

# DOWN 101

## WHAT IS DOWN?

Unlike feathers, down is the light, fluffy clusters found on the underside of a goose, duck, or any waterfowl. These clusters are soft, fine strands that stem from a central point, but have no quill. Down clusters interlock and trap air, acting as an insulator to keep you warm. Down also has the magnificent ability to “breathe”, allowing air to flow around the down and through the fabric.

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## WHAT IS FILL POWER?

Fill power is a measure of efficiency representing the number of cubic-inches filled by an ounce of down.



Fill power is directly related to the down cluster’s size; the size of each down cluster is relative to a bird’s size and the climate in which it lives. In general, the colder the climate, the larger the down cluster. Large down clusters occupy more space than smaller down clusters, thus, they possess a higher fill power rating.

The advantages of larger clusters are also evident in their ability to trap more air in and around the down. Pockets of air act as insulators, so the greater the propensity towards air pockets, the more warming the down.

In short: the higher the fill power, the better the down, and the greater its thermal insulating properties. The goal of higher fill power is to provide warmth without weight.

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## WHAT IS FILL WEIGHT?

Fill weight is the total number of ounces that fill a duvet, blanket, pillow, or mattress pad. The higher the fill power, the lower the number of ounces required to achieve the same loft and insulating properties.

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## WHAT IS A TICKING?

Ticking is the shell fabric of a duvet, blanket, pillow, or mattress pad. Ticking fabric is expressly woven to a tight construction to help prevent down from escaping from its shell casing.

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## WHAT IS A DOWN-PROOF FABRIC?

Down-proof fabric is used for the ticking, or outer shell, of a duvet, blanket, pillow, or mattress pad. Down-proofing is a finishing process that prevents the down from leaking through the fabric while still allowing air movement. This feature is essential because down fibers are very fine and can leak through most untreated fabrics. SFERRA only uses ticking with superior down-proof qualities: strength, durability, and a fine hand.

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## WHAT IS BAFFLE BOX CONSTRUCTION?

Baffle boxes utilize interior fabric walls to connect the top and bottom fabric layers of ticking shells of a duvet. The walls form an interior chamber that help to prevent shifting and allows for maximal loft of the down. Greater loft creates more air pockets around the down, and these in turn increase its thermal properties. Additionally, baffles add strength to comforters and duvets, reducing stress on the stitching when you move during sleep.

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## WHAT IS A CORNER SILK?

A corner silk is a woven label attached on the diagonal at one corner of a duvet or pillow. This label is both decorative and informational, providing brand and product names.

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## WHAT IS EIDERDOWN?

Eiderdown is down that comes from the eider, a large sea duck that lives on the northern coasts of Europe, Asia, and North America. The eider’s nest is built close to the sea and is lined with its celebrated down. This soft and warm lining has long been

harvested for filling duvets and pillows. Although eiderdown duvets and pillows are now a rarity, eiderdown harvesting continues as it has in Iceland for more than 1,000 years, with no harm to the birds.

Eiderdown is a unique plumage. Fill power cannot accurately be measured because of the way each cluster clings to the other. Eiderdown is exceptionally soft and has insulating properties far superior to any other down. Typical goose and duck down tends to sit loosely in a product and can shift and “flow.” Eiderdown tends to hold together and is generally more resilient. This clingy behavior also makes it better at trapping air and, therefore, a better insulator.

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### **HOW DO I SELECT DUVETS AND PILLOWS THAT ARE RIGHT FOR ME?**

Selecting a duvet or pillow is really a matter of personal preference. Duvets are available in three weights - Light, Medium and Heavy. Pillows are available in three densities – Soft, Medium and Firm. The way you like your bed to look and feel, and how you sleep will be the most important factors in determining which weights and densities to choose.

If you like a warm and fluffy bed, then you might select a heavy duvet. If you get hot at night, then you may want a lighter duvet. If you always sleep with the air conditioner on, then you may want a heavier one, it is all a matter of personal preference. Typically, a light duvet is for warmer seasons and climates, a medium-weight is a good year-round choice, while a heavier duvet is great for colder seasons/climates.

Generally speaking, a soft pillow is for stomach sleeping, a medium pillow is back sleeping and a firm pillow is for side sleeping.

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### **WHY DOES MY DUVET HAVE LOOPS IN EACH CORNER?**

Sometimes, a duvet can shift or slip and may bunch up inside the duvet cover. The loops allow for the duvet to be tied to the ribbons or strips sewn into the corners of duvet covers. All of SFERRA’s duvet covers feature these interior strips. Once tied in place, it’s easy to fluff and refresh your duvet with a quick shake.

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### **HOW DO I CARE FOR MY DOWN DUVET AND PILLOW?**

Your down product can be washed and dried at home using a washing machine. *You cannot use a washing machine with an agitator.* Use regular detergent without bleach. Do not use fabric softener of any kind as it may coat the down clusters and weigh them down. You should use tennis balls in the dryer to help unclump the down. It is very important to ensure that the down is thoroughly dry before putting it back into use. When you think the comforter is dry, dry it some more, because if it is not dried thoroughly enough, the down may emit an odor.

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### **HOW DOES SFERRA ENSURE THE CLEANLINESS OF ITS DOWN?**

It is very important to note that all of SFERRA’s down products are “hypoallergenic”. Many people believe that they are allergic to down, when in reality, they are allergic to feathers. Feathers are not washable, since by nature, they repel water.

All our down is washed twice and rinsed four successive times with water, soap, deodorizers, and finally, a sterilizer. Washing is adjusted, if necessary, to ensure that all of our down exceeds “hypoallergenic” standards. To confirm that the material is as clean as it can be, each lot of washed material is tested for both oxygen and turbidity, and material which does not achieve standard specifications is reprocessed until it exceeds required standards. We target a minimum turbidity number of 550 (500 is required for “hypoallergenic” standards) and a maximum of 3.2 oxygen (4.8 or less is required for “hypoallergenic” standards.)

During the drying process, our down is dried in a machine at temperatures over 200°F. The intensity of the heat causes curling up of any feathers that may be there, opens up the down clusters, and helps to sterilize the down.

De-dusting is performed as the last step in the cleaning process, occurring after the drying of the goods. The down is sent into a screened chamber and agitated. Then, a slight vacuum is created, which draws excess fiber and dust through a screen into a dust collection system, leaving the down fully cleaned.

Finally, the down is sorted. It is sent into a machine with four separate chambers, into which a current of air is sent. Both feathers and down are carried on this airflow. The current of air forces the down to waft up and over the walls that separate the chambers, pushing them from one chamber to the next. The heavier material (the feathers) stays in the first three chambers, whereas the lighter goods (the down clusters) are swept along farther, traveling to the last chamber. From here, the down is collected and used to fill the fine products in our luxury down collections.