

KLIPPAN AND THE SWEDISH WOOL CLIP

– I ACTUALLY NEVER THOUGHT OF US HANDLING SWEDISH FLEECE, SAID GÖSTA MAGNUSSON, FORMER MD AT KLIPPAN. UNTIL WE HAD A VISIT FROM CALLE ALLARED AND CHARLOTTE JANSSON FROM VÄSTKUSTENS ULLINSAMLING.



Swedish fleece

In just four years, consumption of Swedish fleece at Klippan Yllefabrik (wool factory) has gone from 0 to 40 tonnes. 4 tonnes were accepted in the first year, increasing in years two and three to 40 tonnes annually. The volume this year is not expected to diminish, neither are there any indications that this might be the case. On the contrary.

We stepped through the doorway into the *Klippan Yllefabrik* premises, theirs since 1879. Gösta Magnusson, fourth generation MD, welcomed us in. The next generation, Pernilla Roos and Petter Magnusson have been at the helm since 2012. Gösta Magnusson is still involved in the work there and told us that he has even had time now to delve into the archive, bringing to light many interesting and entertaining items. More of that later.

Our main focus this time was on Klippan's work with Swedish fleece. This is where Gösta has played a significant role. After all his years in the business he is very knowledgeable about wool and fleece and his network of contacts is extensive. Combined, I would surmise, with great curiosity and desire to try new directions. Prior to our learning more that day about Klippan's processing of Swedish fleece, Gösta gave us a picture of how he sees the situation.

– There is, as I see it, two clear pathways as regards processing of Swedish fleece. One is craft practice oriented and aimed at very small scale concerns where the variations in fleece can be dealt with and are even an advantage. The other track is what we do, industrial production on a larger scale with completely different requirements. We need larger quantities of a more even quality that work for our kind of production and offer continuity in what we supply.

So with this in mind, we were ready for the story about how Klippan came to process Swedish fleece. Gotland fleece was the first step.

– For several years now we have been using Gotland wool in our throws. It is blended with 75% New Zealand fleece, Pernilla told us.

She showed us their latest throws in the *Gotland* series. White wool and the Gotland blend are dyed the same indigo blue and woven up in twill. She pointed out that Gotland fleece suitable for spinning into yarn comes largely from the mainland. Many Gotland sheep are bred for pelts with long, lustrous locks, and this fleece is not suitable for their kind of yarn processing and production.

So what happened four years ago, when Swedish fleece was incorporated into your production?

– I actually never thought of us handling Swedish fleece, said Gösta. The amounts were too small, there were too few sheep on average in a flock and fibre diameter and quality were very uneven. Quite simply it was hard to obtain what we needed. Yet it was in fact round this table, where we are now sat, that we had a flash of genius, he continued. Calle Allared, a Swedish champion shearer and Charlotte Jansson from the Väst kustens Ullinsamling came up with the idea of sorting the fleece already during shearing so as to meet Klippan's requirements. We



MAGNUS CARLSSON

then agreed to start with 2 tonnes, which is the smallest amount we process. And that seemed to work absolutely fine. More fleece was taken in and more shearers engaged. The volume of the particular fleece quality requested by Klippan increased.

What kind of fleece do you need?

– With fleece, we are not so interested in the fine wool, rya or other breeds. The important factors are diameter, colour and a minimum of vegetable matter.

Fibre diameter is measured in microns, where the smaller the micron rating the finer the fibre. The Swedish fleece Klippan wants should have a micron rating between 30–35, which after blending is about

33 microns. It is important that the fleece is an even white and there is as little vegetable matter as possible in the fleece.

– If we order 20 tonnes of white fleece with a 29.5 micron rating and 0.1% vegetable matter from New Zealand, that's what we get. With the Swedish fleece, there is considerably more work involved. This is where Calle is a key person, with his network of contacts and experience, he has fingertip feel for the micron rating. Gösta looked content as he said this.

Why is it important to make use of Swedish fleece?

– It feels like good practice in general to utilize



Klippan Yllefabrik

The family business, Klippan Yllefabrik, was launched when in 1879 Jöns Petter Magnusson took over a little wool spinning mill in central Klippan. The enterprise grew steadily and kept going till the 1980s manufacturing handweaving yarn and yarn for furnishing fabric. During the 1970s, Klippan Yllefabrik was reckoned as being the most modern wool spinning mill in Scandinavia, with ca 100 employees. At the beginning of the 1990s, the mill gradually took on production of ready made domestic textiles. Klippan Yllefabrik bought a spinning and a weaving plant in Latvia. The 100% owned subsidiary, *Klippan Saule*, is today responsible for the production of yarn, throws, blankets and woollen fabric.

The type of fleece Klippan Yllefabrik is interested in needs to have an even fibre diameter, minimal vegetable matter and an even colour.

Top from the left, fourth and fifth generations working alongside each other:

Petter Magnusson, Pernilla Roos and Gösta Magnusson.

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more local resource, one which has so many assets. Sheep are of themselves very useful animals, they keep the landscape open, provide us with meat and wool that can be refined in different ways, said Pernilla Roos.

Today Klippan buys in between 700–800 tonnes of fleece, of which currently 40 tonnes (ca 5%) are of Swedish fleece, the remainder coming from New Zealand.

Could you deal with more Swedish fleece in your production?

– I reckon we have today ca 800 tonnes of usable Swedish fleece in its scoured weight, said Gösta. Much of it is not that suitable for us. However, with further measures in place we could certainly expand. Right now we make use of all we get.

One problem is the vegetable matter mixed up in the fleece. By law, sheep need to have straw bedding during the winter, which is not the case in New Zealand or in our neighbour Norway.

– A simple way of obtaining more fleece with finer fibre is to take more care at the shearing stage. Instead of shearing sheep after they have gone onto

Page 28 Throw, *Gotland*, contains 25% Gotland wool, with the remainder from New Zealand, photo: Johan Kalén.

Page 31 Throw, *Gotland multi*, photo: Linus Zetterlund.

From the left Fleece is sorted during the shearing, photo: Magnus Carlsson.

Freja, throw made entirely of Swedish wool, photo: Johan Kalén.



straw bedding, a space outdoors with short grass and no debris could be set aside for the shearing.

Gösta Magnusson, through investigating old documents, came upon the first order made for New Zealand wool dated 1911. The order was to a company they still deal with.

– That was fun, and in actual fact we have always used New Zealand wool in our production. From the post-war period on our wool came exclusively from there as Swedish wool was no longer spun here. Until four years ago, he quickly added, when Swedish fleece came along again.

Swedish fleece blends very well with that from New Zealand. There is nothing then too particular about it, he emphasized. Wool is wool and we select the quality that works for us in our production.

– Klippan has consistently gone for what we call middling fleece. Which suits our product ranges. That thickness is excellent for a variety of textiles for interiors, throws, blankets, rugs and furnishing fabrics. Garments, though, I feel involve other preferences, which is harder. But, he added, we have also produced yarns for fashion companies.

Their latest commission has been for a worsted made of wool from a Sörmland farm. The fleece was scoured and combed in Poland and the worsted spun in Lithuania. That yarn will be used in a collection of sweaters for a well known brand. Klippan also spins worsted for some of Röjk's sport sweaters. Another collaborative endeavour is Swedish wool worsted for Järbo.

– We are finding that companies do want to use Swedish wool, but establishing the whole production chain is quite hard. This is where we can offer assistance with our network of contacts, which is gratifying, said Gösta.

Klippan Yllefabrik's own product ranges consist mainly of throws and blankets. The wool has, since the mid 1990s, been spun into yarn and woven in their own subsidiaries in Riga and Bauska, Latvia. Dealing with Swedish white fleece is no problem for the machinery over there but Gotland fleece can create a bit of extra work, said Gösta.

– We are of the opinion that Gotland fleece needs some other fleece blended in for the spinning to function well.

Väst kustens ullinsamling

Calle Allared and Charlotte Jansson set up Väst kustens Ullinsamling in 2019 and began taking in fleece. Today they offer woollen products themselves and Klippan Yllefabrik is their main customer. As a wool reception centre, they are able to collect and sort fleece of similar quality on a larger scale to then sell on to buyers of wool in large quantities.

*vastkustens
ullinsamling.se*

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NEW LABELLING

So as to provide a clear description of the goods, *Klippan Yllefabrik* and some other players have brought out the label, *Swedish Wool*. The organization behind the label is *Svensk Ullmärkning* and comprises *Klippan Yllefabrik*, *Västkustens Ullinsamling*, *Ullcentrum*, *Swedish Wool Mattress Company* and *Nordanå Craft* (formerly Järbo Garn). The labelling means that at least 25% Swedish wool has gone into the finished product. This is early days for the venture and to date. There is room for more, added Gösta.

What are your considerations regarding the design of Klippan's own blankets and throws?

– We do need a broad palette in terms of colour and expression, said Pernilla. Our products are often accessories and follow the trends in colour and design. With the throws that are part of the *Swedish Wool*, these are a little more rustic and the design is then more in tune with the material, said Pernilla.

Spread out in front of us were throws made either of Swedish wool alone or of a Swedish and New Zealand wool blend. The designs are created in collaboration with the factory in Riga.

Gotland is a throw in which the Gotland wool gives it character alongside the white wool from New Zealand.

– Gotland fleece is lustrous and produces a fine melange and a gorgeous soft, slightly hairy throw, a bit like a Swedish mohair, said Pernilla.

– *Freja* is pattern woven in white and shades of grey, sometimes with different dyed yarns in the weft, suggesting something more Nordic, a little austere and rustic, and is 100% Swedish wool, Pernilla told us.

And, she added, it is doing well, we have certainly sold more than 1000 *Freja* throws.

They have customers all round the world and Pernilla said that it need not be Swedish wool determining customers' choice.

– The important thing is the quality and that the design feels attractive. These days there is much more emphasis on the material. Here in Sweden there has been a lot of talk about all the Swedish fleece that gets discarded. The issues at stake do change over time. Sometimes the emphasis is on ecology, sometimes the focus on animal husbandry and sometimes it is about recycling. We do try to keep several aspects in mind at any one time and with Swedish wool, we can work with a circular economy, animal husbandry and ecology.

Klippan's new product range includes a collection based on recycling. Pernilla fetched out a twill throw with a wine red weft. Its speckly appearance arises from the tiniest of textile fragments. These come from remnants at their Latvian plant that have been shredded, carded and then blended with 25% or 50% pure new wool to be spun into yarn.

With steady growth over the last 15 years, sales increased during 2021 by 25%. They think this is because there are more people today going for natural materials. Everything that has been written about wool, and specifically Swedish wool, has reached a broader public. Consumers know more about wool and what it is.

– This is great for wool! they say. And, added Gösta, for me it has been absolutely wonderful to be able to work in my latter years with Swedish wool. Really great!

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