

FIBER GRADES

Sorting and grating of raw fiber initially made by the alpaca farmer plays a crucial role in the quality of the yarn and ensures the comfort and durability of the final end product. Fiber mill processing also plays a crucial role in the final quality of the yarn and therefore, the final end product.

Hand grating or laboratory fiber micron analysis (calculated in micrometer μm) provides an indication of its fineness and allows to establish which grade it belongs to. On a commercial level, grades for alpaca yarn will often be labelled with a name such as *Baby Alpaca* or *Superfine*. The official Canadian grading system uses grade numbers ranging from 1 to 6. Here's a small chart to demystify naming and grading and their appropriate end product uses.

ROYAL BABY ALPACA or GRADE 1 ULTRAFINE

20 microns or less

This exceptional fiber grade is the rarest and almost exclusively produced by excellent crias (baby alpacas) and young adults of superior quality. Only 3% of the global production of alpaca fiber can be classified as *Royal Baby Alpaca*. This type of quality is similar to cashmere, is found in small quantities on a commercial level and on an artisanal level at the best alpaca farms.

Used for: Scarfs, cowls, hats and other high end fashion accessories

BABY ALPACA or GRADE 2 SUPERFINE

20 to 22.9 microns

This excellent quality of fiber is generally produced by very good crias and young adults as well as exceptional older adults. This grade is similar to commercial merino, is more widely available on a commercial level and at the best alpaca farms.

Used for: Hats, shawls, scarfs, cowls and other high end accessories

SUPERFINE ALPACA or GRADE 3 FINE

23 to 25.9 microns

This fiber grade is still very soft and is more often produced by adults rather than crias. This type of fiber is used for products that will typically be worn as accessories dedicated to the less sensitive body parts.

Used for: Leg warmers, shawls, mittens, gloves, socks and other high quality accessories

ALPACA or GRADE 4 MEDIUM

26 to 28.9 microns

This fiber quality is generally produced by older adults but retains all its capacity to provide warmth and comfort. It can be used more specifically for products worn on less sensitive body parts or over clothing as well as for high end home accessories.

Used for: Leg warmers, throws, cushions, shawls, coats and other derived high quality products

GRADE 5 & 6 INTERMEDIATE & ROBUST

29 microns and over

At these grades, you would generally start feeling the prickle effect of coarser fibers and would be slightly uncomfortable to wear next to the skin. However this type of fiber is still very warm and can certainly be used for practical items and high end home accessories.

Used for: Dryer balls, felted insoles, rugs and other derived high quality products