



# Mohair: Straight from the Goat!

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The Angora goat is one of the oldest domesticated animals known to mankind. The mohair that is shorn from these goats is known for its strength, versatility, luxurious texture, lustre and a high affinity to dyes. Not only is it very durable but flame resistant as well. It is because of these characteristics that Reborn Doll Artists around the world choose it over anything else for hair.

My name is Ellen Lee and in 2003, I discovered the Art of Reborning and instantly fell in love. I was very disappointed with a mohair purchase I made, so I decided to process my own mohair to use on my dolls. So off I went purchasing a couple ounces of raw (unwashed) mohair and some acid dyes. It was here my quest to produce the finest quality mohair began. Many hours were put into discovering the best way to take a pile of raw mohair, separate it into manageable locks and dye it into colors that my customers would use. In 2006, Slumberland Nursery was born offering artists around the world "Exquisite Quality Mohair for the Discriminating Buyer". We sell our mohair to retail and wholesale customers alike. My husband Trevor and business partner Diane Frowen are directly involved in the daily production of doll hair along with three other subcontract employees.

After a long search for a mohair supplier that could meet our production demands, in 2008 an email was sent off to Pat Haley from Prairie Lake Farms in Lakeville, MN to send us a sampling of his mohair. After the samples were examined and approved by myself, an order was placed and our business relationship established.

Pat Haley had been in the Colored Angora Goat business for several years before we found each other. He originally started breeding Colored Angora Goats for the fun of it and selling their mohair to hand spinners. Prairie Lake Farms is just one of many farms in the United States that specialize in Colored and White Angora Goats. What sets this farm apart from the rest is Pat now selects and breeds his Colored Angora Goats to produce mohair used for doll hair only.

We are often asked many questions about mohair...the different types, fineness, length and lock structure. Pat Haley and I hope to explain all there is to know about mohair in this article.

The number one question we get is what is the difference between Kid, Yearling, Fine Adult and Adult?

Kid mohair is shorn from a goat between the ages of 0-12 months. They are called 1st clip and 2nd clips. The finest fleece comes from the first clip of an Angora goat. Now not all first clips are equal in fineness of fibre, length and lock structure. The first and second kid clips are sometimes harder to root than all other clips of mohair because of their fineness. Using a 42-43 gauge needle is recommended. Kid mohair is great for dark colors because the plugs are very minimal. The lock structure of the kid clips is usually slightly wavy to wavy/curly. It is very hard to find a straight/slightly wavy fleece from the kids. However kid mohair is easier to comb straight and you are able to have more options styling the hair because of its fineness.

In the Northern Hemisphere most Angora goats will be born between December and July. The gestation period is on average 150 days. With that wide range of possible birth dates the First Clip (first shearing) can happen just about anytime during the year. So it is good to know the length of the fleece. There are two things to remember about the 1st kid clips. One is that the birth coat is NOT mohair. It takes about a month for the mohair to show up under the kid coat. So a 6 month fleece will range from 4 ½ to 6 ½ in length...the average being 5 to 5 ½ inches. Yearling Mohair is shorn from a goat between the ages of 13 to 24 months. They are called 3rd and 4th clips. Now this mohair is of course not as fine as Kid mohair because as a goat ages their hair tends to get coarser and straighter. Now don't worry it is nowhere near as coarse as human hair. However, the fibre from the breeding males will be more coarse than the breeding females of the same family and age. Yearling hair is still very fine, but has more lustre and body to it. You will have an easier time rooting the Yearling hair. This is where the straighter hair now comes



from. Now NO goat has perfectly straight hair....you will always have a slight wave to it....but it will root straight if that type of mohair is chosen. Fine Adult Mohair is shorn from a goat between the ages of 25 – 36 months. They are called 5th and 6th clips (Young Adult). This type of mohair is generally comparable to the Yearling mohair. However you will find that the straighter locks are found from this type of clip.

Adult Mohair is shorn from a goat from the age of 37 months and up. Many people think that Adult hair is too coarse to use on reborn dolls, however since we selectively breed the goats for fineness the Adult mohair we use is very fine and could be compared in fineness to the Average Yearling or Young Adult clip.

If you are just starting out in the fascinating world of Reborns, we suggest going with a Yearling or Fine Adult Fleece. They are much easier to work with. For the more experienced artist, Kid Mohair is the most popular choice.

Many Artists are curious as to how one goes about dyeing their own mohair to use on their reborn dolls. If you wish to try your hand at it, we suggest buying samples of the different types of mohair. To find a breeder you can visit the CAGBA (Colored Angora Goat Breeder Association) [www.CAGBA.org](http://www.CAGBA.org). They have a fabulous website with a list of breeders across North America. There are some farms that offer both Raw and Washed Mohair. If the Mohair is already washed it will save you a couple steps. If you choose to buy it raw then you will have to wash it yourself.

When looking for mohair there are several things you need to know. Mohair comes in both White and Natural Colors. The Pure Bred White Angora Goats date back to biblical times and their fibre is generally used in commercial applications. The Naturally Colored Angora Goat comes in a broad range of colors and patterns. Their fibre can be red, black, brown, and silver/grey. They can be of a solid or mixed color or have a variety of spots, stripes and patterns.

When choosing mohair you want to make sure that the locks are well defined and uniform throughout the whole fleece. You want to stay away from anything that is not a defined lock. If it is fuzzy or loose looking then the chances are you will have a very difficult time processing the mohair. Choose mohair that has great lustre...this is the natural sheen of the fibre. The dyed fibre will maintain its color and resist fading if there is an abundance of lustre.

Another thing to look for is the amount of grease in the fibre. Many people believe that this is Lanolin, however that is completely false. There is no lanolin in a mohair fleece. The grease in the mohair fleece helps to protect it against the elements, such as the sun, rain, etc. Too much grease and the fleece will have a black looking appearance and it is very difficult to wash out. Not enough grease causes the fleece to be dull and fluffy looking, resulting in the undefined locks. Just the right amount of grease will protect it from the elements, keep the locks well defined and hold in its lustre. One thing to remember is when you are purchasing a raw fleece full of grease you are paying for that extra weight. Once you get it all washed out, the fleece weight can be reduced by up to 15%.

## WASHING RAW MOHAIR

Follow these steps:

1. The first thing we do, before anything is separate the locks and band them together at the cut ends. The cut end is where the mohair was sheared from the goat.
2. Fill up your sink or washing machine (depending on the quantity you want to wash) with Dawn Dishwashing Soap and water that is hotter than 140 degrees F. For every pound of mohair use ¼ cup of soap.
3. Place the mohair in the water and let it soak for at least 30 minutes. Try not to agitate the fibre or it can felt.
4. Drain the water out of the sink, or put it on the spin cycle if you are using your washing machine. If you are washing it in your sink, squeeze the excess water from the fibre and remove it from the sink.
5. Refill either the sink or washing machine again and add the Dawn once again.





- Let the mohair soak again for another 30 minutes. Do not let the water cool, otherwise the grease that is on the mohair will reattach itself to the locks and it is very difficult to remove.
6. Remove the mohair once again from the sink or washing machine and repeat washing it until your fibre looks clean.
7. Once your fibre is clean you can then rinse it the same way you washed it. This time you can add some conditioner or vinegar. Any conditioner will work.
8. You can then remove the hair from the sink/washing machine and lay it out to dry. Either on drying racks or on towels.

After the mohair is washed and dry you can then try your hand at dyeing. We always comb our locks before dyeing. This takes out any vegetable matter and tangles. A slicker brush works the best.

There is an abundant of dyes available. Mohair takes the dye beautifully no matter what type of dye you choose. You can use Acid Dyes such as Cushing, Jacquard and ProChem. etc. These dyes are specifically designed for Protein Fibres. You can use Human Hair Dye, Coffee, and Tea. For some pretty colourful fantasy colors Kool Aid works great.

If you decide to use the acid dyes, you can find some already made in specific doll hair colors. Or you can make your own colors by mixing certain colors together. To achieve a good dye result, we suggest following the instructions and not deviating from them.

Human hair dye is another option to use. Most people think that these cannot be used on Mohair, however that is untrue. Mohair loves dye. If you plan on using this type of dye, we suggest finding a color a couple of shades darker than your final outcome. So if you want a light brown, choose a medium brown. Sometimes you may have to leave the dye on longer, we suggest not less than an hour and not more than 4 hours. If you use mohair from a Colored Angora Goat, you will have beautiful highlights.

We have used Coffee and Tea to get a nice light/medium Blonde. You must make sure that the tea or coffee is strong. The stronger it is the darker the color.

Kool Aid is great for fantasy colors. We suggest starting off with boiling water and then gradually adding the color of Kool Aid slowly, until you like what you see. We take the locks one by one and submerge them in the mixture. The mohair will suck up the color very fast which is why we dye it lock by lock.

The most important thing to remember when dyeing mohair is that you need to rinse and wash the hair to remove all traces of dye. This is especially true for any dark colors. Rinse the mohair the first time in warm to hot water. Squeeze as much dye out as possible. Then take some dawn dish soap and add it to the hair. Rinse the soap out and squeeze the hair. If you still see dye running from the mohair, rinse it again... We suggest putting the mohair in a vinegar bath to help set the color. The water doesn't need to be hot. Warm is fine. Leave it in for several minutes and then rinse again. Then take some conditioner and add it to the mohair and rinse again. When you are done rinsing your mohair you can comb the locks and set them out to dry or you can just set them out to dry and comb them afterwards. Whichever method you choose either one will work. Don't worry about damaging the locks, mohair is known for its durability and can be twisted and bent. A single strand of mohair compared to a single strand of steel measured in the same diameter is stronger than the steel.

Selecting mohair that is all ready to use (washed, dyed, and combed) is the choice of many Reborn Artists today. With such a variety of mohair on the market, you want to make sure you select the one that would enhance your Reborn doll. After spending hours, even days painting them to look realistic, making the wrong choice of mohair may be disappointing.

We suggest looking for mohair that is in its lock formation. Stay away from anything that is machine prepared such as Roving Mohair. Roving mohair is a long rope of mohair that is compiled of short and long pieces running in all different directions. It can be frizzy and can break easily. You want to look for mohair that is in useable locks. Look for mohair that is aligned with the cut end at one end, and the tip of the lock at the other, this will prevent the hair from frizzing when rooting. Many "Mohair" Artists like myself, select our locks and prepare our mohair like this. Purchasing mohair that is ready to use straight from the package, is definitely what many are looking for.

