



Nordwool workshop  
11-12 February 2026

# Icelandic wool

Characteristics and production  
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# Icelandic sheep

Diversity of colours  
and horns



# Leader sheep and pelt sheep



- **Leader sheep**
- Defined as a separate breed 2017
- Special yarn from Leader sheep wool is sold at „Forystufjársetur“ in N. Iceland.
- 1942 Leader sheep recorded in 2025 (>50 % purebred)

## • **Pelt sheep**

- A small strain selected for gray colour and pelt quality
- Started ~ 1980
- 453 pelt sheep (>50% peltline) recorded in 2025
- Soft wool popular with handspINNERS and knitters



# Wool characteristics

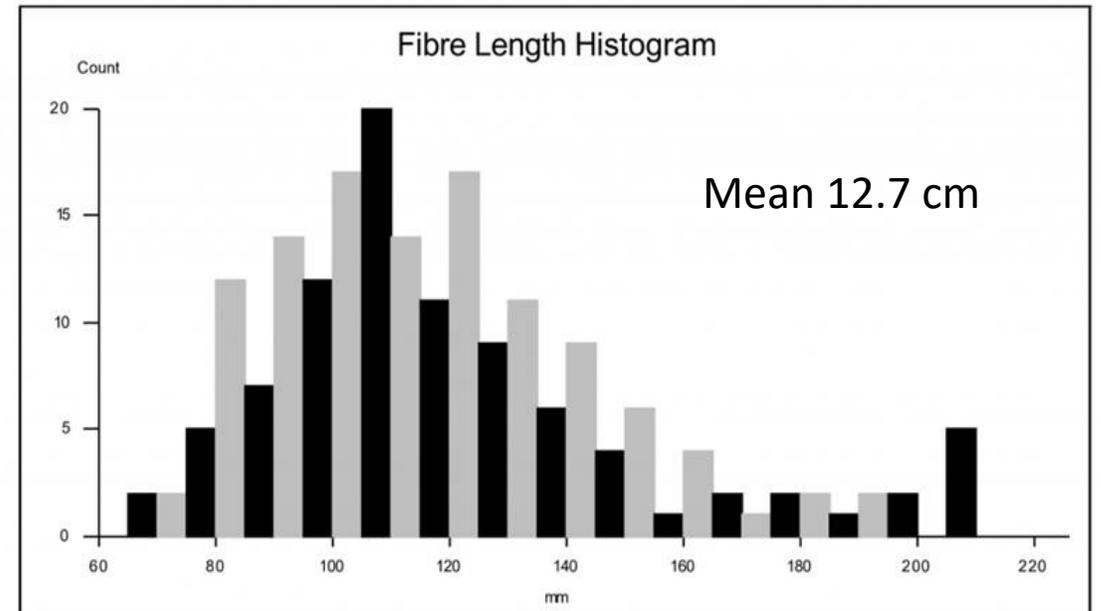
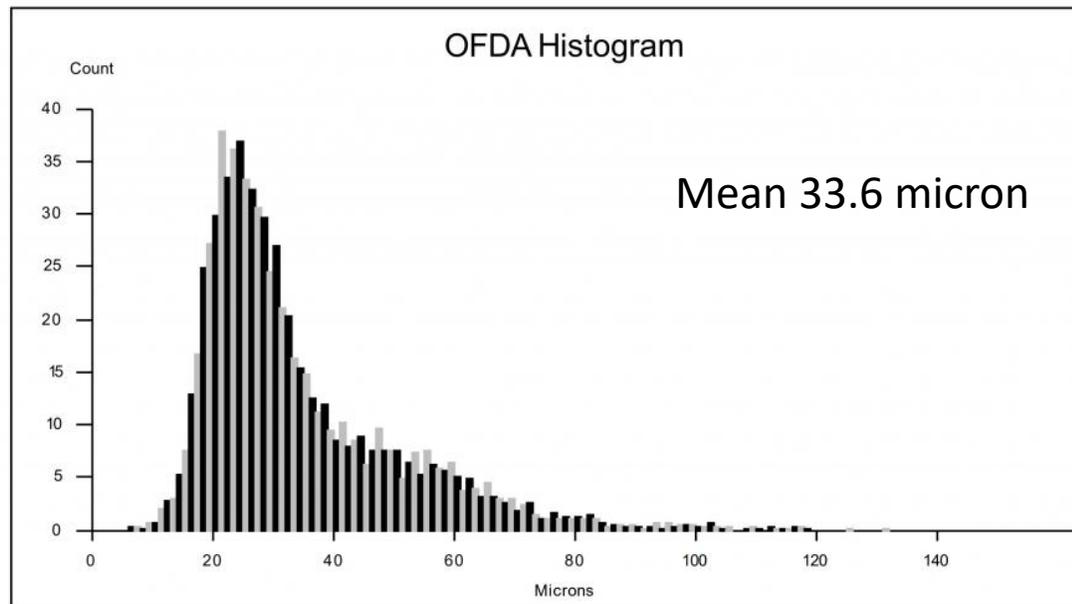
- Double coated fleece;
  - undercoat 6-10 cm, 20-25 microns
  - outercoat 18-24 cm, 40 – 80 microns
- Around 10% coloured solid coloured wool, black, grey and moorit
- Other colours combined with faulty coloured wool – up to 15%
- No official wool grading system
- Wool grades are defined by wool buyers – based on former grading system with some modifications
- Sorted into grades on farm by farmers at shearing



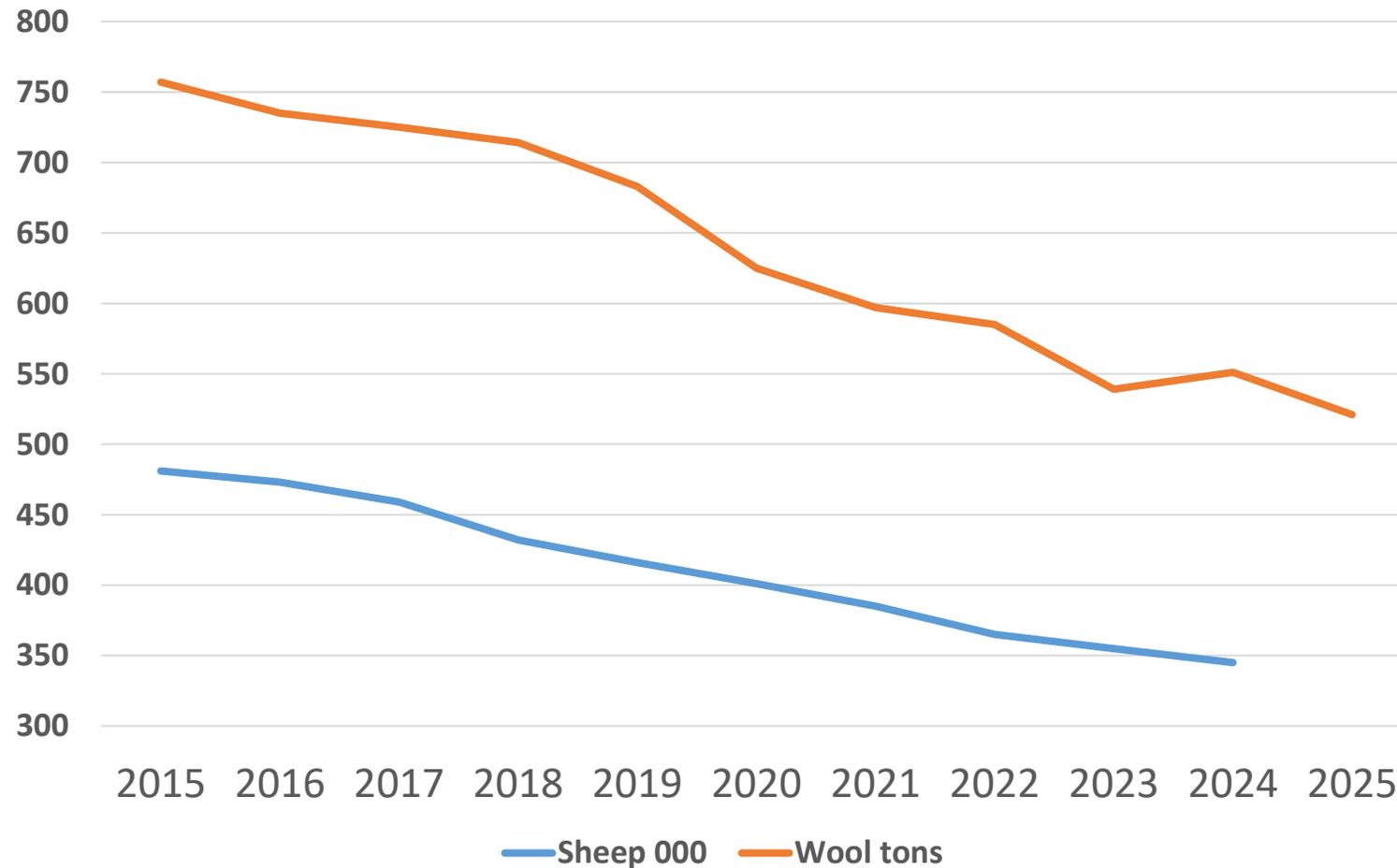
# Example of fibre diameter and length of best quality white wool (all fibres together)

Mean Fibre Diameter : 33.6 um  
Standard Deviation : 16.20 um  
Coefficient of Variation : 48.20 %  
% Fibres > 30 um : 44.8 %

Mean Length : 127 mm  
Standard Deviation : 30.30 mm  
Coefficient of Variation : 23.90 %



# Sheep numbers and wool production



- 2025: 527 tons clean wool
- 415 tons (78%) autumn clip
- 35 % of autumn clip suitable for knitting yarn
- Other wool mostly exported

# Wool grades as defined by Ístex

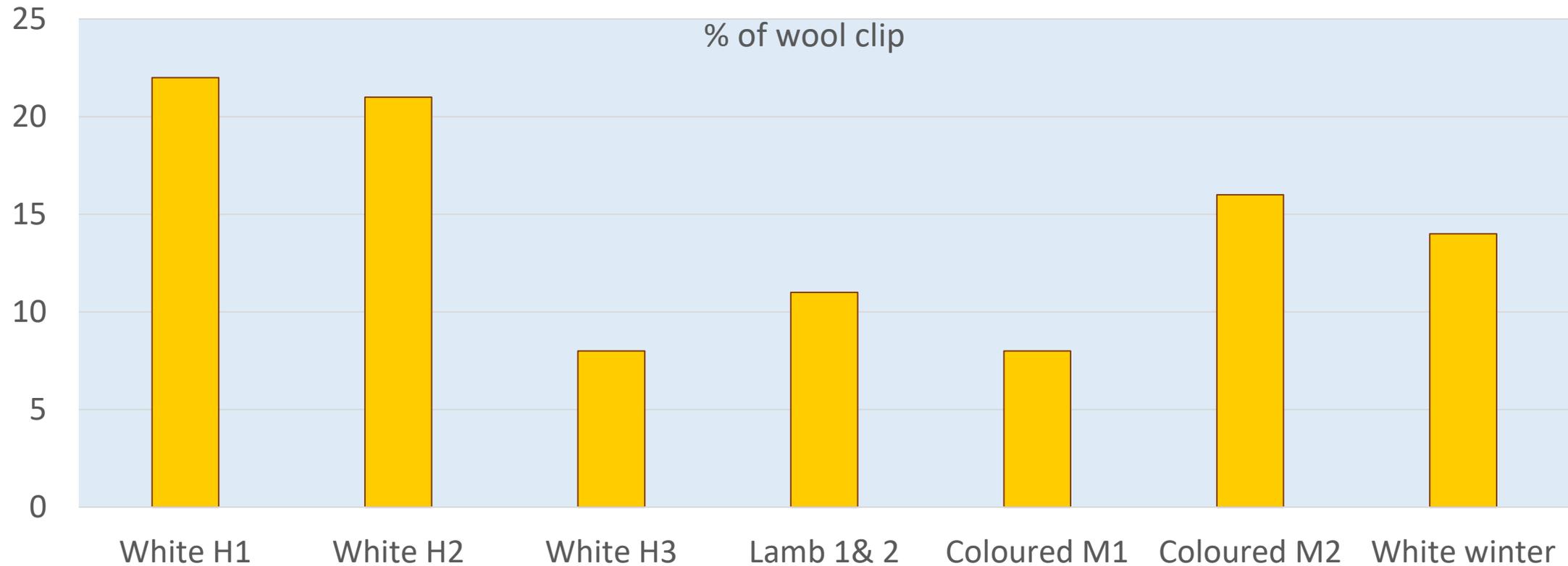
- **Autumn clip - White**
- Lamb1 – no faults
- Lamb2 – minor faults
- H1 – very minor faults
- H2 – some faults
- H3 – coarse/damaged wool
- **Autumn clip – coloured**
- M1 – Black
- M1 – Grey
- M1 – Moorit (brown)u
- M2 – mixed colours & faulty coloured wool

All wool is sorted and labelled on the farm. Recorded into the wool system by farmers and paid accordingly. Mistakes/wrong sorting is corrected at the scouring station

# Examples of good and damaged/faulty wool



# Distribution of wool into main grades 2025\*



\*Information from the Ministry of Industries

# Wool prices – Ístex- and subsidies 2026

White wool autumn clip	Euros/kg clean wool	Coloured wool autumn clip	Euros/kg clean wool
Lamb 1 – good wool	4.22	Lamb M2 – mixed colours	3.00
Lamb 2 – minor faults	3.18	M1 – solid colours	3.00
H1 – good wool	3.00	M2 – solid colours	1.20
H2 – some faults	0.80	M2 – mixed colours/faults	0
H3 – coarse/faulty	0.65		

Prices have gone down in recent years. International markets for yarn have diminished

Subsidies are 8.30 Euro per kg, regardless of quality.

Discarded wool is not subsidized.

Political decision to move subsidies from meat production to wool.

# Utilization of wool



- Ístex is a company owned by icelandic farmers
- Collects and scours about 98% of the wool clip
- Scouring factory in Blönduós, NW Iceland
- Spinning factory in Mosfellsbær, close to Reykjavík
- Products:
  - Handknitting yarns (LOPI)
  - Blankets, cushion covers, duvets & pillows
- Faulty/damaged wool is exported as carpet wool at low prices



# Small spinning mills

- Altogether 1,5 – 2 % (8-10 tons) of the wool clip processed by several small spinneries or by hand.
- Increasing in recent years
- Handknitting yarns
- Often emphasis on natural colours
- Sold through web stores and on site at the spinneries

