

Recommendations for use of Majacraft mini combs

Advantages of the clamped mini comb system:

Easy to use and to carry around

Light to use

Versatile

Able to be used to create true worsted yarns using traditional methods

Hand held mini combs: (single or double row of tines)

Fleece should be of even length, clean and have good strength (Has no breaks or tenderness) Greasy fleece may be used, but wool grease and wax can collect around the tines and is difficult to remove, so I would recommend that fleece be washed or scoured * first.

- Lash the butt end of staples (locks) of fleece onto the tines of one comb. I lay it so that 1/3 of the length of the staple is behind the tines. One row of staples, about 5 gms is about enough.
- Hold that comb tightly (I brace it against my knee) with the tines pointing to the side. Gently begin to comb downwards with the other comb, starting by catching just the tips of the staples and working deeper until very little fibre remains on the first comb. What is left should be just short waste, which is put aside. (It's great to use as stuffing!)
- Now begin to transfer the fleece back onto the first comb by striking sideways, once again beginning with the tips and working deeper. The mass of fibre should now be opening up and will be a bouncy mass of fibres. You have now completed one "pass".
- You should only need one more pass to completely comb the staples.
- Now "diz" the fibre off the comb. Thread the fibre onto the diz and pull through while holding the comb in place.

Using the double mini combs clamped to a table as mini woolcombs:

Selection of fleece:

- Fleece should be of good strength (high tensile strength) and length to produce a good worsted yarn. (70 - 150mm depending of fleece type) Any tenderness will result in broken fibre and an excessive amount of waste left on the comb.
- Long wools such as romney and border leicester through to fine wools such as the finest merino can be combed easily using the mini combs.
- Fleece should be properly scoured * (hot washed) and completely free of grease or wax.



Other necessary or recommended accessories

- Diz
- Pad and clamp
- Small spritzer bottle filled with water to which a few drops of hair conditioner has been added. This reduces the effects of static electricity.
- A handcarder or flick carder

1. Clamp one comb to a bench or table set at a good working height (about waist height) with the tines vertical.
2. Pull the tips only of a staple of fleece through the carder or flick card.
3. Lash the butt onto the comb with about 1/3 of the length behind the tines. Repeat with a few more staples. Up to 10 gm of crossbred (long wool) is recommended and about 5 gm of fine fleece.
4. Swing the packed comb around to a horizontal position.

5. With the other comb held firmly begin to comb downwards through the fibre starting by just touching the tips and working progressively deeper. Comb upwards occasionally too. Continue till only a few short fibres remain. Discard these short fibres. If static electricity causes a problem a light squirt with the spritzer will settle the fibres.

6. Now strike sideways to return the mass of fibre to the first comb, once again starting by combing the tips only and working progressively deeper. Work slowly to ensure an even result. This completes one "pass".

7. If you are using quality fleece which has been well scoured one pass may well be sufficient. If bumps or lumps are still evident on the mass of fibre repeat the process.

8. Now return the clamped comb to the vertical position, thread the diz onto a few fibres and diz from side to side until only a few short fibres remain on the comb. Roll the resulting roving into a ball ready for spinning. Repeat.

Using single combs may require more passes to completely comb the fibre. They also require more care in execution of the above techniques.

Fleece prepared this way is used to produce true worsted yarns. Within the roving all fibres are of similar length and all are aligned from the butt to the tip. You are always spinning from the butt end of the fibre. Spin short draw to produce a smooth strong and even yarn.

Blending colours and different fibres:

Blending is very successful on the combs, the main rule being that fibres should be of the same length, be clean and of good tensile strength. Sampling can be fun and rewarding.

Using one clamped mini comb as an aid in the preparation of carded and/or combed sliver or top.

Top or sliver is an industrial preparation that is only a part of the process in the manufacture of yarn. The next step is the drawing out of the top into a thinner roving.

If we do the same with our sliver or top we are able to spin yarns that are classy, even and very special.

Requirements

One mini comb clamped to a bench.

Diz

1. Lash the length of top onto the comb with about 15cms (6 inches) hanging in front.
2. Thread the diz onto a few fibres and begin to gently pull the fibre through. If the diz jams you are pulling too much through at one time. A little practice will result in an even loose roving.

Scouring:

The key to preparing a waxy fleece is to scour it effectively. This is essentially a thorough hot wash that removes all wax, dirt and suint.

This scouring method as given is suitable for all the waxy type fleeces, such as Merino, Corriedale and Halfbred. If you are using this method for the stronger fleeces that don't contain wax the washes can be 5 degrees cooler (about 10 degrees Fahrenheit). If in doubt use the higher temperatures. (A suitable thermometer can be purchased from any homebrew supply shop!)

The method is adapted from the three-pot mini scouring plant at the Wool Laboratory at Massey University in Palmerston North, New Zealand.

- Prepare fleece by laying staples in mesh bags or in the base of a plastic basket that fits easily into your tub. A maximum of 170 gms / 6 oz of fleece.
- Half fill a tub with water at just over 70 degrees celsius (160 deg F) and dissolve 2 tblsp mild laundry detergent (that does not contain enzymes or whiteners) American - 2 tblsp orvus.
- Press the bags or basket down into the water (should be at 70 degrees after the fleece has been added)
- Leave 3 minutes, then carefully lift the bags or basket and press lightly to drain.
- Repeat with two more washes at 65 degrees (150 degrees fahrenheit) and 60 degrees (140 degrees fahrenheit). Then follow with three hand hot rinses of three minutes each.
- Squeeze, then lay to dry on a towel.

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