

## Newsroom

### **McCourt Makes Sleep Painless With Wool**

By Angie Smith - Special Sections Editor

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There is no counting sheep at night for Susan McCourt to fall into a deep slumber.

This Oconomowoc sheep producer and entrepreneur says she has uncovered the secret to measurable pain relief and endless nights of restful sleep, all thanks to wool.

Susan, along with her husband, Art, sells a collection of handmade, natural wool bedding products designed to provide customers the ultimate in comfort.

The secret lies in the natural properties of wool and just how the wool interacts with the body. According to Art's research, he concluded that "wool has a natural resilience as a result of the crimps and the hair-like scales or burrs found in each wool fiber. These attributes create a natural weight-support system. Wool also delivers therapeutic warmth, which works together with your body to temporarily relieve pain and stiffness by relaxing sore, tight muscles and conforming to the contours of your body to help you fall asleep."

Art goes on to say, "The Soothe Ewe underquilt distributes your weight to eliminate pressure points." That, coupled with a sustained body temperature, allows the body to "rid itself of the chemical byproducts that cause pain."

All products are trademarked with names such as Soothe Ewe Underquilts, Comfort Ewe Comforters, Hug Ewe Pillows and Support Ewe Neck Rolls.

"It is like lying on a cloud," Susan remarks of her underquilts. "That's what makes the products unusual. Wool is used in many products, but not often for comfort." Unlike down or feathers, wool doesn't compact, Susan explains, which means that air circulates through the wool and helps maintain your body temperature.

Susan's products are said to be ideal for those who suffer from arthritis, headaches, fatigue, back pain and other general aches. Susan also suggests her products for those who suffer from the debilitating disease fibromyalgia. According to information from the Mayo Clinic, the chronic condition is characterized by fatigue and widespread pain in muscles, ligaments and tendons. Also, many who are affected experience sleep disturbances because they miss the deep restorative stage of the sleep cycle. While the disease is not life threatening, sufferers say it is life altering. It affects millions of Americans, of which 80 to 90 percent are female.

Most recently, treatment for fibromyalgia has centered on medications, but Susan hopes that her products can open the door to other means of relief.

"Doctors are beginning to refer patients with fibromyalgia to our products," she says, explaining that doctors are even writing out prescriptions specifically for Soothe Ewe Underquilts. Some insurance companies will even cover the cost, she says.

Susan reminds that "people with pain come in all body shapes, ages and sizes," and that is why every product that leaves her farm workshop is made to order within 7 to 10 days. "I try to help those who come in by finding where there pain is and then we go from there," she explains. "And if someone would take the product home, and decide it isn't quite right, we'll tweak it."

The workshop is even complete with a full-size bed, so potential customers can test-out the product before they buy.

Sounds too good to be true? Susan has letter upon letter from satisfied customers who have finally been able to enjoy an uninterrupted night of sleep, only to awake feeling refreshed the next morning. In letters written to Susan, one customer says she feels like "a new woman" after using a Kerry Hills underquilt, and another raves that the pillows she purchased even helped her geriatric dog feel relieved from arthritic pain.

Perhaps what is most amazing is that Susan's entire business essentially began by happenstance. The couple, seeking a place of solitude, moved to rural Wisconsin in 1997. But within a few months, they encountered a problem they never anticipated - with no livestock, their pastures "weren't so pretty anymore." However, just one trip to visit family in Door County uncovered the solution, and Susan came home with two ovine friends.

While Susan admits that Art wasn't too fond of her new lawnmowers, she just kept bringing the animals home, sometimes six sheep at a time, but never asking Art for his permission. She just assumed his answer would be a resounding, "No." Today, the farm is home to not only 60 sheep, but also five horses, two llamas and more turkeys than one can count.

After that first shearing season, Susan quickly realized that she needed an outlet for all her wool. "I don't knit and I don't weave. I don't want to sit still long enough to do that," she says. So instead, Susan planned to build a fleece-bunk mattress, an old style mattress filled with wool similar to what was used by her great-grandparents. But after more serious thought, Susan altered the plan and stuck with bedding.

Susan, who spent more than 30 years in sales, says that she never intended her farm to be just a hobby; she expects it to pay for itself. Art, who is a semi-retired pharmacist, launched the Tobin Drug Store chain, and after selling those businesses he started Drug Emporium. He is now employed with Aurora Healthcare.

Wool from Susan's flock is cleaned with a very gentle natural soap, and no harsh dyes or chemicals are used. From there, the bats are made into underquilts and comforters, complete with hand-tied duvet covers. The underquilts are used with up to five batts, whereas comforters are usually made with less. Although, all products are made to meet the customer's specific needs, regardless of the amount of wool needed.

Wool has many intriguing characteristics. It is non-allergenic because it resists dust mites, it is flame resistant, mildew resistant, it remembers its shape and it insulates.

Such a booming business was not quite what Susan anticipated six years ago. Sales have been spurred by word of mouth, and Kerry Hills' products have been shipped to France, Wales and other international locations. "We've had website hits from just about every country - Japan, Brazil, Australia..." Susan says.

"I've had many inquiries from major healthcare marketing firms that want to market my products for me," she notes. "And because the product is helping people, the business is just going to continue to grow. We didn't have any idea that this would be as big as it is."

For more information about the complete line of Kerry Hills Farm products, visit [www.surroundewe.com](http://www.surroundewe.com), or call 920-474-4503 to speak with Susan. Visitors are always welcome at the workshop, too, which is located at N1237 Franklin Rd., near the town of Ashippun.

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