



# THE LIVING RUG COMPANY

## A Natural Fibre Company case study



### How rescued sheep make rugs and still enjoy life

DEBORAH GRIFFIN'S living rugs owe their existence to a generous husband, a farm that needed income, a chance sighting in the Netherlands and a dread of slaughtering animals.

'I've always loved horses and kept them at a variety of liveries' she says. 'But when my husband Kevin sold his business in 2008, one of the first things he did was to buy a 40-acre farm so I could keep my horses at home.'

Sheep came next. Four Herdwicks, followed by four rescue Blue-faced Leicester crosses and finally four Valais Blacknose, an anniversary gift from Kevin.

Until she discovered some felted fleece rugs in the Netherlands, Deborah gave her fleeces away. But the farm needed income, so as a result of what the Dutch call 'vegetarian sheepskin rugs', The Living Rug Company was formed in August 2015.

'A Living Rug is like no other rug: it's special because it comes from a living sheep that grows its fleece every year. The sheep whose fleece we use live on the farm with my other sheep which were rescued from slaughter. I found this more rewarding than breeding, so we don't breed any more' she says.

'I love working my farm and looking after my sheep, even in the extreme weather that comes from living at 1,350ft in the Peak District. It's hard work keeping 74 sheep, two horses, three ponies, two dogs and three cats in good condition. Not forgetting a couple of humans.'

Deborah shears her sheep when the weather gets too warm. If she's lucky, a sheep's fleece

will come off in one piece. Her rugs are backed with felt rather than the traditional suede. Deborah then combines the fleece with wool that's prepared for felting or spinning. The scouring and carding is done by The Natural Fibre Company.

'I take the washed fleece and lay it out, so I get the shape I want. Then I place three layers of carded wool on top with netting over to hold it in place during felting' she says.

This involves soap and water and involves a gentle, but firm rubbing. Next the fleece, along with its backing, is wrapped around a tube, which in turn is wrapped in durable plastic. This is rolled like pastry.

'Felted rugs have become very popular in the UK. A Living Rug is completely different to a sheepskin because the sheep is still alive and well and enjoying life at the farm' says Deborah who points out that the 'Wood and Wool' bowls she makes are as popular as the rugs.



Website: <https://www.thelivingrugcompany.com/>

