



ALPACAS

MIDDLE/HIGH SCHOOL



As part of the camelid family, alpacas are related to camels and llamas. While camels and llamas are used as pack animals, alpacas are raised for their fiber. Llamas are twice as big as alpacas. Alpacas are usually more sweet natured than llamas.



Alpacas originated in South America. Most alpacas live high in the mountains in Peru where it is cold. Their fleece keeps them warm. Alpacas were first brought to the United States in 1983. Today there are about 10,000 alpacas in the United States.



There are two breeds of alpacas - Huacaya (pronounced wah-KI-ah) and Suri (SUR-ee). Ninety percent of alpacas are Huacaya, which makes it the most common breed. Huacaya have a crimped, springy fleece which grows out and gives them a fluffy look. Suri is less common than Huacaya. Suri fleece grows in long, thin locks, which fall straight down from their body and has a silkier feel than the Huacaya. When using alpaca fiber, dyes are not required as the fiber comes in a variety of natural colors—white, several shades of brown, several shades of gray, and black. In fact, there are 22 official colors with many other shades and hues.

DID YOU KNOW?

Alpaca fleece is similar to sheep fleece. However, it does not contain lanolin. Therefore, it does not repel water.

HOW IS ALPACA YARN MADE?



1. SHEARING OF ALPACA

The wool from an alpaca is usually shorn with scissors, and this process is done by hand to avoid harming the animal.



2. CARDING

Once the raw wool has been acquired, it is carded, which is the process of combing the individual wool fibers in a uniform direction.



3. SPINNING

Once it has been carded, the wool is ready to be spun into yarn using a pushka that uses gravity to combine multiple carded wool fibers into a single thicker fiber.



4. WASHING

Once it is formed into yarn, the wool is washed to remove impurities.



5. FINISHING

Once the wool is washed and air-dried, it is ready to be formed into a finished textile product.

6. TEXTILES

Alpaca yarn is commonly used to make socks, shirts, and pants. However, alpaca fleece can be made into a very fine yarn, which means it's perfect for mittens, gloves, and mats.



EXPLORE

Scan the QR code to explore alpaca farms in Oklahoma.

How close is the nearest alpaca farm to you?

Does this farm raise Huacaya or Suri?

WAIT, THERE'S A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN LLAMAS AND ALPACAS?



Yes! Scan to watch a video to learn the difference between the two animals.