

What I was Happy I had to Wear this Past Week and Thoughts for Events by KI5LNM

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We have all experienced a week that is not our norm here in Central Texas. A week that was forecasted but who knew what was really going to happen. Was it really going to be as bad as they said? I guess we all know the answer to that now and each have their own experiences with loss of electricity, water, and/or heat. Or the need to care for animals that were not used to this cold and finding shelter from sleety rain or snow or below freezing cold, and making sure they had feed available.

So I had to be out in the cold all the way from -17F wind chill to just above freezing to feed, water, and watch over my sheep, chickens, and Mark's horse. Many trips a day. I wasn't one who just got to sit by the fireplace this past week with a good book or project.

So how did I dress for those cold early mornings and then multiple trips out? What kept me warm and could keep you warm and dry in similar situations at any time.

My two favorite articles of clothing quickly became my handspun hand crocheted wool scarf and my Irish wool sweater bought in England. In all the layers that I would put on these two items made the biggest difference.

One of wool's great qualities is that it can wick moisture away from your body into itself. This can be sweat, rain, or snow and has the distinct ability of holding 30% of its weight in water and still feel dry. With this property, it can help insulate you as well as keep you dry. My scarf wrapped around my neck and then my nose and mouth kept my face quite warm with a warm barrier that would otherwise have been cold. And my breathing and talking didn't affect how it felt or the need to get it away for becoming wet or too cold feeling from breathing into it.

Wool fibers are hollow and depending on how it is spun will then have lots of hollows for insulation. My wool sweater was what was missing until I put it on under my coat that just didn't quite get the job done alone.

Another wonderful property of wool is that one of its natural properties is that it doesn't trap odors in itself. This is an advantage especially with wool socks. You can, if necessary, wear the same pair for a few days without them becoming a stinky mess.

Wool is also a good option if it is going to wet and blizzardy. Wool does have a naturally water resistance. This is an advantage if you are going to be in a wet environment over any type of down coat which will absorb the wet and just go all to nothing.

But just in case you think wool is only for winter and only for this past week, wool is a great fiber to wear even in summer. And for some of the same reasons as one would love it in winter. It absorbs moisture and yet still feels dry and is naturally water

resistant. So you can get lightweight worsted spun wool which has fewer hollows for insulation but because of its natural properties and breathability, it does still provide the ability to even out the temperature of your body and the air around you. Despite what you may think, you can wear wool in summer and be comfortable. And imagine that ability to not absorb odors? That could be a blessing if on an exercise, and you do not have the facilities or ability to change often. One can just brush them down for dirt and when the chance comes a rinse and dry. Think of those socks as well. Wool ones can be an advantage in a hot summer event for its wicking ability and dry feel as well as not smelling like they've had feet in them too long.

And while thinking of what kind of situation you may be involved with, there are other advantages to wool as well.

It is a natural fire retardant. Remember that 30% of moisture it can hold and still feel dry? Because of that, wool only burns as long as it is in a direct flame. But once it is no longer in the flame it will naturally stop burning. This is the reason historically that women would wear wool petticoats around fires. It would cut down on accidentally catching yourself on fire. That petticoat would actually help you extinguish the fire.

I haven't specifically stated yet that wool is very breathable. The wool fibers themselves allow for air to pass through. This is also a reason why it can regulate temperature. You will not get overheated wearing wool.

Wool also is naturally high in UV protection. This protection that is natural to wool is much higher than cotton or synthetic fibers can provide.

Now if you are thinking that wool sounds horrible and itchy, you're remembering back to the 70s and all those itchy sweaters we wore. Forget them. There are reasons those were so horrible. Wool needs not be itchy and if you have some that is, find another use for it but don't wear it next to your skin. Wool does come in different degrees of softness. Merino being the softest of all but there are sheep that do have rough wool that works great for carpets for strength and durability. Wool can also be treated in such a way that causes it to be itchy. Making sure your wool was not mistreated in processing can eliminate this element as well.

When looking to your clothing needs, don't forget wool. There is much more that could be said about it, but even if you think it is never needed in Texas, it just might surprise you with what it can do for you no matter the weather or temperatures.