

# What You Should Know About Cashmere

## PASHMINA

“Pashmina” is a term given to soft, luxurious cashmere, cashmere/silk blend or synthetic fabric made into ladies scarves and shawls. It is not a term that will normally appear on a label, since there is no such fiber as pashmina, but labels have been noted stating pashmina. Pashmina is the Indian term for cashmere. As other fibers, the cashmere and silk must be properly labeled in terms of percentages, or labeled as 100% cashmere only if the cashmere is used by itself with no silk added. A label cannot say “100% Pashmina” since it is not a recognized fiber by any regulatory source.

## CASHMERE

Cashmere is the very ultra-fine, soft, downy undercoat of a small goat (sometimes referred to as a cashmere goat), varying in color from white to gray-brown. Living in extremely high altitudes in the Kashmir region of Central Asia, the goat grows a dense “insulating” undercoat to withstand its surroundings. These fibers are considered luxury fibers and typically command a higher price than wool. The goat has an outer coat of coarse, long fibers and it's the undercoats' down-like hair, which is used in fine apparel. The hair usually is combed by hand from the animal, separating the coarser fibers (used in outer garments) from the finer ones. The downy fibers make up a very small part of the fleece, approximately ½ pound per goat.

The more expensive garments will be made from the hand-sorted longer under hair, spun into a worsted yarn, which pills less. 100% cashmere can have a variety of prices, depending on the quality of the fibers used. The undercoat of a cashmere goat has very small scales; therefore a finer fiber.

Generally speaking, the finer the fiber, the more care needed on all specialty-hair fabrics.

## Characteristics, Care & Precautions

- ◆ Warm buttery hand.
- ◆ Excellent draping qualities.
- ◆ Very sensitive to stain removal agents; more sensitive than wool.
- ◆ Does not wear well; cuff's and elbows on jackets show signs of wear readily.
- ◆ Handle as a fragile garment; short cycle (4 minutes) in drycleaning.
- ◆ Clean in a moisture free system.
- ◆ Lower drying temperature if possible. All natural "hair" fibers are sensitive to high heat.
- ◆ Net bag in drycleaning to reduce mechanical action.

- ◆ Use a neutral detergent (no alkaline detergents) when hand washing or wetcleaning.
- ◆ Sensitive to alkalis. Do not use ammonia or chlorine as this will yellow and deteriorate the fabric.
- ◆ No mechanical action if hand washed; squeeze moisture in a towel and dry flat.
- ◆ Gently card (brush) the fabric after finishing to eliminate matting and align the yarns.
- ◆ Weaker when wet.
- ◆ After stain removal, gently brush (or card) the fibers so they do not appear matted.