

## ALPACA

### WHAT IS ALPACA?

Alpaca is a hair fiber from the animal of the same name. Alpacas are “camelids,” meaning they are cousins to camels, llamas, guanacos and vicunas. About half the size of llamas, alpacas are native to the Andes Mountains of Chile, Peru and Bolivia.

There are two distinct breeds of alpaca. The *huacaya* is distinguished by its crimped, very dense fleece. The *suri*, representing only about 10% of the total population, has long, non-crimped “pencils” of lustrous hair that hang like dreadlocks. The picture below shows an adult suri.

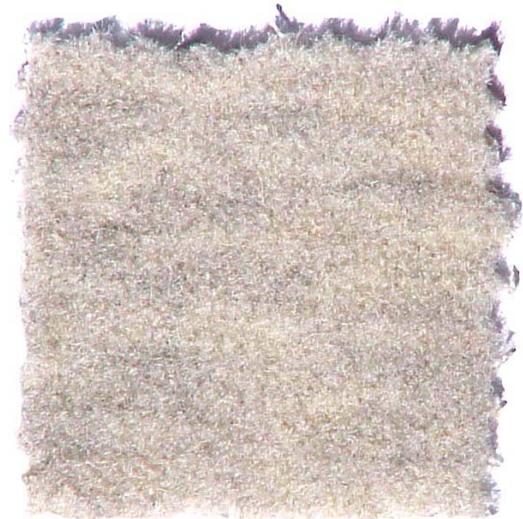
The best fleece an alpaca will ever produce is usually its first coat called “tui.” This is coat is also called “prime fleece” and “baby alpaca.”



### FIBER PROPERTIES

Alpaca is a protein fiber, as are all other fibers of animal origin. As such, alpaca shares the characteristics common to other

hair fibers. It is easily dyed, resilient and resistant to moderate acids. It is also susceptible to damage by alkaline cleaning agents.



The fabric shown here is 90% alpaca, 10% cotton. (The pile fiber is pure alpaca.)

### CLEANABILITY

Alpaca is often blended with other fibers. Each different fiber in the fabric must be considered when choosing the appropriate cleaning method.

The velvet fabric shown on this page is readily cleaned with water-based methods. (In fact, the manufacturer’s cleaning code for this fabric is “W,” meaning that wet cleaning is acceptable.)

Testing shows that this fabric is colorfast to water-based products and also to dry cleaning solvents. Assuming careful testing, most alpaca fabrics are likely to be

wet-cleanable with normal methods and chemicals.

## **SPOT CLEANING**

Alpaca fabrics can be spot cleaned (assuming very careful pre-testing) using both water-based cleaners such as pHnominal and dry cleaning solvents such as Kleen-Tec.

Chlorine bleach and strongly alkaline chemicals, such as many pre-sprays, should be avoided when working on alpaca or any other protein fiber.

Also to be avoided are any chemicals containing optical brighteners. These chemicals have been known to leave “white spots” (areas of fabric that look somewhat

bleached) when used on fabrics such as the alpaca velvet shown in this publication.

## **ON THE BRIGHT SIDE**

With proper care, alpaca fabrics can last for years. Routine maintenance should include vacuuming, as well as rotating and flipping cushions (where applicable).

The Fiber-Seal Fabric Care System can benefit alpaca fabrics by reducing absorbency, helping to resist permanent staining, and ultimately increasing the useful life of the fabric.

**ALWAYS TEST CHEMICALS AND/OR PROCEDURES FIRST IN AN INCONSPICUOUS AREA OF THE FABRIC.**