Farm and home - Washing woollens - Some hints on hemlines

Brenda Cleeve

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KNITTING needles will be clicking again shortly as numerous garments are laboriously constructed revealing intricate patterns and styles. Even the plainest of woollens takes some time to make and all are expensive. All this painstaking work can be undone in a few minutes of careless handling during laundring. Once the damage has been done it is permanent and nothing can be done to return the garments to their former beauty.

The nature of the woollen fibre itself explains why every care should be taken in laundring. It is a wavy fibre, covered with minute overlapping scales which give a saw-like appearance under the microscope. When the fibres are treated roughly these scales are rubbed together and lock, giving a felted, shrunken surface. Once the fibres have felted they will remain that way for the lifetime of the garment. Rubbing and twisting of the garment while wet and sudden changes or extremes of temperature in washing waters are the factors which induce this felting more readily and are to be avoided at all costs.

The water for washing should be just warm—some people prefer cold water, but if the garments are very soiled, the dirt is removed more easily in warm water. As a rule more than one washing water is necessary so prepare at least two before you start.

To clean the garments use a mild soap or soap flakes. These should be thoroughly dissolved in the water before commencing to wash. Avoid using strong soap powders as some contain soda which affects the colours. Detergents can be used with good results. Follow the directions with the respective detergent with regard to the amount to use.

A cleaning agent which has been used on woollens and found to be most effective can be made as follows:—

Take 1 packet of soap flakes (such as Lux).
1 bottle of eucalyptus.
1 cup of methylated spirits.

Mix these three together and store in a jar. The ingredients will not mix to a paste completely. It can be stored indefinitely. Any odour from the eucalyptus is removed during the rinsing and drying processes.
Use just sufficient of the chosen soap to make a good lather, but not an intense one.

Wash woollens on both the right and wrong sides being careful not to stretch the threads while changing from side to side. Avoid rubbing or wringing. Instead use a kneading and squeezing action so that the soapy lather is forced through the fabrics. Avoid lifting the garment out of the water unless it is supported by your hands, as the weight of the water will stretch it.

Any very dirty spots can be treated by patting some of the lather through the patch. Resist the temptation to rub with a bar of soap on these spots.

Woollens can be washed by machine as the action with these is not a rubbing one. Follow the same principles regarding water and soaps. Wash woollens for two minutes only by machine.

When the garment is clean rinse in at least two waters of the same temperature as the washing waters, using the same gentle, squeezing motion. Rinse until all the soap is completely removed or until the last rinsing water is quite clear. For white woollens add one to two tablespoons of ammonia to the last rinsing water.

Remove as much moisture as possible before hanging on the line in order to preserve the shape. Pass the woollen through a wringer with a light pressure applied. Shake well afterwards to raise the fibres. A very satisfactory way to remove moisture is to roll the woollen in a bath towel for 10 to 15 minutes. It is surprising how much moisture the towel will absorb and the woollen can be hung to dry with no fear of its losing shape. Avoid hanging on the line when full of moisture as the weight of the water stretches a garment out of shape very quickly.

Before putting the garment to dry, shake it well, pull into shape gently, make sure all buttons are fastened and see that it is on the wrong side.

**Drying**

If possible dry in a shady spot with a current of warm dry air. If put to dry carefully a woollen garment should require very little pressing.

The quickest way to dry most woollens is on the line with an old stocking passed through the sleeves and the stocking pegged at each wrist and the neck. For long-sleeved garments use two stockings knotted together. Pull the garment into shape without stretching. This method needs quite a lot of line space if a number of woollens are being dried.

A second method is to place the garment on a coat hanger which can be tied on to the line.

Lacy garments which stretch, are best laid on a towel which should be placed where the air can circulate through the garment. This can be arranged by placing the towel on the back of an inverted kitchen chair, on a cane chair or a piece of wire netting supported by bricks or attached to a framework. The top of a hedge is often a good place as the air can come up through the foliage. A second method is to place the garment on a coat hanger which can be tied on to the line.

Lacy garments which stretch, are best laid on a towel which should be placed where the air can circulate through the garment. This can be arranged by placing the towel on the back of an inverted kitchen chair, on a cane chair or a piece of wire netting supported by bricks or attached to a framework. The top of a hedge is often a good place as the air can come up through the foliage. Tissue paper can be placed inside lacy woollens to separate the two layers of fabric and speed up the drying. If none of these supports is available the woollen may be put to dry on the lawn on a towel. Light, lacy garments can be dried by tacking them on to an old bath towel and pegging it onto the line. This is a quick method on a windy day. The garment can be tacked on with large stitches around the edge and a few across the centre. Avoid using pegs on woollens as they leave marks which need heavy pressing to remove them.

**Pressing**

When woollens have been dried carefully, very little pressing should be necessary. They should be pressed on the wrong side when very slightly damp. If completely dry a slightly damp cloth should be used. The iron must be cool. Use a "press and lift" movement to avoid matting of the wool. Press lacy patterns very lightly on the wrong side, if at all.

**Angora**

To raise the nap on angora after washing, rinse finally in a solution of starch in cold water. Use two tablespoons of starch to a pint of cold water. Allow the garment to dry completely then shake to remove the dry starch. As the starch powder falls out it raises the fluff on the angora.

Woollens need careful handling at all stages of their life but any extra time spent in their care is well worth the effort.
SOME HINTS ON HEMLINES
BY BRENDA CLEEVE.

THAT well-dressed and well-groomed appearance which every woman longs to achieve is only possible when each item of one's outfit blends in that unobtrusive perfection which comes from attention to details. How often, for instance, have you seen attractive and highly becoming frocks marred by lumpy, uneven hems fastened with stitches that are so obvious that they almost appear to be part of the trimming?

Far too frequently it seems as if the dress has just been finished in time to be worn on this particular occasion and the wearer has not had time to press the hem. That means that the time and trouble of planning and making a new dress have been largely wasted, for want of a little extra care in the final stages. Neat hems are important and in this article I have tried to indicate how good results can be achieved by the home dressmaker.

LEVELLING THE HEM

After the skirt has been attached to the bodice, and the placket opening neatened, the skirt should be levelled by measuring the distance of the hem from the floor.

The best way is for the wearer to stand on a table so that the hem is somewhere near the eye-level of the person doing the measuring.

A copper-stick or suitable piece of wood can be used, with the desired level marked by an elastic band or a pencil mark.

A simple measuring gadget can easily be made by inserting a length of broomstick, dowelling or square wooden rod into a wooden base-plate.

A portion of a tape-measure is glued to the upright rod in such a manner that it indicates the height from floor level. For instance, if the base-plate is 1 in. thick, cut off the tape-measure at the 1 in. mark and place this end at the bottom of the upright where it enters the base-plate.

Place an elastic band round the upright as a height indicator. It can be moved up or down to give a suitable skirt length and is much more satisfactory than a pencil mark. (See Fig. 1).

Having marked the hem level (the best way is with a row of pins inserted in the skirt), open out all the seams and press them flat to avoid a lumpy hem, then turn up the hem along the row of pins and tack along the folded edge. It is well worth while to do this line of tacking to make sure of an even hemline. Pins fall out and might not be replaced accurately.
REMOVING BULK FROM A HEM

Bulky hems can ruin the appearance of a dress so great care should be taken to dispose of any fullness at this point.

If the hem is a wide one, say of 1½in. or more, it should be carefully pressed to eliminate any fullness, especially in gored or flared skirts.

First pin up the hem at the seams, and on any parts where a straight grain occurs in the material, so that the fullness comes between these points.

On most materials, the fullness can be disposed of by a series of small pleats. Large pleats tend to give the hem a pointed edge and create an ugly line. Don't try to pleat the hem after it has been turned under, as this results in unnecessary bulk on the fold.

In woollen materials this extra fullness may be removed by shrinking. Pin the hem around, spreading the fullness as evenly as possible, using plenty of pins and then press lightly with a damp cloth. If there is much fullness a line of gathering may be put around the hem allowance about 2in. from the edge and the thread tightened until the hem will sit flat. Be careful not to pull the thread too tightly and pucker the hem. The fullness can then be pressed out as before. This method is often more satisfactory with woollens than the first method. Leave the gathering thread in position until the hem is finished.

When pinning a hem insert the pins at right angles to the edge to prevent stretching of the fabric.

On all materials except woollens the finished depth of the hem itself can now be measured. This is measured from the levelled edge and not from the raw edge of the material. For most hems a 3in. allowance should be the maximum but on children's garments more may be left for growth.

A quick guide for measuring a hem can be made with an envelope by cutting a notch in one edge the depth of the required hem. By placing the corner of the envelope on the edge of the hem and pinning around at the level of the notch, the job can be done more quickly than with a tape-measure.

The excess material can then be cut off, allowing sufficient to turn under (¼in. to ½in.). On transparent materials the amount to be turned under should also be measured as it gives an ugly and untidy finish if the turn under is uneven.

Turn the extra allowance under at the measured width, leaving any pleats in position. Tack the edge. It is now ready for finishing.

HEM FINISHES

The quickest and neatest method of finishing a hem is by slip-hemming. This gives almost an invisible finish on the right side and has no loops of cotton to catch the heels on the wrong side. When slip-hemming, the needle should be slipped between the layers of the hem fold for a quarter to half an inch before picking up one or two threads of the single material. In this way the cotton is con-
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cealed completely except for a small V which appears where the stitch is made. On fine materials, pick up sufficient threads to give a firm stitch.

On coarse materials one thread should be enough. This is the stitch which will show on the right side therefore the smaller the amount picked up the more invisible the hem. It is easier to slip-stitch if the hem is left unpressed as the needle slides between the layers of the hem more readily.

For hems on dresses which are to be washed frequently, a row of machining may be worked along the turned edge of the hem before it is tacked down for slip-stitching. The hem allowance will have to be opened out to be machined and then folded back into its final position as of course this machining row should not show on the right side. Leave any pleats in position when machine stitching and this will help to hold them in place more firmly.

HEMS ON FLARED SKIRTS

Skirts which are cut with a flare should have a small hem allowance. If a large hem is turned it will give added weight to the skirt and on the crossway or bias sections the material will be continually stretching and making the hem uneven. This applies particularly on washing fabrics, where it will be found that, even with every care in ironing, the hemline will have altered. On very full flares it is also difficult to remove all the fullness in a hem without making a pointed line on the edge owing to the number of pleats which need to be put in. On a half-circle skirt a 2in. hem should be the maximum, while on a full circle the smaller the hem the better. Full gored skirts can have a larger hem allowance as the seams help these skirts to keep their shape.

The easiest and most satisfactory finish for a fully-flared skirt is to do a tiny machine-stitched hem. Allow a quarter to half-inch turning. One way to complete the edge is by turning up as small an amount as possible and machining on the folded edge (not the raw edge as this frays out very quickly). Then turn it up again and machine on the folded edge once more. This gives a machine-stitch on the right side and a small ridge on the wrong side, both of which are concealed by the fullness of the skirt. Many dressmakers machine about \( \frac{1}{4} \)in from the edge but you will find that this gives a rippled or ridged effect to the edge which cannot be removed and which becomes more pronounced after washing as the threads are stitched into a crooked position.

A second method of finishing is to turn the edge up a quarter to half an inch and machine on the edge of the fold. Then work another row of machining an even distance from the first. Use the edge of the foot on the machine as a guide for this row. This method is suitable for evening frocks or any which are not to be washed frequently. As the hem is only turned once this leaves a raw edge on the wrong side, but as it is machined twice it will not fray to any great extent.

If your machine has an attachment for small hems, this can be used to give a satisfactory finish on a flared skirt and entails only one row of machining.

For a pretty effect on a flared skirt, stretch the hem slightly as it is being machined and it will fall into small flutes when finished.

HEMS ON WOOLLEN MATERIALS

When finishing the hem on winter garments it is best to avoid turning under any allowance at all, so that there is no unnecessary bulk. Measure the hem an even distance all round as with other fabrics but cut off any excess fabric on this line. This leaves a raw edge which must be neatedened before it can be fastened down to the body of the garment.

Paris binding, which can be bought in most haberdashery departments is a good finish for the hem and is made for this purpose. It is a type of ribbon with a dull finish about half and inch wide and comes in tonings of grey, brown, beige and black. Choose the colour nearest your fabric. To attach Paris binding, tack it onto the hem turning leaving about \( \frac{1}{4} \)in. underlap. Avoid fastening it through to the bulk of the garment by slipping a piece of paper under the hem turning. It is advisable to tack the binding on to ensure that it is not stretched causing puckering of the hem. The binding is machined on to the hem
turning which will have to be opened flat to allow this. The free edge should be fastened to the garment with slip-stitch or blind hemming. Any pleats which are inserted to remove fullness should be left in position and held down with the binding.

When Paris binding is not available or cannot be obtained in a toning close enough to the colour of your fabric, bias binding can be used in its place. Choose a soft binding and attach it in the same manner as the Paris binding. Extra care must be taken to avoid pulling it too tightly as the bias binding has more stretch than the Paris binding.

A third method of finishing the raw edge on winter materials is to bind the edge in the normal way with a bias binding. In the above method the binding is left flat. When the edge is bound it is doubled over again and either machine stitched or slip-stitched. This gives a very neat finish to the raw edge which can be attached to the body of the garment by slip-stitching as before. If this method is used be sure that the extra row of stitching involved in attaching the binding does not make the edge too stiff.

Hems on woollen fabrics, especially babies' clothes, may also be neated by herringbone. This is worked over the raw edge and gives a very firm and flat finish. Only one line of stitches of the herringbone must show through on to the right side. A herringbone finish can also be used on heavy coats where the material is too thick or the coat too cumbersome to handle on a machine. The stitches can be worked very firmly into the material and are concealed by the thickness of the fabric.

With all hems, after stitching, a good pressing is necessary to complete the finish. Many people neglect this final step which can mar the appearance of an otherwise attractive garment.

**FARMERS WINTER COURSES**

The Principal of Muresk Agricultural College, Mr. W. Southern, has announced that a sheep husbandry course will be held at the college in mid-July.

Members of the course will assemble at the college on Tuesday evening, July 17, and the course will conclude on the afternoon of Friday, July 20.

The cost of the course, including residence, is £3 3s. Those wishing to enrol should apply to the Principal, Muresk Agricultural College, Muresk, or the Department of Agriculture, St. George's Terrace, Perth, for the necessary enrolment application form.

**WEED CONTROL**

The spraying programme for the control of blackberry has now been completed for this season. Work was undertaken in a number of districts, but the largest project was in the Manjimup-Pemberton area where more than 300 acres were treated. In this section tracks were bulldozed through about 50 acres of dense blackberry to gain access for spraying.

A contract for chaining and raking Mesquite on a North-West station has now been completed. One thousand acres, including the most heavily infested area, was chained two ways and then the uprooted plants were raked into windrows. Trees not handled effectively by chaining were bulldozed.

A further 230 acres were double chained and 720 acres single chained without subsequent raking.

**QUEENSLAND TOADS**

An unauthorised consignment of Queensland toads was discovered by officers of the Stock Branch of the Department of Agriculture.

These toads are considered a potential menace to the bee industry, and have been found to be a great nuisance in Queensland. They have been declared vermin, and any person who obtains any without a permit from the Chief Vermin Control Officer is liable to severe penalties. The toads are valuable for medical and scientific purposes and permits have been issued for their importation by the University and medical institutions.

Permits will not be issued to private individuals.
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