

# Knotty Lady YARN S

## Get to know Cashmere and Angora!

This is a double feature for two of the more sought after and luxurious wools...cashmere and angora! Lets start off with talking about cashmere!

Cashmere is a fiber obtained from cashmere or pashmina goats, as well as other types of goats. Cashmere goats produce a double fleece that consists of a fine, soft undercoat, or underdown, of hair mingled with a straighter and much coarser outer coating of hair called guard



hair. We are more interested in the soft undercoat that is gathered from the neck area of the animal. Once spun into yarn, it is finer, stronger, lighter, softer and approximately three times more insulating than sheep wool. The North American Cashmere Goat, or NACG, is an association that brings together breeders and fiber artists to grow and produce not only quality cashmere fiber, but care for these adorable creatures. NACG also sets the standard for cashmere fiber. To be considered a cashmere goat, the fiber must meet a number of requirements. Requirements begin with a diameter of 19 microns or less, a micro is 1/1,000 of a millimeter, and a minimum length of 1.25 inches. Other qualifications include uniformity, total weight, style and differentiation between guard and down hairs. All cashmere is scaled on a 0.0 - 3.0 ranking, with 0 being disqualified and 3 being excellent. The NACG also takes into account the animals confirmation, which we will not go into since that is more for the meat industry.

Once a year from April to May goats will naturally shed their coats. This is the prime time to harvest the cashmere. Unlike wool from sheep, goats are not sheared but brushed. This is a time intensive process, but well worth the results. The goats are often placed on a small table with a feed bucket to keep them entertained. First you will want to brush out the guard hairs, debris and remove any matted fur. Now you can brush a little deeper to get the cashmere out. As you are brushing, you can easily feel with your hand if there is more

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cashmere to be removed by the "fluffier" parts of the coat. A single goat will produce 4 – 6 ounces of cashmere per year and the fiber will become slightly coarser after each harvest.

Fun Cashmere Goat Facts:

- Some breeds are more likely to produce cashmere than others.
- About 60% of cashmere goats are found in China, Nepal and India.
- Other countries such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, Kashmir, Turkey, Australia and New Zealand also produce quality cashmere.
- Male (buck) and female (doe) cashmere goats both have horns.
- Cashmere goats are generally small to medium in size.
- Cashmere goats can also be used for milking and meat.
- The average lifespan of a Cashmere goat is 10–12 years.



Cashmere yarns we carry:



Jojoland International Cashmere 2-ply is 100% Cashmere in a lace weight with 440 yards per hank and comes in 9 stunning colors.

Lang Yarns Cashmere light is 88% Cashmere and 12% Nylon in a chunky weight with 93 yards per skein and comes in 20 amazing colors.



June Cashmere DK is 100% Cashmere in a DK weight with 150 yards per hank and comes in 16 classic muted colors.

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Now lets go to Angora wool...no not the breed of goat, but one of the five breeds of angora rabbits. Originating in Turkey, this rabbit's fur was not made popular until 1790 in France, and North America in 1920! There are five major Angora breeds, which are: English, French, Satin, Giant and German. With their docile dispositions and generally calm nature, these rabbits make great pets. However, they do require daily grooming. Angora wool is typically paired with other types of fiber because it is too fine to withstand knitting or crochet stitches. But, as always, there are exceptions. Even blended with other fibers, the angora will provide a "halo" effect and is said to be seven times warmer than sheep's wool.

## Harvesting Angora

Harvesting Angora is typically done by plucking or shearing. The English and French Angora rabbits naturally "blows its coat" or molts 3 - 4 times per year. During the molting process, it is easier to gently pluck or comb the loosening tufts of fur from the rabbit. These tufts should be 10 -14 cm in length. While plucking, you must make sure you are not pulling the secondary growth hairs, which will be 1-2 cm long at this time. The German, Giant and Chinese Angora rabbits are typically sheared with clippers or scissors since their hair grows like the hair on our own heads.

Like other animals that shed their hair once to several times a year, it is relaxing and enjoyable for them to loose that excess hair. Like grooming your dog or cat come spring time! It is important to keep in mind the temperature and how much hair we pulled from these rabbits since they are more susceptible to the cold. Some



English Angora Rabbit



rabbits may be more restless than others during this process. So, it is important to keep them calm and go at their pace.

Giant Angora Rabbit

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## Processing Angora

The joy of Angora Rabbits is simple. Since they are clean animals and a higher maintenance animal, one can groom their rabbit and spin straight away with the fiber.

## Angora Rabbits as Pets:

Like owning any animal, owners should do their research and make sure that the animal is a good fit. Below is a brief list of Benefits and Considerations prospective owners should think about if you are interested in having one as a pet.

### Benefits:

- No kill wool-producing livestock
- Don't need acreage, can be happy in urban and suburban homes
- Inexpensive to feed
- Easy breeding and reproduction
- Harvesting wool is easy and relaxing for both you and your pet
- Double as a 4H project and can be entered into shows
- Fiber can be sold for profit

### Considerations:

- Special animal husbandry practices to keep them healthy and a good fiber producer
- Some people can be allergic
- Daily cage cleaning
- Minimal to extensive coat maintenance (breed specific)
- General daily care
- Life span of 7 - 12 years and weight between 4- 12 pounds

## Angora yarns we carry:

Plymouth Yarn Company Angora is 100% Angora in a worsted weight with 49 yards per skein and comes in 16 vibrant colors. Pictured on the left.



Hikoo Kenzie is 50% New Zealand Merino, 25% Nylon, 10% angora, 10% Alpaca and 5% Silk Noils in a worsted weight with 150 yards per skein and comes in 30 colors. Pictured to the Right!



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## Cleaning a Cashmere or Angora Project

Hand wash your garment in warm water and a wool wash for cashmere or plain hair shampoo (no conditioner) for Angora. Soak for a few minutes while gently squeezing dirt, stains and debris. Drain and rinse with the same temperature water so as to not felt or shrink the item. Don't wring out your garment, always squeeze your item. Use a dry towel to further squeeze out water, then lay flat to dry. If you want to bring that halo back, gently pin your work on a line outside and let the breeze do the rest.

## Blocking Cashmere and Angora

### Dry Blocking / Spray Blocking

This method works for projects that need little to no blocking, but enough to help fix a projects shape or a curled edge. This is the forever safe blocking method and my personal go to. This is also perfect for these temperamental yarns made from unique fibers!

- 1) Pin project down on blocking mats to desired shape
- 2) Using a spray bottle gently mist your project until lightly damp
- 3) Let dry completely before removing pins