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# buying and caring for blankets

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Mention of commercial names does not imply endorsement nor does omission imply criticism.


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# INTRODUCTION

The essential function of a blanket is to provide warmth. Not many years ago you could find this necessary quality only in 100-percent wool blankets. But today many blankets are made entirely or partially from manmade fibers as well as from wool. Such changes complicate the problem of selecting blankets for your family.

Before you shop for a blanket, ask yourself these questions: • How many years do I want the blanket to last? • What should I look for to get a warm blanket? • What fiber or fibers will be best for my purpose? • What kind and how much care will the blanket need? • How should the top and bottom edges of the blanket be finished? • What should I expect to pay for a good blanket?

# FACTS ABOUT BLANKETS

## Warmth

Warmth, the most important quality in a good bed blanket, depends on the ability of the fabric to act as an insulator. The still air trapped in the cloth protects a person from cold drafts and prevents the heat generated by his body from escaping too rapidly. The kind of fiber, the nap, the construction, and how you care for a blanket all contribute to its warmth.

## Kinds of Fibers

The main fibers used for blankets are wool, cotton, rayon, nylon, and the acrylics (Acrilan and Orlon are two of them). Manufacturers are required by law to state the fiber content on the label.

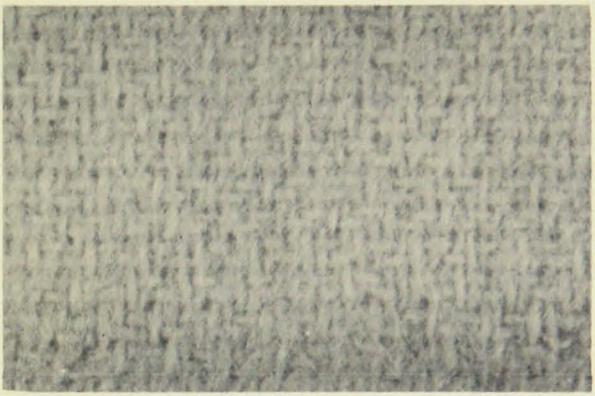
A research study conducted cooperatively by the Agricultural Experiment Stations of the University of Minnesota and South Dakota State University showed that 100-percent fiber content blankets were superior to blends. However, among the blends studied, the 50/50 percent fiber blends were found to be superior to the others because they contained enough of the fibers to have the advantages of each fiber. Low percentages of fibers may be misleading, as the amount of fiber often is too small to give the desirable qualities. The blanket performs like the major fiber.


The thick pile of blanket No. 2 makes it considerably warmer than blanket No. 1.

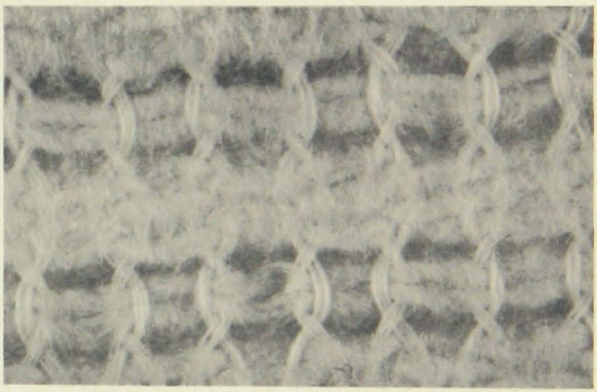
## CHARACTERISTICS OF BLANKETS MADE OF DIFFERENT FIBERS

| Fiber | What you may like | What you may not like |
|---|---|---|
| Wool | Are high in warmth qualities.<br>Are easily napped—the high nap provides warmth because of the dead air space.<br>Retain their softness, fluffiness, and high nap after proper laundering.<br>Have low flammability.<br>May be treated for resistance to moth damage and shrinkage. | Can be ruined by improper laundering, which results in:<br>Shrinking, matting, felting, and loss of fluffiness.<br>Loss of dead air space.<br>Can be yellowed and weakened by chlorine bleaches.<br>Can be damaged by moths.<br>Are moderate to high in price. |
| Rayon | Are low in price.<br>Are resistant to moth damage.<br>Come in a wide range of colors.<br>Are fluffy and attractive when new. | Lose some of their warmth due to crushing and loss of nap during use and laundering or cleaning.<br>Lose much of their good appearance after laundering.<br>Shrink lengthwise and stretch crosswise.<br>Are highly flammable. |
| Acrylics (e.g., Orlon and Acrilan) | Are highly resistant to shrinkage during laundering.<br>Provide warmth with little weight.<br>Are naturally mildewproof and mothproof.<br>Retain original appearance after proper laundering.<br>Have low flammability. | Are moderate to high in price. |
| Nylon | Used in small amounts in blends with other fibers to give them added strength. | |
| Cotton | Are low in price.<br>Can be easily laundered.<br>Withstand high temperatures.<br>Are good for summer use. | Lose their nap since it crushes readily.<br>Provide less warmth than wool or acrylic blankets.<br>Are weakened by mildew. |

# BLANKET CONSTRUCTION



Shows structure of modified twill weave without nap (magnified).



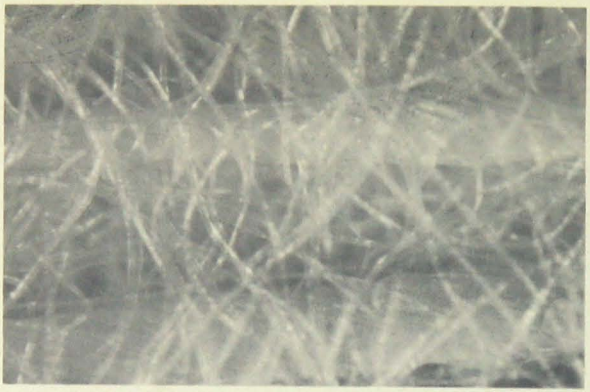
Shows open structure of leno weave (magnified).

## Woven

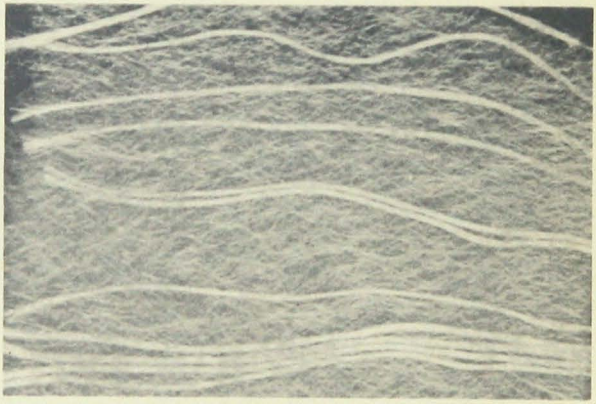
The majority of blankets produced are woven blankets. Most woven blankets have either a simple twill weave or some modification of it, because a twill weave throws more filling yarns to the surface than does a plain weave. Consequently, there are more yarns to be napped and the blanket can be made thick without much injury to the foundation.

## Thermal (or Cellular)

Thermal (or cellular) blankets most often are woven in a leno weave. This weave is especially suitable for blankets because it has a porous, open textured construction. The leno weave is made by a crossing and twisting of the warp yarns over the filling yarns, thus locking the filling yarns in position. Thermal blankets also may be knitted. Greater pattern variations can be obtained with the knitting than with the weaving systems. Research shows that thermal blankets stretch rather than shrink in washing.



Shows the crosswise yarns between two layers of entangled fiber (highly magnified).



The top layer of entangled fibers has been removed to show construction detail.

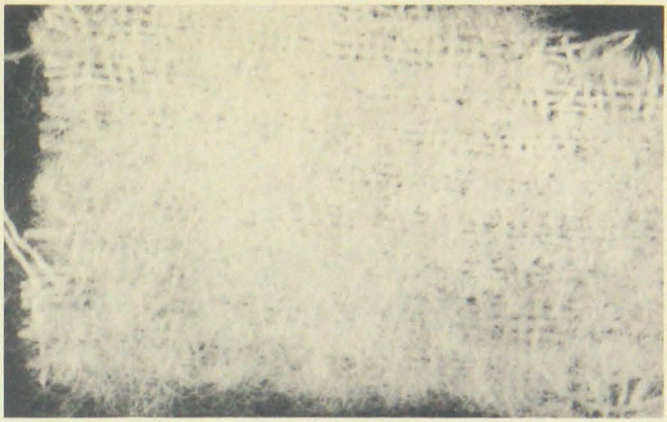
## Nonwoven

Nonwoven blankets most often are made by the needle punched method. Nonwoven or fiber-woven fabrics are distinguished from regular woven goods by the arrangement of their fibers. The fibers in nonwoven or fiber-woven fabrics are laced and looped into chains of entanglement.

Nonwoven blankets can be produced quite rapidly and inexpensively since intermediate manufacturing processes such as spinning and weaving are eliminated. Blankets with a nonwoven construction (similar to felt) *must be handled carefully* both in use and in laundering.

## Tufted

Tufted blanket yarns are inserted in a backing fabric through the stitching action of tufting machines. The pile formed by this process is then napped. Brushing or pulling out tufts of the pile yarns by napping does not weaken the basic structure of the blanket as occurs when woven fabrics are napped. Research has indicated that the stability of tufted blankets is good after repeated washings.



A tufted blanket fabric showing the woven backing and inserted tufts.

The manufacture of tufted blankets requires relatively low capital investment, and space requirements are relatively small; the blankets can be produced quickly.

### Electric

Electric blankets are made of a double woven fabric using two warp and two filling yarns. The two layers of self-stitched fabric form channels for electric, insulated, resistive wire. An average length of wire used in a standard size blanket is 100 feet. As a safety measure, most blankets have nine thermostats in the wiring system to shut off the current if the temperature becomes too hot.

The function of an electric blanket is to supply enough heat to replace the body heat lost by the sleeper. Some blankets have dual controls to provide two sleepers with a temperature choice.

## ELECTRIC BLANKET SAFETY

Although electric blankets generally are safe, they present more potential shock, burn, and fire hazards than many other appliances when they are mishandled. Always follow the manufacturer's recommendations for use and care of your electric blanket and take these precautions:

- Do not use an electric blanket in a baby's crib, for a helpless person, or for a person insensitive to heat.
- Do not sit or lie on electric blankets.
- Do not pin them to the mattress, as pins can injure the wiring.
- Do not fold an electric blanket while it is in use. Excessive heating may result if you do.
- Do not tuck in the wired area of an electric blanket.
- Do not dryclean or use drycleaning fluids on electric blankets.

• Do not try to repair an electric blanket. Take or send it to the nearest factory service center or authorized service station listed on the instruction sheet included with the blanket.

## BLANKET FINISHES

### Napping

Blanket fabrics are napped to enhance their aesthetic appeal and to increase the warmth of the blanket. Napping is achieved by a brushing operation. The fabric is passed over rapidly revolving cylinders covered with fine wire brushes or set with teasels. The short and loose fibers in the filling yarns are lifted to the surface, forming the nap. Retaining the nap is essential to preserving a blanket's warmth-giving characteristics.

### Dimensional Control

"Dylanized" chemically finished wool blankets have been treated to reduce felting shrinkage. Blankets labeled "Carefree" have been "Dylanized." Another chemical process is "Wurlan," developed by the Western Regional Laboratory of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. "Bancora" and "Zeset" are other commercial finishes for dimensional control.

### Moth Control

Wool blankets may be treated with a chemical to make them resistant to attack by moths. Such processes differ in their resistance to laundering and drycleaning and in the length of time they are effective.

### Finish to Minimize Shedding and Pilling

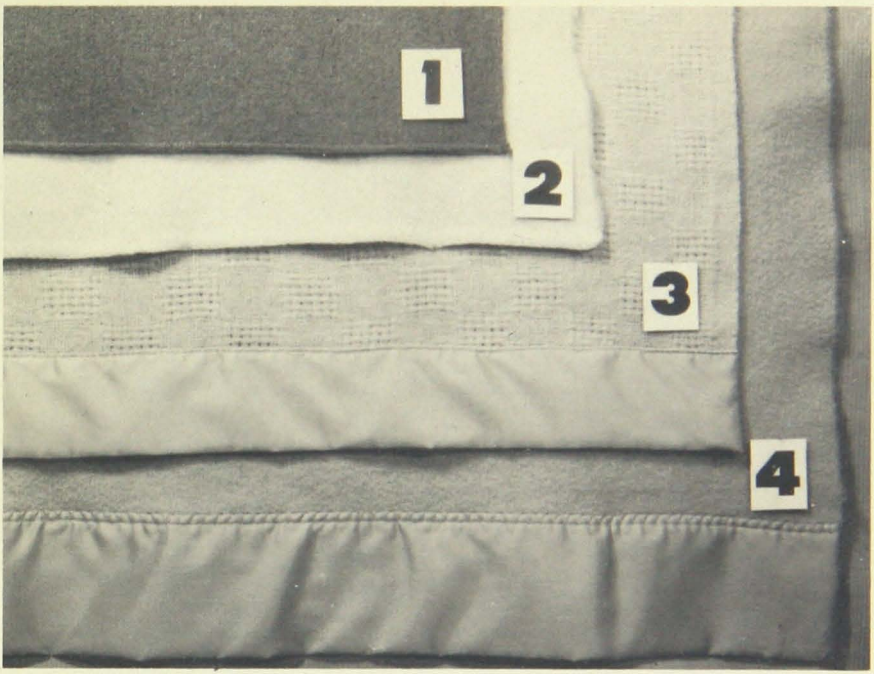
After napping, shedding and pilling occur because long fibers have been raised above shorter and more compact fibers. This layer of long fibers tends to shed or roll into unsightly pills. Chemical treatments that stabilize the fabric and reduce the tendency to pill or shed have been developed. "Chemloc," "Fiber Fast Finish," or "Fiber Sealed" are trade names for these processes.

## OTHER FACTORS IN BLANKET SELECTION

### Prices

Prices for regular blankets range from $3.50 to $20 or more, varying with the quality and size. Prices for twin size electric blankets begin at about $9. A king size electric blanket with dual controls may cost $50 or more.

Research indicates that low cost rayon blankets have a good appearance when new but do not retain it after washing. Although you should be able to find a good quality blanket for $10 to $15, price is not always a reliable guide to blanket quality.




The shallow stitched edge on No. 1 may not wear as well as the wider stitching on No. 2. Nos. 3 and 4 have nylon bindings with zigzag stitching.

## Bindings and Edge Finishes

Blanket bindings usually are made of nylon or rayon. Good bindings are firmly woven. Nylon bindings are more resistant to abrasion than rayon and should last the life of the blanket. Bindings may be zigzag or plain stitched. In good quality blankets, the thread ends are secured. The end of the binding should be folded under enough to prevent raveling.

Various kinds of machine stitching are used to finish the raw ends and are less expensive than bindings. Nonwoven blankets usually are zigzag stitched on the sides and bound on the ends.

## BLANKET SIZES

| Bed | Width-length (inches) |
|---|---|
| Bunk | 54 x 80 |
| Twin | 66 x 90 |
| Twin or double* | 72 x 90 |
| Double | 80 x 90 |
| Queen | 100 x 90 |
| King | 108 x 90 |

* Twin or double may be described as all purpose.

# CARE OF BLANKETS

If you give them proper care, your blankets will last many years. You can wash blankets or send them to a laundry or drycleaners.

## Type of Washer

Many blankets can be satisfactorily laundered in some kinds of automatic washers. However, you must use lukewarm water, little agitation, and mild cleaning agents for acceptable results. Research has shown that:[1]

- Blankets washed in agitator washers (top-loading) were the most acceptable in appearance.
- Blankets washed in pulsator washers (top-loading) were similar in appearance to those washed in agitator machines.
- Blankets washed in cylinder washers (front-loading) were the least desirable and could not be rated as acceptable.

## Soaps and Synthetic Detergents

Washers require varying amounts of water for each load. Follow the directions in your washer manual regarding amounts of water and amounts and types of soaps or synthetic detergents to use.

You can use soap with soft or softened water. Use synthetic detergents with hard water. Use enough to make a good standing suds. Determine the kind and amount of soap or synthetic detergent to use by considering:

- The amount of water your washing machine holds.
- The hardness of the water.
- The amount and kind of soil in the blanket.

When you use a sudsing detergent, you have the suds to serve as a guide. But you must follow package directions when you use a low sudsing detergent, because you cannot use the amount of suds as a guide and because these products vary in weight per cup.

## Cold Water Wash

Research by Ethel McNeil, U.S. Department of Agriculture, showed that large numbers of bacteria survived cold water laundering with a liquid cold water detergent.[2] More bacteria survived cold water washes than warm and hot water washes. The addition of chlorine disinfectant in the wash cycle or quaternary disinfectant in the rinse cycle reduced bacteria substantially. Phenolic and pine oil disinfectants were not effective in reducing bacteria numbers when they were used with cold water de-

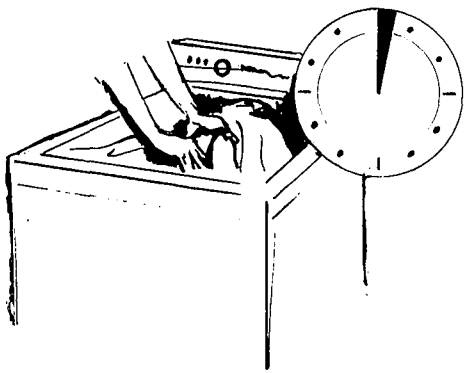
[1] Research Bulletin 717. LAUNDERING BLANKETS. Ohio Agricultural Experiment Station. Wooster, Ohio.
[2] AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH. "What About Bacteria in Cold-Water Laundering?" Vol. 14, No. 7 (January 1966). Pp. 12-13.

tergents. Do not use chlorine products on wool, as they weaken and yellow it. For disinfectant trade names, see USDA Home and Garden Bulletin 97, *Sanitation in Home Laundering.*

## WASHING PROCEDURES[3]

### Regular Blankets

If you have an automatic washer with different wash and spin speeds, set the machine on the slowest cycles. If your machine does not have a slow speed, start the machine to get a standing suds, then remove the agitator and put the blanket in the machine. If the agitator cannot be removed, stop the machine and let the blanket soak for 5 to 10 minutes. Use a 2-minute wash period and allow the machine to complete the wash cycle. If you cannot reduce the length of the wash period, do not use the machine for washing blankets.



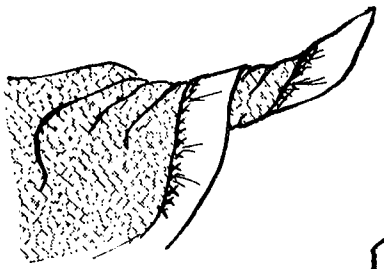
Use a 2-minute wash period for blankets.

If blanket bindings are heavily soiled, pretreat them with a solution of water and the same soap or synthetic detergent you'll use for washing the blanket. Brush the solution into the binding before you put the blanket in the washer.

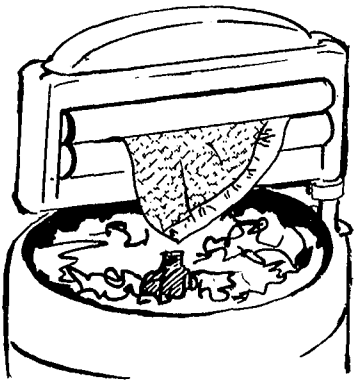
### Electric Blankets

When washing an electric blanket, follow the above directions concerning soap and water. Soak the blanket for 15 minutes, agitate for *only 1 minute*, rinse twice in fresh water, and spin dry or squeeze gently by hand. Do not use wringers, and do not twist or wring an electric blanket vigorously.

[3] Information in the washing and drying procedures sections is based on the Minnesota-South Dakota research study.



Do not twist or wring an electric blanket.



Do not put an electric blanket through a wringer.

Without extreme care, repeated washings will shorten the life of an electric blanket. Any extra precautions you take to prevent soiling an electric blanket will lengthen the time between washings and lengthen its life.

## DRYING PROCEDURES

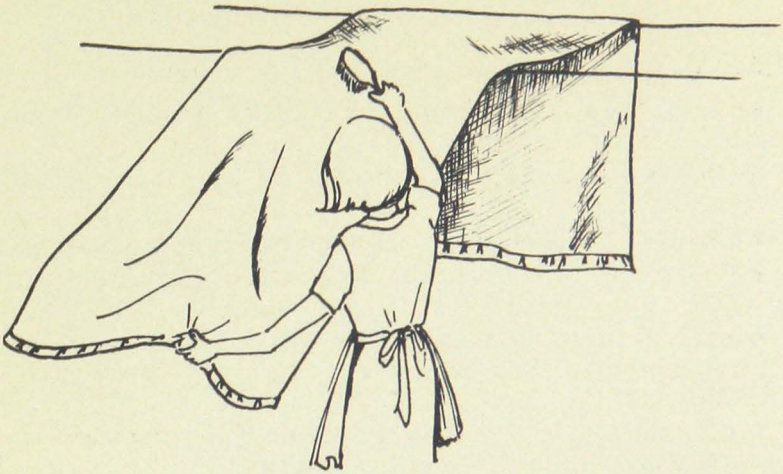
### Regular Blankets

*Automatic*—Place several bath towels in an automatic dryer and preheat the dryer. Then sandwich the heated towels in the folds of the wet blanket. Set the dryer at low heat, put the blanket in, and leave in the dryer until the binding no longer feels damp (about 15 minutes). Remove the blanket from the dryer, stretch gently by hand, and hang on a line or rack to finish drying. When it is dry, shake the blanket vigorously or brush gently to restore the nap.

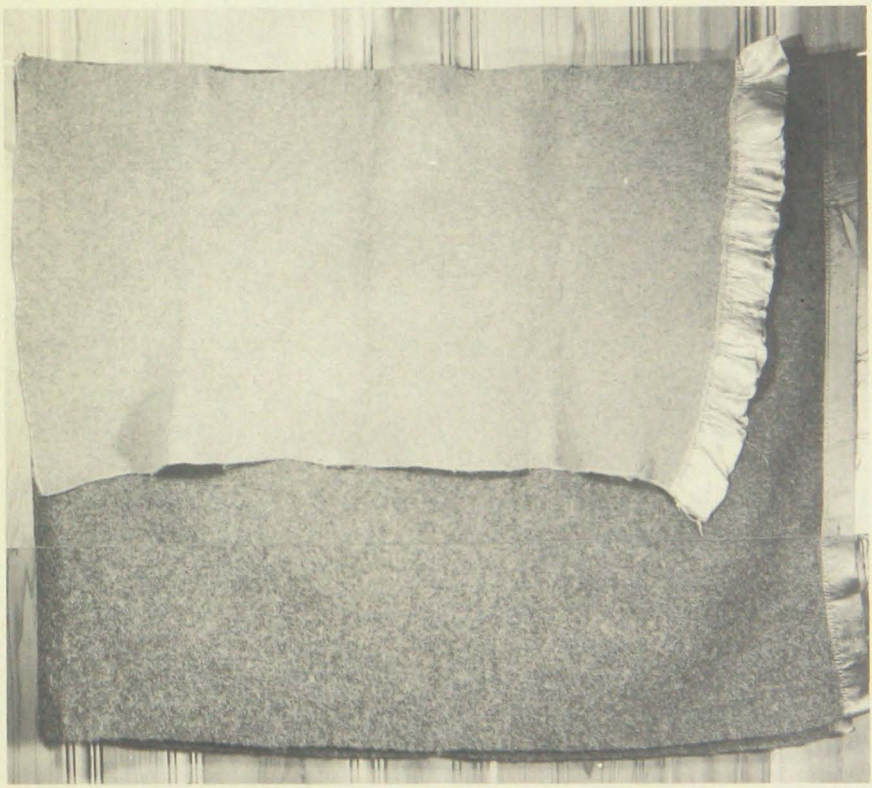
*Line*—Hang the blanket crosswise over two parallel lines 2 to 3 feet apart. Hang it in the shade to prevent yellowing and fading. Do not hang a blanket in a high wind or in direct sunlight. When the blanket is dry, brush gently on both sides to renew fluffiness.

### Electric Blankets

Never dry an electric blanket in an automatic dryer—heat and agitation can be harmful to the wiring system. To remove excess water, blot the moisture from it with terry towels before drying. Line dry electric blankets.



Hang blankets over parallel lines to dry. Brush gently to renew fluffiness.



Improper laundering caused the top blanket to shrink excessively. The pile has become felted and flat.

# SOME BLANKET BUYING GUIDES

Keep these things in mind when you shop for blankets:

- Choose a color that harmonizes with the color scheme in the bedroom.
- Observe the thickness—the thicker the blanket, the warmer it will be.
- Check to see whether the edges are bound or machine stitched.
- Be sure that the blanket is cut and stitched on the crosswise grain line.
- Buy only electric blankets that have the Underwriters' Laboratories (UL) seal of approval. This seal certifies that the blanket was electrically safe when bought.
- Read the label to determine the length of the guarantee. Electric blanket guarantees usually run from 2 to 5 years.
- Buy from a reliable merchant who will guarantee his product.
- Remember that stripes and patterns add to the cost.
- Read the label for size, fiber content, and instructions for care. (See the artist's illustration below.)


Fabric Mills Inc.

FESTIVAL

100% ACRILAN ACRYLIC

100% NYLON BINDING

GUARANTEED FOREVER AGAINST MOTH DAMAGE

**QUICK FACTS ABOUT YOUR NEW TRADEMARK BLANKET**

*Washing Instructions:* Use mild soap and lukewarm water to make plenty of suds, whether washing by hand or in manually operated washing machine. If blanket is heavily soiled, two short sudsings are preferable to one long sudsing.

*Hand Laundering:* Force suds through blanket by repeatedly dipping and raising in suds until soil is removed. Rinse several times in clear lukewarm water to remove all soap. Do not scrub, wring, or twist wet blanket fabric.

*Non-Automatic Washer:* Wash only one blanket at a time. Always have high water level in washer. Run machine one minute, stop machine, raise entire blanket to change its position in machine, run one minute more, stop machine and drain off suds. Rinse briefly several times in clear lukewarm water, draining well between rinses (with machine stopped).

*Automatic Washer:* Follow instructions for washing blankets as recommended by manufacturer's manual. Remove excess water by hand squeezing or in basket (spinner) type extractor. Do not wring by hand or through rollers.

Dry blanket by hanging over two lines with bindings at bottom and weight evenly distributed. Stretch gently so that ends match. When partly dry, reverse blanket so both sides dry evenly. Shake occasionally to restore fluff finess. Do not use clothes pins. Out door drying is preferable, but never hang in direct sunlight. Press binding with warm (not hot) iron. But do not iron blanket fabric. . . . This blanket has been tested at 24 points during manufacture by the Quality Control Laboratory of Trademark Mills.

## TIPS ON OFF-SEASON CARE

- Never store a soiled blanket.
- Put clean blankets in tightly sealed bags or boxes and store them in a dry, cool place.
- Unless your wool blankets have been treated for moth resistance, protect them with flaked naphthalene, paradichlorobenzene flakes, mothballs, or repellent sprays.
- Do not use mothballs or sprays on electric blankets.