

Quality assessment and the requirements of the manufacturing industry for angora mohair and angora rabbit

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First of all, the following statement had to be made concerning this group of fibres. There are two different markets for angora, the world market, which absorbs 99% of the production, and a niche market, for the rest.

However, to maximise added value, the niche market requires to be accessed by the European producers. By involving themselves in the processing of their products, with the help of the textile network industry, they could obtain the best income for their fibres.

A niche market requires a) a good knowledge of the market and of the needs of consumers, b) a good segmentation of the market, i.e. targeting specifically different types of consumers, c) creating and developing new products always orientated towards the consumers and d) staying up-to-date with fashion, to produce desired products.

All these facts require specific quality requirements.

1-Fibre quality requirements for angora rabbit:

On the world market, the main criteria are the length of the staple (graded in 5 points, from 7 cm to 3 cm) and the cleanness of the fibre (one grade).

For a niche market, there are more criteria that require to be taken into account. These are as follows:

- length of the staple. It must be below 6 cm, ideally between 3 and 6 cm.
- animal age. The fibre will be different if the animal is a young or juvenile.
- a fibre which is bristly or prickly - classified into two grades.
- presence of felted fibre
- absence of dirty fibre

These criteria account for 8 grades.

Uses on a niche market:

Three kinds of yarns are used (100%, 70% or 50% angora). The angora fibre is mixed with wool. They are used mainly for knitting yarn, underwear and accessory clothes (socks, gloves, scarves...etc.) or for luxury yarn (fluffy yarn) for making jumpers, sweaters or jackets. The felted fibre is used for making hats and inner soles.

2-Fibre quality requirements for angora mohair:

On the world market, the main criteria taken into account by the industry are a) the fibre diameter, b) the kemp rate and c) the fibre length. These criteria represent around 25 grades.

On a niche market, the same criteria are important, but they are restricted to the 5-6 following grades:

- superfine kid
- kid
- young goat
- adult (fine & coarse fibre)
- kempy fibre

Use on the niche market:

The yarns are generally between 100% and 50% mohair fibre, mixed with wool. They are used for knitting yarn, accessory clothes (socks, scarves, gloves), jumpers or sweaters and blankets.

3-Fibre quality assessment for a niche market:

3-1- Angora rabbit:

The assessment is made at harvest by the producers. The fibre is graded into different grades according to:

- the age of the animal
- the fleece assessment.

The main factors are the length of the fibre, the bristle rate, the cleanliness and the felt factor.

3-2-Mohair:

The assessment is made at shearing by the producers, according to:

- the age of the animal
- the fleece assessment.

Fineness (animal age dependant), medullation and length of the fibre are the main factors.

A fibre test is made in France, using the OFDA technique and the scouring yield. There is one test per grade and per farm fibre lot.

4-Fibre quality assessment requirements:

4-1-Angora:

A good definition of bristle fibre is necessary. OFDA could be a way of defining it. The bristle is recognised as a fibre with a fibre diameter above 40 microns. The required fibre diameter for Angora varies between 25 microns and 40 microns.

4-2-Mohair:

The rate of medullated fibres and the kemp rate ought to be measured more quantitatively. This could be done using the OFDA technique, depending on the outcome of a planned second round trial to describe inter-laboratory variability in these quality characteristics.

