



Drum Carding Icelandic Fleece for Hand Spinning

Carding combined fibres is most successful on a drum carder as hand carders tend to separate rather than combine the tog and thel of the fleece. Also, the tog of Icelandic fleece can be too long for hand carders. Use a drum carder with long teeth to cope with the extra length and airiness of the Icelandic fibres.

This is my way of drum carding my Icelandic fleece:

In order to spin a combination lopi-style yarn from your Icelandic fleece, first tease out the washed fleece pieces so that all the tangles are opened up. This will save time when carding.

Feed the fleece a little at a time onto the smaller drum, and let this slowly feed the larger drum. The smaller drum can sometimes become clogged with fibres. In order to avoid this I watch out for tog that starts to get wrapped around the small drum, and lift this up to encourage it to be picked up by the larger drum. Saves having to unclog the small drum later!

Eventually no more fleece will be picked up by the larger drum. The batt can now be removed from the drum. Personally, I prefer not to make these batts too thick.

Split the batt into several sections and repeat the carding process, to ensure that the fleece is well mixed. This will produce a heather or tweed effect yarn when spun.

If you want to retain some differences in the colours, put some of the teased fleece on the big carder by hand i.e. don't let it go through the small carder, then card the main colour in the normal way. This gives streaks of a different colour. Don't put it through the carder a second time as this would mix the colours.

You can also split the fleece into the striking colours and the main colour. Remember, Icelandic sheep are rarely one colour. Even white can vary in shades! Card up the main colour first - not more than once, as this batt will go through a second time when the other colours are added. You can then card each of the different colours separately, and add sections of this to the main colour batt on a second run through the carder. Or, if the striking colour doesn't need carding (or needs just a quick combing), put bits of this on to the main batt on a second run through the carder.

You can try splitting tog and thel, and put the thel through the carder first then add streaks of the tog. The end result should look similar to the original fleece. Don't card more than once then as the thel might start to produce "fluff balls" (pill).

Oddments of different coloured fleece can be carded together to produce different colours and blends of colours for knitted or crocheted items! It is great fun.

A Good DVD

Look out for a video/DVD called "Fiber Preparation and Multicolor Blending Techniques". It's by Deb Menz (an American), and was produced by Victorian Video Productions for Yarnbarn, a U.S company. It was made in 1998. Deb Menz demonstrates how to play with colour blending on a drum carder. Amazon will probably have it for sale, or failing that you can get it from Yarnbarn direct. Deb also wrote a book on the subject, but actually watching the way she blends the colours is much better.

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