

# Guidance on Using Raw Fleece: Addendum for Newsletter

Following the number of queries after the December 2018 Newsletter, this note serves to clarify some points and add some recommendations. There is **no** suggestion that as hand spinners we stop using raw fleece. Every act of daily living carries a risk and we take steps to minimise those risks, be it wearing seat belts when driving to washing hands after using the toilet.

The fleece of alpacas, goats (mohair) and rabbits (angora) as well as sheep is the main focus for hand spinners. Whilst the risks of a disease being passed from fleece to humans are very small, awareness and some sensible actions will minimise those risks. The detailed guidance can be found on the Association Web Information Point Section 11. Below are the key points separated into firstly, Guild activities involving only members; and, secondly, any activities involving the general public.

## Guild Only Activities

- All Guilds are recommended to have guidance available to members on using raw fleece of all kinds
- Guilds are advised to have hand disinfectant close to areas where raw fleece may be handled as well as ensuring appropriate hand washing facilities
- Many Guild members find they can only assess the quality of a fleece by feel so the simple precautions are:

Check hands and arms for any cuts before handling, using plasters or gloves where needed to cover any wound

If fleeces are dusty (sometimes alpacas can be as they like dust baths) use a dust mask

Examine fleeces in well-ventilated rooms or outside

Wash hands straightaway after handling fleece

Scouring fleece effectively before spinning is recommended – hand hot water is not sufficient, see reference below

- All the above applies to working with raw fleece at home

## Activities Involving the General Public

The general public, particularly children, will not be aware of the risks and may not pay attention to notices. The Association Public Liability Indemnity will not be valid for these reasons if raw fleece is openly available for people to touch. Educating the public is one of our primary aims and there are ways to include raw fleece safely.

- Raw fleece can be at demonstrations if placed in a sealed see through container (such as a Kilner jar). In this way the nature of the fleece can be observed
- The dirt contained in raw fleece can be observed by having a sealed see through container with raw fleece in water
- Fleece that has been effectively scoured can be handled

## Reference on effective scouring:

Washing Fleece for Handspinning by the Wool Clip (available on the WIP)