



Sheep CRC Practical Wisdom Case Studies

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Implications of wool measurement systems for retailers

CASE STUDY

Natalie Skubel, Country Road

The objective data on offer from the Wool ComfortMeter and HandleMeter will provide garment retailers like Country Road the quality assurance system they need to ensure the wool garments are of a consistent standard that meets customer expectations for quality and comfort.

About Natalie Skubel

Natalie Skubel is the General Manager of Sourcing at Country Road, one of Australia's leading fashion retailers and an early participant in the Sheep CRC's research into the objective measurement of wool comfort and handle.

The Wool ComfortMeter counts the number of fibres protruding from a fabric that could cause wearer discomfort, and then accurately predicts a consumer's response—crucial information for next-to-skin fabric manufacturers.

Wool 'handle' had traditionally been measured subjectively by judges, who often had differing views on a fabric's smoothness, softness, hairiness, tightness and perceived weight. The Wool HandleMeter overcomes this with objective data.

Ms Skubel believes the Wool ComfortMeter and HandleMeter will assist her business in managing consistency of quality across seasons, as well as reducing the complexity of the buying process.

"The garment hand feel is the result of extensive product development in yarn and garment finishing," she said. "Once established, the same high-quality hand feel must be maintained for garments season after season—it is vital for encouraging consumers to re-purchase garments."

Ms Skubel said the biggest factor that impacts the quality of garments on the shop floor is the spinning process, and what the knitter then does to that yarn when producing garments out of it.

"There are some really important applications for both these tools at the back-end of the product development process and we see a particular benefit in the finishing and final processing of the woollen material," she said.

"That objective data from these tools enables us to consistently replicate the kind of comfort, handle and hand feel that we want to deliver to our customers."

Take home messages

- Wool comfort and handle are critical to the process of fabric selection and garment design.
- The Wool ComfortMeter and Wool HandleMeter allow retailers to set strict specifications and source fabric and garments of a consistent standard.
- The technology provides retailers and brands with a means of differentiating their next-to-skin Merino wool products, enhancing consumer trust and increasing their willingness to pay a premium for Australian wool.

Further information

- Detailed fact sheets on the Wool ComfortMeter and Wool HandleMeter technology and how they benefit different areas of the wool supply chain, are available at www.woolcomfortandhandle.com.
- www.sheepcrc.org.au
- www.countryroad.com.au