

Super S

Fact Sheet

What is Super S?

“Super S” is a voluntary labelling system for describing the fineness and quality of wool in woven fabric. The Super S label will be found on the selvedge of fabric or on the label of a garment such as a men’s suit. The label displays a Super S number that ranges between 80 and 250. The higher the number, the finer the wool fibre. The finer the fibre, the softer the fabric and the higher quality it will be.

How is Super S defined?

The S-number is a direct and precise measurement of the thickness of the fibre as defined in the IWTO Super S Code of Practice. Each S-number correlates to a maximum fibre diameter measured in μ , one thousandth of a millimetre. Assessment of the diameter happens at end product stage. This means that all diameters are measured from the finished, dyed fabric.

Super ... S	Diameter of fibre
80	19.75
90	19.25
100	18.75
110	18.25
120	17.75
130	17.25
140	16.75
150	16.25
160	15.75
170	15.25
180	14.75
190	14.25
200	13.75
210	13.25
220	12.75
230	12.25
240	11.75
250	11.25

Figure 1: Super S numbers and corresponding fibre diameters

Why is wool fabric with a high Super S number softer?

Remember that the higher the S-number, the finer the wool fibre. Finer wool can be spun into finer yarn – i.e., smaller in diameter. In this fine yarn there will be no coarse wool, and it is the ends of

coarse wool which, when spun into coarse yarn, sometimes stick out and make a fabric feel “prickly” next to the skin. The finest wool is obtained from sheep reared primarily for these fibres. Merino, Rambouillet, Blue Faced Leicester, and Corriedale breeds are among the best known. Environmental factors such as soil or climate can also influence the fineness of a sheep’s wool.

Is the Super S system regulated or standardised?

The wool industry has developed a Super S standard which has been incorporated into the US Wool Products Labelling Act of 1939 and a CEN/ISO standard to be published in November 2014.

Is there an official Super S label?

IWTO designed a Super S label for use by licensees. It has a distinctive sinuous S and clearly shows the S-number. However, each fabric and suit manufacturer is free to use their own label, or weave the Super S number into the selvedge for information and marketing purposes.



Figure 2: IWTO's Super S label with its classic, sinuous S

How can I be sure that the wool I'm buying is what the label says it is?

Unfortunately there are occasional instances of misuse of the Super S system by fabric and garment manufacturers. This is why IWTO is acting to have Super S recognized by ISO and CEN standardizations. The correct form of the label includes the word “Super” and the letter “S” with the appropriate number, 80-250, in between. A label that says only “Super 200”, for example, would not conform to requirements. Customers noting suspicious Super S labels should contact IWTO with the information. A trustworthy wool manufacturer will proudly display the correct form of the Super S label, leaving no room for doubt of the quality of the wool fabric.

Where can I learn more?

Contact IWTO for more answers to your questions about Super S:

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About IWTO

The International Wool Textile Organisation (IWTO) is an independent non-profit organisation representing the wool industry at the international level. Our mission is to connect all parts of the wool supply chain in order to strengthen wool’s credentials as the world’s leading sustainable fibre.