

Billions Recognize This Mark

From Golden Fleece



Woolmark creator Francesco Saroglia's first effort.

More than 400,000 million Woolmark labels are used each year by 14,000 licensees in over 60 countries. In 1985 Woolmark was also launched in China, bringing the message to a further one billion customers.

What Does "Pure New Wool" Mean?

"Pure" indicates that the article bearing the label contains 100% wool. Under Woolmark specifications a deviation of

5% is allowed but only for technical reasons (i.e. to strengthen the yarn) or for decoration (i.e. a decorative yarn).

The term "new" indicates that the wool is manufactured into a garment the first time after it has been shorn and has not been used before. In Prato, Italy, a prosperous art and textile centre, wool is reused. The rags are sorted by colour and weight, treated with chemicals to remove impurities, shredded, spun and rewoven into cloth. Reused wool is never as strong as new wool.

Why Was Woolmark Created?

The early 1960's were difficult years for wool. It was being out-promoted in many countries by the rapidly growing synthetic fibre companies by a margin that varied from five to one in the UK, to ten to one in Germany. Wool's popularity and its position as a quality fibre were under attack from the new "easy-care" synthetic fibres.

Wool had to be given a clearer identity to distinguish it as a unique quality fibre and to develop consumer confidence. What was needed was a unique and distinctive symbol that could be used internationally.



The final result.

A competition was staged to find such a design. The winner whose symbol became the Woolmark was the art director of a Milan advertising agency, Francesco Saroglia.

From the onset, IWS recognized that the Woolmark could not be successful unless accompanied by product quality and performance standards which had to be met before the symbol could be applied.



The famous Woolmark poster that won international acclaim in the 70's. The shot required 218 sheep, 436 stakes and 3 km of string and lots of patience. The photographs show various stages in the preparation.

Woolmark today is one of the most successful and widely recognized certification marks in the world—it is in fact just as widely recognized as the Mercedes-Benz and Coca-Cola symbols. It also is the central point around which IWS's promotional activity evolves.

The Woolmark launch in 1964 began with media advertising aimed at the trade and consumers. In addition, IWS undertook a major programme of sponsorship associating Woolmark with events and celebrities who were guaranteed to catch the public's attention.

Winner of the 1964 Miss World competition, Ann Sidney, became a Woolmark ambassador, traveling throughout the world to promote wool during her reigning year. Other sponsorships like that of yachtsman Sir Francis Chichester, first to sail around the world single-handed, put the Woolmark on the bows of Gipsy Moth IV and onto the newspaper front pages.

Who May Use The Woolmark?

The Woolmark is a certification mark and products may only carry the Woolmark label if they meet strict quality standards governing their appearance and performance. IWS is the owner of Woolmark. In South Africa, Australia, New Zealand and Uruguay, Woolmark is owned and administered by the particular member country.

Promotion of Woolmark

With the launching of Woolmark in the mid-1960's, the goal was consumer recognition and understanding. The mark dominated advertising with blow-ups of the design and headlines such as "What is this thing called Woolmark?"

Once consumers began to recognize the mark, IWS advertising was changed to highlight the quality and style of Woolmark products.

This continued until the early 1970's when there was a broad social move towards naturalness. Wool became not only ecologically desirable, but there was growing consumer disenchantment with the performance and aesthetics of synthetic fibres.

IWS seized on this favourable trend and ensured that its advertising highlighted the natural origins of wool. Sheep, beautiful countryside scenes and an atmosphere of healthy living prevailed.

Famous Advertisement

It was at this time that IWS's most widely used advertisement was created in France, the famous Woolmark sheep scene.



This famous scene was done in 1974 for a billboard campaign run by the French branch in 31 cities.

The green hills were the Pyrenees and the shot required 218 sheep, 436 stakes, 3 kilometers of string and a fair amount of patience, because the sheep had to be kept "posing" until the light was right.

The sheep and the photographic team were brought together in the field at 07h30 on Day 1. One at a time the sheep were led down a fenced path to the side of the picture. By midday this process was well underway, and by 17h00 they were all in place. Six farm workers had spent all that

day getting the sheep in place within the symbol, and two farmers kept them agreeable by feeding them corn. By 17h00 they were ready to photograph. And then it rained.

On Day 2, they started all over again, and this time succeeded in getting a photographic record by 17h30.

The story and the billboard campaign attracted such attention in France that the French Branch and its advertising agency won that year's prize for the most successful campaign. (The prize was one month's free use of a giant billboard in the Champs Elysees in Paris.)