

Why Do Indian Towels Shed Lint, and How Do You Spec Against It?



Yash Khatri

Founder, SourcingFrom

Updated 18 Oct 2026 7 min read

Towels that keep shedding after several washes usually have a pile yarn, shearing or finishing problem that nobody wrote into the order. You can rarely fix towels already delivered, but you can fix the next order by diagnosing where the lint comes from, naming the yarn and finish, and making bulk pass a wash test against your retained approved sample.

The Short Version

- Some lint on the first wash is normal. Lint that does not taper off after three or four washes is a spec problem.
- Look at where the lint comes from: the loops, a sheared velour face or the cut edges each point to a different fix.
- We found no published lint-loss standard for terry towels, so write a relative test: bulk must shed no more than the retained approved sample under the same washes.
- Ask whether the bulk yarn came from the same mill and lot as the sample, and whether a softener was added.
- Run the test on towels pulled at random from bulk, never on towels the factory picks.

Indian towels shed heavily when the pile yarn, the shearing or the finish was never specified, and the order went to whatever the mill had on the shelf. The country isn't the cause, and India supplied 37.4% of US household linen imports in 2025 (our analysis of UN Comtrade data). You usually can't fix towels already in your warehouse, but you can fix the next order, by working out where the lint comes from and writing a wash test into the purchase order that bulk has to pass before it ships.

The thread behind this page is the one our terry page opens on: a US shopper, towels from an off-price chain, three washes, a full dryer filter.

What that page doesn't use is the first reply, which shrugged: "That's pretty common for new towels. I just start using them after the first wash" ([r/CleaningTips](#), July 2023). Both people were partly right, and the gap between them is what this page is about. Our [terry towels from India](#) page covers the four spec lines (weight after washing, pile yarn, pile-to-ground ratio and a lint test). This page is for the buyer who already has a shedding shipment and wants the next one to be different.

SourcingFrom Intelligence

powered by [Kirnova](#) - the intelligence company

- 01 **Lint is the one towel complaint in our forum log, and the evidence is thin.** In our review of buyer forum threads we found one first-hand account tied to India: heavy lint after three launderings on off-price retail towels, with a counter-voice calling it normal for new towels. (*Our forum signals log*, July 2023)
- 02 **There is no published lint test to point a supplier at.** ASTM publishes a performance specification for household and institutional towels (D5433-24) and a method for the surface water absorption of terry fabrics (D4772, current revision 2026). We found no published lint-loss method for terry towels. ([ASTM D5433-24](#) and [ASTM D4772-26](#), read 18 Oct 2026)

What we don't know yet

- ☐ How much lint Indian bulk towels lose against their approved samples. Nobody publishes it, and we plan to measure it on sample orders.

1. Is Some Lint Normal on a New Towel?

Yes. Every cotton towel loses loose fibre in the first wash or two. Spinning leaves short fibres in the yarn, cutting and hemming frees more, and some sit on the surface from the loom. That's the lint the forum reply meant, and it tapers off fast.

What isn't normal is lint that stays heavy. If the third and fourth washes leave as much in the filter as the first, the towel is losing fibre from the pile itself, and it will keep thinning. That's the towel the shopper had, and it's a spec problem.

Before you write to anyone, run your own check on five towels pulled from different cartons. Wash them together at your usual temperature, dry them in a tumble dryer with a clean filter, and weigh or photograph the filter after each of four cycles. A falling line is normal. A flat line is your evidence.

2. Where Is the Lint Coming From?

Look at the towels and the lint together. The source tells you which line of the next order to change.

The loops. If the pile looks thinner after washing and the lint matches the towel colour, fibre is leaving the yarn itself. That points to the pile yarn: short staple cotton, open-end spinning, or low twist. Zero-twist and low-twist pile yarns feel softer on the shelf, and that softness comes from fibres held loosely, which also lets them go in the wash.

A sheared face. Velour towels have the loops cut on one side to give a smooth face. Cut loops are loose ends, so velour sheds more than looped terry by construction. If your towel has a velour face, some extra lint is the product, and the fix is to decide whether you want velour at all.

The edges. Fluff collecting along hems, side borders or cut ends points to the making-up, not the weaving. Raw cut edges, loose hem stitching or a border woven with a weaker yarn all shed. This is the cheapest fault to fix and the easiest to inspect.

The finish. A softener can make a towel feel full and heavy on day one and then wash out, which is when the real yarn shows. Our terry towels page has

the forum report of makers reaching a quoted weight with a finish that washes off. If the towels felt markedly thinner after the first wash, suspect the finish as well as the yarn.

3. What Should You Say to the Supplier About This Order?

Start with evidence, not blame. Send the filter photos or weights, a note of the wash conditions, and a comparison with the approved sample if you kept one. Then ask four questions.

- Did the bulk pile yarn come from the same mill, count and lot as the sample yarn?
- Was the pile yarn ring-spun or open-end, and what twist?
- Was a softener or other finish added to bulk that wasn't on the sample?
- Were all the towels woven on the same looms, or was the order spread across units?

That last question matters more in India than buyers expect. In a cluster like Solapur, an exporter may place weaving with several loom owners, and the yarn can come from different lots, as our [Solapur terry towel cluster](#) page explains. That's a normal way for a small-loom town to fill an order. It's also where lint and weight drift start, so you want to know.

As for the stock you hold, you have limited options. A wash before sale removes the first-wash lint but not a weak pile. Some buyers negotiate a credit or ask for the next order at the corrected spec. Whatever you agree, write down what changes in the yarn and finish, because "better quality next time" is a promise nobody can check.

4. What Goes in the Next Purchase Order?

The terry towels page lists the four core lines. Here's how to turn the lint line into something a mill can't misread.

Name the yarn and the finish. Pile yarn by count, ply, spinning method and twist, and the mill if the supplier will say. State whether the towel is looped on both faces or velour on one, and whether softener is allowed. A mill that answers in a line knows its yarn.

Keep a reference. Approve a pre-production sample from the bulk yarn, not from sample-room stock, and keep half of it yourself. Without a retained sample you have nothing to compare against.

Write a relative lint test. Because we found no published lint-loss standard, don't invent a number. Write that bulk towels, washed and dried under the same agreed procedure as the retained sample, must not shed more than the retained sample. Name the procedure: number of washes, temperature, detergent, drying. A testing lab can run the washes on a published domestic procedure, ISO 6330:2021 (textiles, domestic washing and drying procedures for textile testing), and weigh the lint. Ask the lab whether the method sits inside its accredited scope, as our [quality control in India](#) page explains for any test.

Watch the trade-off. If you push a mill to cut lint with a heavier, tighter yarn, the towel can lose some softness and absorbency. If absorbency matters to your customer, add it to the same test using the ASTM terry absorbency method (D4772), so you see both numbers on one report.

Finish the edges. Specify hem type, stitch density and a border yarn no weaker than the ground. It costs little and shows on inspection.

5. Who Checks the Bulk Before It Ships?

Somebody independent, on towels pulled at random from packed cartons. A test on towels the factory hands you proves the factory can pick good towels. [AQL sampling](#) explains how many to pull for the visual checks, and a lint and weight test needs only a handful sent to the lab.

Timing matters too. Run the test when the first lot is finished and the rest is still on the looms, so a bad yarn lot gets caught while it can still be changed. If you don't have anyone near the mill to pull the samples, seal them and send them to your lab, [SourcingSync](#) does that at origin.

Questions Buyers Ask

Do Indian towels shed more than Turkish or Chinese towels? ^

We have no data that says so. One forum account is not a comparison, and cheap towels from any country shed. Our [India vs Türkiye home textiles](#) comparison makes the same point.

Will washing the towels before I sell them stop the lint? v

Is there a standard lint limit I can quote to my supplier? v

Is a heavier towel less likely to shed? v

6. Back to the First Reply

"Pretty common for new towels" is true of the first wash and false of the third. The shopper's towels weren't shedding because they came from India. They were shedding because nobody had named the yarn or tested a

towel from bulk. Write the yarn, keep the sample, test the bulk against it, and the next carton will stay on the shelf rather than in the dryer filter.