send us your comments on the enclosed slip. We propose to accept minimum orders of 10 kilograms, as with de-hairing only and scour/card only.

NEWS: The Natural Fibre Company and Cornish Organic Wools are offering a prize for the best organic fleece at the Royal Cornwall Show in June.

In the coming year we will also be travelling round to see customers and attend more breed society meetings, a number of which we will host at the mill in Launceston.

Cross Eyed Chameleon Workshops, that is Jill Morris and Jane Deane, are working with the Natural Fibre Company and running workshops at the mill in weaving, spinning and dyeing from April 2007. For more information either contact the NFC or jerryjillandco@aol.com

Diary Dates

- WonderWool Wales, Builth Wells, 19-20 May
- Woolfest at Cocker-mouth 29-30 June and 1 July
- WSD Somerset Fleece Fair, 21 July
- Devon Woolfest at Cullompton, 1-2 September
- Soil Association Fair at Bristol 1-2 September.