



## DOWN JACKETS & VESTS Challenges for Buyers

Down apparel continues to increase in demand & popularity worldwide.

Mass market down jackets and vests and specialty sports and expedition products are found in all types of retail outlets.

Buyers face some challenges in making sure that products meet buyer specification.

### **Why is down such great filling for outerwear?**

Down is extremely lightweight and very warm.

Gram per gram, down has the best insulation value of any natural or synthetic fill material.

Down works well in any climate. Geese and ducks use down as insulation in dry arctic climates and humid tropical climates.

Down can be washed and dried regularly with no loss of insulation ability. In fact regular care and cleaning returns down to its original lofting capability.

### **Outerwear Quality Challenges**

Because down and feathers are not transparent in finished products, vendors can easily substitute inferior fill materials.

Buyers should be aware of the following quality problems:

**Low Down Cluster.** Jackets must be labelled with the percentage of feathers and down. Many products are labeled high down %, but really have high feather %.

**High Fibers.** Some products contain excessive chicken and other fibers in products labeled down.

**High Damaged Material.** Damaged feathers and down can reduce filling quality.

**Non-down added.** In a few cases cheap synthetic fibers have been mixed with down and feathers.

### **Downproof Issues**

Some products tested in 2006-7 enclose the down and feather with non-downproof fabrics.

Downproof fabrics do not allow the down and feather to migrate out of the jacket or vest.

Fabrics that leak down and feathers cause great consumer dissatisfaction after a few uses.

### **Net Weight of Filling**

Vendors sometimes short the fill weight to save money.

Also, if a vendor fills in high humidity Asian climates, the actual fill weight will be much less in colder climates.

## Value of Product Testing

Regular product testing for outerwear helps avoid the common problems that create headaches for retailers after products are shipped..

IDFL tests about 1,500 jackets per year for many retailers. The majority of down jackets sold worldwide are not tested.

### **COMMON TESTS FOR JACKETS AND VESTS**

- 6-Test Package of Filling (includes content, specie, cleanliness and fill power)
- Downproof Test of Fabric
- Net Weight of Filling Material
- NOTE: Products should be tested during production and after arrival in destination country.

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