

# EUROQUILT



The abbreviation EDFA stands for European Down and Feather Association. The association, which was founded in 1980 and has its headquarters in Mainz in Germany, is currently made up of more than 90 companies and national organisations from 23 countries. Alongside Brazil, Bulgaria, Denmark, Germany, Estonia, Finland, France, Great Britain, Ireland, Italy and Japan, this also includes the Netherlands, Norway, Austria, Poland, Portugal, Russia, Switzerland, Spain, South Africa, the Czech Republic, Ukraine and Hungary.

The aim of the association is to sustainably represent the interests of members from the bed feather & down industry, the feather & down filling industry and their suppliers (machine industry, chemical industry, ticking industry and test institutes) in Europe. Current issues are discussed and tackled in interdisciplinary working groups.

The EDFA is particularly committed to defending consumer interests and animal welfare. It aims to provide reassurance and the maintenance of ethical standards across the industry.

**EUROQUILT** is pleased to announce that we are now a fully certified member of the EDFA. We are also delighted to confirm that all of our natural feather and down products are now certified and labelled as **NOMITE** and **Downafresh** compliant.



This certification gives our customers peace of mind in promoting our products as safe for use by persons suffering from house dust allergies and ensures that our product cases and fillings meet the very high standards required on cleanliness, fabric weave density and strength. This certification brings a whole new level of quality, traceability and compliance to our products and we hope that this advance assures our customers of our continued efforts to bring the best products to market.

We will confirm and issue protocol shortly governing the use of the NOMITE and Downafresh branding for your business shortly.

The **NOMITE** mark indicates that a product is suitable for house-dust-mite-allergy sufferers: because down and feather filled products offer excellent thermal and climatic conditions for humans (rapid warming up when one is sleeping, rapid decrease in humidity when the bedding is aired), they provide a very poor habitat for house dust mites, which rely on high humidity to live.

The tight weave of the down-and feather-proof fabric acts as a barrier preventing the mites from passing through and offers additional protection so that also those who suffer from house dust allergies or asthma can enjoy the natural comfort afforded by down and feather bedding. This has been demonstrated by scientific research.

### **Interesting facts about house dust mite allergies....**

#### **Much Ado About Nothing!**

Do house-dust-mite-allergy sufferers really have to do without the cosy comfort of cosy down and feather bedding provides? No, they don't. Although the matter has been settled a long time ago, the debate on this issue continues to be fierce. Thus, many people are still labouring under the misapprehension that down and feather filled bedding articles are the preferred habitat of house dust mites.

#### **Is there any truth in that rumour?**

Prof. Hans Jürgens, Head of the Institute for Industrial Anthropology at the Kiel University, investigated the matter thoroughly and carried out a study on this topic. The results confirm not only that house dust mite allergy sufferers may sleep in down and feather beds, but that such bedding is even actually recommendable.

#### **The proof of the pudding is in the eating!**

After laboratory tests showed that there is no relation between down and feather filled bedding articles and the occurrence of house dust mites, Prof. Jürgens conducted a representative study on used duvets from different households. It was established without exception, that the tested bedding articles contained practically no mites.

#### **The approach**

It is not the house dust mite itself but its excretions, which trigger the allergy and only if they occur in huge quantities. The presence of a small number of mites is not decisive in terms of allergies. House dust mites are present everywhere in the house, because they thrive on the same ecological environment as humans. Consequently, it is extremely difficult to completely eliminate them without losing much of the quality of living we are accustomed to. However, as only elevated numbers of house dust mites are harmful to allergy sufferers, it was examined first under which conditions mites reproduce massively.

#### **Food**

House dust mites primarily feed on the shed scales of human skin and on those of their pets. One human produces approx. 0.5 to 1 gram of skin scales every day. As little as 0.25 grams is sufficient to feed several thousand mites for months. As the tests show, down and feathers are not on the house dust mites menu. This leads to the conclusion: it is the humans that the mites feed on – not the down and feathers.

#### **A textile barrier**

Interestingly: research has shown that house dust mites are too large to penetrate into the ticking's (Duvet Cases) which encase down and feather filled bedding. The ticking's allow for ideal air exchange and climate regulation, but they are so tightly woven and calendared that the feather and down cannot pass through the fabric. Experts call this quality "down-proof". In any case, there is no reason for the mites to pass inside the ticking in order to feed on down and feathers. Furthermore, the down-proof ticking represents a barrier, which prevents them from migrating inside the bedding.

**In Conclusion: A clear "Yes" to down and feathers**

Also people suffering from house-dust-mite allergy may enjoy the advantages and the comfort of down- and feather-filled duvets and pillows without regrets. As the survey shows, there are two main reasons why down and feather filled bedding is practically mite free: On the one hand, mites primarily feed on human skin scales, and not on down and feathers, and have therefore no reason to penetrate into the ticking. On the other, the down-proof ticking's act as a textile barrier for the mites.

**Studies relating to house dust allergies.**

Allergy sufferers are oversensitive to certain substances present in the environment, the so called allergens. The microscopically small house dust mites trigger allergic symptoms in those who are allergic to them. Mites are natural and harmless and coexist with humans in every apartment and every house. The shed scales of human skin are the house dust mite's main source of food. House dust mites do not feed on feathers. In order to grow and reproduce, house dust mites need a special microclimate: high humidity and ambient temperatures of approx. 25°C.

It is not the mites themselves but the allergens contained in their excretions that lead to the painful allergic symptoms: watering eyes, nasal congestion, coughing and breathing difficulties, which may strongly interfere with the allergy sufferer's quality of life.

According to recent scientific findings the use of down and feather filled duvets and pillows is safe also for people suffering from house dust mite allergy. When purchasing these goods you should seek advice and make sure that certain criteria are met. The NOMITE® label indicates that the bedding is suitable for house-dust-mite-allergic persons.

The scientific findings were also published in PAS 1008 which was edited by the German Institute for Standardization (DIN).

# Downafresh

*Hygiene according to EN 12935*

Downafresh® is a trademark of the registered Association of the European Bed feather and Bedding Industries documenting that the filling material complies with the European standard EN 12935 (“feather and down – hygiene and cleanliness requirements“). Companies using these brands have the down and feathers they process tested at a hygiene laboratory and document the origin and processing of the filling material.

DOWNAFRESH is a guarantee that the filling of down and feather complies with the most strict hygienic requirements, established according to the European standard EN 12935. Furthermore, the filling material is washed with washing detergents that are not harmful to nature

Additionally, feather and down is tested by an impartial test institute to ensure the product does not contain substances harmful to the environment. Downafresh is a guarantee that the manufacturer has an audited traceability system for the feather & down filling material they use and that this complies with all laws and regulations relating to animal welfare and ethics.

## **Clarity for the benefit of the consumer**

Bedding products marked with the Downafresh brand are filled with feathers and down that were previously washed with water and dried at temperatures of at least 100°C. Hence, bedding products which carry the Downafresh label meet the hygienic requirements laid down in the European standard EN 12935.

Feathers and down are a product of nature. They are produced according to strict statutory provisions and originally do not contain any harmful substances. Their natural properties and their light weight keep the user comfortably warm without burdening with excessive weight. They provide outstanding heat insulation and climate control depending on weights and blends selected. They are thus the perfect filling material for bedding products.

By means of a documented traceability system it is established that the filling material was gathered ethically and in compliance with current animal welfare legislation.

During the processing only environment friendly cleaning agents are applied which preserve the natural properties of the feathers and down. At the end of the product life cycle the filling material can easily be recycled.

The producers who use the Downafresh® label have undertaken to have their products regularly tested by an independent testing laboratory to check whether their products meet the requirements for hygiene and cleanliness. Their Feather and down suppliers also have their processes and products independently assessed and tested regularly.

## **Washing**

Down and feathers undergo 8 to 10 washing cycles for circa 1 hour using water and environmentally friendly cleaning agents which gently cleanse the Feather and Down elements. They assist in removing dirt and other microbiological elements to prepare the filling for the drying process.

## **Drying**

Feather and down is then passed through a drying chamber and subsequently dried at temperatures exceeding 100 °C. This high temperature and process disinfects the feather and down to ensure that no microbiology can exist. The product is then separated into its constituent parts, namely Feather and Down which can then be blended in the appropriate proportions to a customer’s specification or requirements.

## **Testing**

All feather and down is rigorously tested in process and at the end to ensure compliance to prescribed hygiene standards. Specific cleanliness standards are also defined by our suppliers which are significantly higher than the European requirement. A number of prescribed test activities are carried out at the processing plant laboratories and independently with external laboratories through the EDFA.

### Washing – Drying - Testing



If you require any further information or support, please feel free to contact us at **EUROQUILT**.

#### **Studies on the topic**

##### [Feather bedding and childhood asthma associated with house dust mite sensitisation: a randomised controlled trial.](#)

Glasgow NJ, Ponsonby AL, Kemp A, Tovey E, van Asperen P, McKay K, Forbes S.  
Arch Dis Child. 2011 Jun;96(6):541-7. Epub 2011 Mar 30.

##### [Evaluation of group 1 mite allergen levels in synthetic and feather pillows: absence of difference](#)

Purohit A, Shao J, Lieutier-Colas F, Pauli G, de Blay F.  
Ann Allergy Asthma Immunol. 2005 Feb;94(2):308-9.

##### [Permeability of synthetic and feather pillows to live house dust mites and house dust.](#)

Siebers R, Nam HS, Crane J.  
Clin Exp Allergy. 2004 Jun;34(6):888-90.

##### [The allergenicity of feather bedding material](#)

Jones KP, Rolf S, Stingl C, Walters GE, Davies BH.  
Allergy. 2002 Mar;57(3):266.

##### [The use of a feather quilt, childhood asthma and allergic rhinitis: a prospective cohort study.](#)

Nafstad P, Nystad W, Jaakkola JJ.  
Clin Exp Allergy. 2002 Aug;32(8):1150-4.

##### [Expert opinion on the assessment of the prevalence of keratin allergy](#)

Prof. Dr. med. Dietrich Hofmann, Former Head of the Paediatric Institute of the University Hospital of Frankfurt/Main, Germany.

##### [Summary: Expert opinion on the assessment of the prevalence of keratin allergy](#)

Prof. Dr. med. Dietrich Hofmann, Former Head of the Paediatric Institute of the University Hospital of Frankfurt/Main, Germany

##### [“House dust mite allergen in pillows“](#)

Expert opinion issued by the Asthma Research Group, Wellington School of Medicine, New Zealand

##### [“Ecological investigations into house dust mite allergy“](#),

abstract, Prof Hans W. Jürgens, Institute for Industrial Anthropology, University of Kiel

Studies edited by

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