

Rumplestiltskin

Spinning suri fibre into gold

Newsletter March 2014

We have good news! The Rumplestiltskin combined fleece from NZ and Australia is now at Design Spun in Napier for spinning.

Scouring Our last newsletter described the success of the scouring operation. To recap, there were no real issues. We were pleased we had been strict with the length specification as any sign of “over long” fleece would have jeopardized the project. At the Canterbury Wool Scour, they checked the bales for length and would have refused to put the batch through the scour if there had been any long fleece amongst it as it tangles in the tines and causes it to clump together and may damage their machinery. The fact that the loss /wastage was minimal going through the scour is also good news.

We had envisaged that the fleece from Australia, which had been grid tested for micron and SD, would have been scoured separately from the NZ fleece. However that was not possible because of the lack of volume, meaning the NZ and Australian fleece was combined before scouring. Then the whole batch had to be kept in quarantine at a transitional facility until after the carding process. The scour kindly agreed to store it for us until we could confirm where we were going to have it carded and spun.

Spinning. The scoured fleece has now been delivered to Design Spun in Napier who are able to take the quarantined fibre as they are also a transitional facility. We are pleased to be working with Peter Chatterton with the next step. He is encouraging and enthusiastic and has a wealth of knowledge. We have had to modify our expectations and will now be producing a slightly heavier fully worsted yarn. On the plus side the yarn will be more versatile also having the ability to be used to make knitted products.

Through our research and with the patient efforts of Peter at Design Spun we have established that processing the fine yarn necessary for making the finely woven fabric we had envisaged, although technically possible, is not a financially or practically viable prospect ie. Not commercial. We plan to continue to explore processing options for yarn and weaving outside New Zealand for the finer micron bands of suri.

End Product. With this change we have had to consider new avenues for an end product. We are reluctant to get ahead of ourselves and find our goals are not possible so we won't go into too much detail of the next step. We can tell you, we are working with the textile development team at AUT who are enthusiastic about our product and have some exciting ideas to explore.

Time line. As our SFF funding has an end date we are now stepping up progression of the project so that we can take full advantage of the funding. The delays and issues that have arisen throughout the trial have caused us to apply for extensions from SFF but we now have to confirm our conclusion. We are hoping to be able to have everything finalized by the end of April. With this in mind and a few ends to tidy up we are hoping to have some product out to contributors at the end of June/July.

From the end of this year's project the progression of suri processing will no longer have SFF funding.

Future. It is important not to lose focus on the long term goal of a sustainable commercial suri fibre industry for us all. To that end we will be holding suri fibre collection days again later this year where we will collect all grades and colors. We will stockpile and store the fibre so it is available for purchase or donation to those in the industry for development projects. Please talk to us about what grades and amounts are available.

Development of any new industry takes tenacity and perseverance (not to mention time and money), sometimes we feel like we are not getting anywhere. But an overriding strong belief in the wonderful future of suri fibre keeps us going. Thank you again to all those who have supported us and the suri industry by donating their fibre, time and money.