

MAN-MADE FUR FROM MOHAIR

Synthetic fur materials of wide variety have been common for a number of years, but this season an interesting new creation, probably more nearly resembling real fur in character and appearance than any previous product, has appeared from the looms of Sanford Mills, Sanford, Maine, famous for its mohair velvet upholsteries and other mohair materials.



Inventor of "Man-Made Fur": Herbert J. Hope, veteran loom designer at Sanford Mills, Sanford, Me., who has succeeded in a 10-year effort to weave "man-made fur" and the final product.

The new man-made fur is woven on a special loom by a patented process which mingles short mohair fibers with the longer hairs in such a way that the natural texture of real fur is closely duplicated. Coloring processes have also been developed to give the material the proper shades and blends with the result that special success has been achieved in imitating genuine coonskin although other furs are closely duplicated.

Because of the product's close resemblance to the fur of the coon, the new fabric has been called "Koon-gora." It is to be used in the manufacture of men's women's and children's winter coats.

The material is the result of several years of research. Mohair, the hair of the Angora goat, had long

been used for velvets and other upholsteries as well as for dress fabrics when interest was aroused in the question of making synthetic furs to meet a dwindling natural supply. Since mohair was known to have definite fur-like characteristics, it was considered well adapted to the problem, but difficulties were experienced in perfecting looms that would weave a material of the typical shaggy appearance of fur. The manufacture of plushes and other fabrics of a regular pattern from mohair had long been solved, but the development of a loom that would handle long and short fibers at the same time, without a definitely mechanical appearance, was a difficult matter.

Sanford Mills' textile experts labored at the problem for months. One day a weaver had brought in a sample for inspection. As the mill manager was looking at it, his young woman secretary began pulling at some of the fibers with her lead pencil. Hairs were drawn out part way from the cloth warp and left to hang in a rough, shaggy manner like that of a wild animal.

"Can you weave a cloth that will look like this?" the manager asked the weaver.

"I believe I can," was the reply. He went back to his looms and some two years later the manager was shown another sample. It was rough and shaggy like the piece that the secretary had picked at with her pencil. Coloring processes were developed to give the material the proper shades and after several months of further testing and experimenting a suitable fabric was prepared.

In a sense, the new "Koongora" is real fur for it is made from a substance of definite fur-like characteristics, the fleece of the Angora goat. Mohair is not wool although it comes from a member of the sheep family. Its outer surface structure is distinctly different in that it has comparatively few scales. The inner structure is likewise different as there is a central canal or passage running the length of the fiber. This canal corresponds to that in human hair and is filled with a natural animal oil. In life this factor helps give the mohair fiber greater luster, resilience and a fresh appearance long after it has been shorn and woven into cloth.

"Koongora" is but one of a number of man-made furs that may be woven from mohair at Sanford Mills where textile experts, skilled inventors and others have been developing this interesting new departure in the art of weaving.