

Wonderful Wool

Do you have a warm **wool** sweater that you love to wear? Have you ever wondered where wool comes from? It usually comes from sheep. People use sheep's wool because it is very warm and the sheep can grow it quickly. Plus, taking the wool from a sheep doesn't hurt it at all.

Once a year, sheep owners collect all their sheep in one place. Then they *shear*, or cut off, the long, thick coats the sheep have grown over the last twelve months. Once all the wool is removed from the sheep, it is washed until it is nice and clean. Most of the wool is white when it comes off the sheep. So how is it possible for us to have blue, green, or purple sweaters made of wool?

The answer is easy: after washing the wool, workers soak some of it in **dye**. This ink will turn the wool into any color you like. You can make wool in any color of the rainbow!

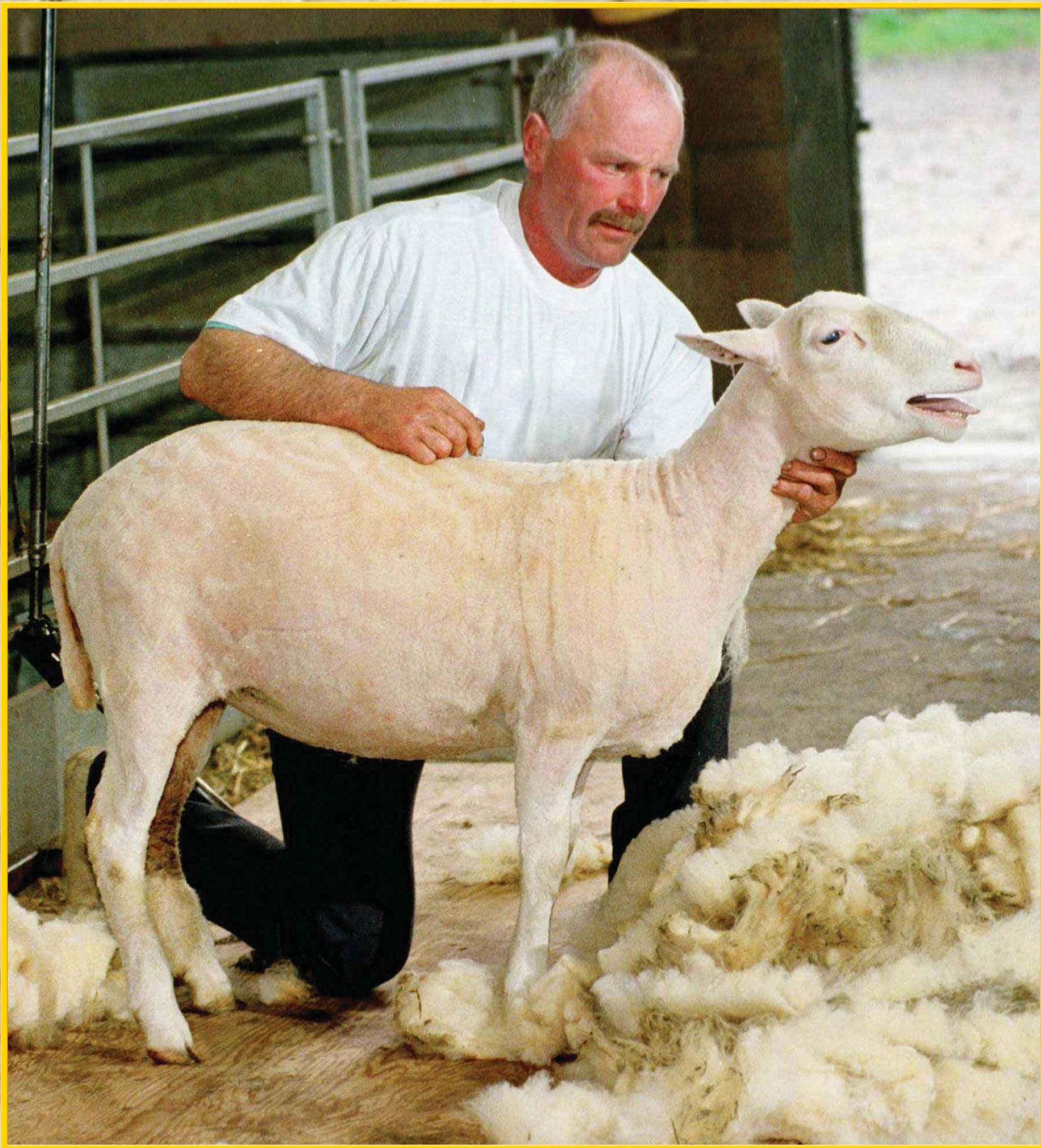
After the wool has been colored with dye, it is sent through rollers that are covered with little teeth. This process is called *carding*. The teeth on the rollers take the knots and tangles out of the wool. It's as if the wool goes through a giant hairbrush!

Now the wool is ready for **spinning**. To spin wool, you take small sections and pull them very tightly. Then you twist them together into strings. We call these strings of wool **yarn**. The strings of yarn are much stronger than single threads of wool. They are much easier to make clothing with.

There are many kinds of yarn. Some are very thick. People use thick yarn for knitting heavy clothing, such as sweaters. Other yarns are thin. People **weave** this kind of yarn into soft, smooth cloth for pants, jackets, and suits. Weaving means to braid threads of wool over and under each other until a patch of cloth has been made.

Wool is a wonderful and useful material that keeps us warm. So the next time you see a sheep, be sure to say, "Thank you for sharing!"

COMPREHENSION Which words help you understand the things people do to turn wool into cloth? Why do people soak wool in dye?



HIDING IN PLAIN SIGHT

To stay alive, animals need to eat. But they also need to keep from being eaten. Many animals use camouflage to do these things. Camouflage means using the way you look to keep from being seen. Animals that use camouflage have special **features** that help keep them from being seen.

Some animals' camouflage stays the same. For example, certain kinds of frogs and lizards have a **pattern** of colors on their skin that is almost an **exact** match of the plants and leaves where they stay. This helps them in two ways. First, the insects that land near the frogs and lizards will not see them easily. This gives the frogs and lizards time to catch the insects and have a tasty snack! Or, if bigger animals are hunting to eat frogs and lizards for lunch, camouflage helps the frogs and lizards hide by making them look like a **copy** of the plant they are sitting on. This means the hungry animals will have to look in another location for their food.

Would you believe that some animals can actually change color? The arctic fox is an example of this. It has a dark coat of fur in the warmer months. The dark color of its fur has a **similarity** to the dark ground where it lives. But in the winter, when snow falls, the dark fur on the arctic fox would stand out, and it would be very easy to see. The arctic fox solves this problem by changing the color of its fur to white! Then the fox matches the snow, and it can hide while it hunts.

Another example of color-changing camouflage is the cuttlefish. Cuttlefish are sea animals that can change color in seconds! They do this so that they become the same color as whatever is nearby. This makes it very hard for bigger fish to find them!

Other animals have shapes that help them hide. The walking stick is an insect that looks like a long twig. It is almost impossible to see one in a tree, even if it is right in front of your eyes! Some other insects take the shape of the leaves they live on.

There are many other kinds of camouflage. Some animals move like the things around them, and some animals make noises that sound like other things. Camouflage is nature's way of helping animals play "Hide and Go Seek"!

COMPREHENSION Which words help you understand how camouflage helps animals? Why is it important for an arctic fox to change color in the winter?

