

More details about Spinning

D L Stapleton 28 Bowman Ave. ORANGE 2800

I have had some problems with the connections and switches on my Inwood Smith electric wheel so decided I might like to shout myself a new wheel. The Ashford e Spinner 3 took my eye so that is what I chose to order. As soon as I did that Spinners (people and their wheels, not just wheels) turned up on the YouTube channel. So, after spending the weekend watching Canadian and UK spinners, I thought it appropriate to make a few points.

Spinning appears to be more involved than I thought. Worsted and Woollen, Short draw and Long draw, colour control, carding, fibre sources and types, chain plying, inside and outside plying from one ball, fibre preparation, on and on.

Now I already knew about Irish and Scottish drives because I have an old Roberta wheel which is Irish (drives from the bobbin) as opposed to Scottish (drives the fly with a braked bobbin). Having been forced back to the Roberta wheel I now realise why I gave up with it in the first place. Too much tension and reverse logic. Friction between the bobbin and the axil of the fly increases tension.

More watching introduced the double drive designed treadle wheels with fixed "ratios" or drive mechanism between the fly and the bobbin. You can change the spindle to get different ratios.

It's all worth a look at the various machines and techniques, though the ladies seem to be a little pedantic. Nevertheless, YouTube articles do explain the huge variation in styles and methods spinners use.

It also seems that many spinners source their fibre from a much wider field than Merino wool and this reflects the variety of fleeced species of animals available in other countries.

Speaking of pedantic techniques. Fibre preparation seems to be a much more complex task than I ever thought necessary. Carding and rolag formation seem to be determined by the type of spinning which is panned. There is a distinction between woollen and worsted spinning. Commercially, worsted spinning involved combing with the removal of short fibres but with hand spinning, it seems worsted is both extra care to card parallel fibres and the imparting of extra twist when plying.

After experimenting with the e Spinner, I find that the amount of twist is quite important and interacts with the diameter of the fibre being spun. Coarser fibre requires considerably less twist. Merino wool requires more, and this includes the amount of reverse twist in the plying process. The 2 twists need to be balanced and this is emphasised when plying when "overtwisted" singles twist on themselves if the tension is not maintained. This problem is new to me. Maybe because I have been experimenting with different fibres, but the e Spinner motor seems rather weak when plying – adding tension slows the spinning speed and can even stall the motor. Clearly the wheel is rather subtle in its control.

So, the approximate rule is that Merino wool requires much twist, Kid mohair a little less, Corriedale wool a little less again, crossbred wool less again, adult mohair similarly, and Leister and long wool fleece not much.

I hope this helps explain about different wheels, spinning methods, fibre types and twist, and sources of information.