

OPTIONS FOR MARKETING WOOL

and other fibers

There are different options for marketing wool and other fibers. Options vary by fiber type (and color) and geographic location. They include wool pools, warehouses, fiber mills, and direct-to-consumer sales. There are many ways to add value to wool.

A wool pool is a cooperative system where small producers combine their wool for grading, sorting, and marketing. According to the American Sheep Industry Association, 19 states still operate wool pools. Wool pools are usually run by university extension. Fine, white, and long stapled wools fetch the highest prices.

A wool warehouse is a central point for producers (usually larger) to bring their wool to have it graded, sometimes stored, and marketed to buyers. Warehouses are usually located in major wool producing areas. Roswell Wool (NM, CA, TX) is the largest wool warehouse in the US. Center of the Nation Wool (SD) handles about 20 percent of the US wool clip. Finer white wools bring the highest prices in the commodity market.

Direct marketing of wool takes more time and effort, but is a way to increase income. There are numerous ways to market wool directly to consumers. One of the easiest and most common is to sell raw fleeces to hand spinners. Fleeces (and other value-added products) can be sold at farmers' markets, fiber and craft festivals, via the internet, or word of mouth. Rarer breeds, coarser wools, and natural colors are well suited to this market.

Adding value to wool (or other fiber) is an increasingly popular way to increase income. There are many ways to do this. There are mills throughout the US that will do custom processing. Pelletizing wool into a soil amendment is a relatively new way to market wool. It is ideal for the lesser wool grades which usually lack commercial demand.

Value-added wool

- Archery targets
- Artisan crafts
- Batting
- Bedding
- Blankets
- Clothing
- Dryer balls
- Felt
- Home decor
- Landscape mulch
- Roving
- Soap (from lanolin)
- Soil amendment
- Stuffing
- Yarn

Wool producers are eligible to receive loan deficiency payments (LDPs) for their wool, including the wool from unshorn lambs. LDPs are meant to compensate for low market prices, thus they are dependent upon market conditions. Payments are made through local Farm Service Agency (FSA) offices.

Did you know?

The US military consumes about 15 to 25 percent of US wool. Fifty to 60 percent of US wool is exported, with China being the primary destination.

