

Statutes relating to tenter use.

This document presents synopses of English statutes that describe the laws relating to the use of tenters stretching woollen cloth during its manufacture. Reference is also made occasionally to other aspects of manufacture such as the required length, breadth and weight of cloth and its quality.

Collections of Statutes by monarch and regnal year are available here:

- Statutes at Large - Wikipedia. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Statutes_at_Large).
- Statutes of the Realm - Hathi Trust Digital Library. (<https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/012297566>) Great Britain. (18101828). *The statutes of the realm: Printed by command of his majesty King George the Third, in pursuance of an address of the House of Commons of Great Britain. From original records and authentic manuscripts. London: Dawsons of Pall Mall.*

Title (modern English)	Year	Monarch, Regnal Year & Chapter	
Assize of Measures	1197	Richard I	'It is established that woollen cloths, wherever they be made, be made of the same width, to wit [that is to say], of two ells [<i>duabus ulnis</i> - about 36 inches] within the lists [selvages], and of the same good quality in the middle and at the sides. Also the ell shall be the same in the whole realm and of the same length and the ell shall be of iron.' ¹ Full text here. ²
The Articles of the Barons; Article 12	1215	John	Article 12: 'The measure of corn and wine, and the widths of cloths and other things, are to be reformed; and weights likewise'. ³
Magna Carta, Clause 35	June 1215	John	'There is to be one measure of wine throughout our kingdom, and one measure of ale, and one measure of corn, namely the quarter of London, and one breadth of dyed,

¹ Stubbs W, 1871, *Chronica Magistri Rogeri de Houedene*, Vol. 4 London/Longman pp. 32-30. Available at <https://archive.org/details/chronicamagistri04roge/page/32> . Nov 1197.

² Bland A E (Ed.), 1919 *English economic history; select documents*, p. 154-5. Available at https://www.gutenberg.org/files/43211/43211-h/43211-h.htm#Assize_of_Measures.

³ *The Articles of the Barons: Article 12*, The Magna Carta Project, trans. H. Summerson et al. Available at <https://magnacarta.cmp.uea.ac.uk/>.

			russet ⁴ and haberget ⁵ cloths, that is, two ells within the borders; and let weights be dealt with as with measures.' ⁶ [discussion – looked back to the Assize of 1197] ⁷
[Untitled]	1389-90	13 Richard II c. 9	'One measure and one weight be through all the Realm of England' (imprisonment for half a year or recompense to double the loss to the aggrieved except in Lancashire because their measures are greater than the rest of the Realm). Wool to be sold at fourteen pounds to the stone etc.
[Untitled]	1389-90	13 Richard II c. 11	Deceitful cloth, Somerset, Dorset, Bristol, Gloucester; 'broken, broused' cloth, wrong colour and breadth and made with diverse wools, tacked and folded to the 'great Deceipt, Loss and Damage to the People'. Merchants carrying them out of the Realm and sell to strangers are compromised when opened. Cloths have to be sold open so that they can be inspected, and workers, weavers and fullers must put their seals upon the cloths. After purchase, merchants may then tack and fold them for export.
[Untitled]	1464	4 Edward IV c. 1	Poor workmanship of cloth, 'fraud, deceit and falsity' to the 'Shame of this Land'. Large imports of expensive foreign cloths highlighting the poor quality and deceit of English woollen cloths. Every broadcloth, 'after the full wetyng, racking, straining or tenturing', ready for sale shall be 24 yards in length at the crest and for every yard one extra inch (a man's thumb) and in breadth 2 yards or 7 quarters at least within the lists. [also discusses dimensions of 'streits', kersies, half-cloths]. Lamb's wool, flocks, tallow or cork shall not be put in cloths. A lead seal should be placed on faulty cloth. Good cloths have two seals. Lord Treasurer shall appoint Keepers of the Seals and will keep accounts (not aliens). Cloth-makers must pay their labourers in lawful money. Fullers and finishers must use teasles, not cards. No foreign cloths for sale to be brought into England. Also discusses exports via Calais and through Newcastle for northern counties.
An Act Touching the Order of Dyeing and of Wool and Cloths	1483	1 Richard III c. 8	Formerly the country has been enriched by the true making and dyeing of cloth and a good many people have been employed. Cloths lately 'unfit and deceptively made and

⁴ Oxford English Dictionary: 'A coarse woollen cloth of a reddish-brown or subdued colour, formerly used for clothing esp. by country people and the poor; a kind or make of this.'

⁵ 'A woollen cloth with a diamond twill, resembling the chain mail of a hauberk, of fine and coarse types, the former popular in the garments such as cloaks in the wealthier classes'. Carus-Wilson E, 1969, *Haberget: A Medieval Textile Conundrum*, Medieval Archaeology, 13:1, pp. 148-166.

⁶ 'The 1215 Magna Carta: Clause 35', The Magna Carta Project, trans. H. Summerson et al. [http://magnacarta.cmp.uea.ac.uk/read/magna_carta_1215/Clause_35].

⁷ Summerson H, 'The 1215 Magna Carta: Clause 35, Academic commentary', *The Magna Carta Project* [http://magnacarta.cmp.uea.ac.uk/read/magna_carta_1215/Clause_35].

			<p>wrought keeping neither reasonable length or breadth'. Wet shorn cloth has been set upon 'tayntours' and drawn out in length and breadth, some cloths of length 24 yards have been stretched to 30 yards and in breadth from 7 quarters to 2 yards and if wetted when dried and strained will shrink when wetted ('werrey necessite shrynk'). They also use flocks and chalk to deceitfully improve coarse and white cloth for sale.</p> <p>Discusses dyeing. Every broadcloth should be fully wetted before sale and be 24 yards and an inch per yard, and 2 yards in breadth. Discusses dimensions of whole and half cloths, streites and kerseys. Seals of lead for every city, town and county where cloth is made. Cloth shall not be stretched by tentering (or otherwise) 'after it be fully wett', or deceitful additions such as chalk. Shearman must fully wet cloth to be sheared.</p> <p>'[Please it also your noble grace] in eschewyng of the greate untrueth and disceyte the which [hath grown and] daily growth by meane of Teyntours ... that no psone ... keep, have or occupye any Taynto' or any other thing in his owne howse or dwellyng place whereby Wollen Cloth may in any wise be drawen out in lenght or brede ... But that all Tayntours which hereafter shall be used or occupied, for evenyng of Cloth onely after it cometh from the Mille and before it be roughed & for noon other cause , as well within the Citee of London as in other Citees Burghes and Townes of this youre Realme, be sette in open places [and mayors, bailiffs and governors in London, all cities, towns and villages of the realm] diligently overse that all Clothes that shalbe sett on Tayntours be not drawen oute in length nor brede otherwise than is afore reherced.' [section on dyeing and exceptions to the Act].</p>
An Act Avoiding Deception in Making Woollen Cloths	1514	6 Henry VIII c. p	Walker or fuller must work a web fully thick, without flocks or other deceits. Cards must not be used to row the cloth on the right or wrong face. Clothier must not put for sale which when fully wetted shall shrink more than one yard in length and one quarter of a yard in breadth (Narrows and 'straites'). Buyer should be rebated if cloth shrunk when wetted more than one yard in length, and less than breadth of 1 yd and three quarters. Buyers of 'Dynsyn or Alyen' shall not strain by tenter or winch but if wetted, may be strained to even them not more than one yard in length. Cloths for sale must be measured by the yard, adding one inch (Lancashire exempt from Act for some cloths)
An Act for the True Making of Woollen Cloths	1549	3 Edward VI c. 2	Clothiers and cloth-makers shall affix a lead seal 'declaringe therbye the just lengthes thereof to be tried by the Water'. Cloths must not be stretched more than one and a half yards in length and a quarter yard in breadth, and that any cloth put for sale,

			when wetted, should shrink no more than the same. 'Straytes' and kersies must not be stretched more than a yard in length and a half a quarter in breadth and should not shrink more than the same in the whole piece. Also discusses dyeing, use of flocks, flour etc, iron cards shall not be used, one inch extra to the yard as per 6 Henry VIII c. 9, pressed cloth not to be sold in the realm. Overseers to be appointed and empowered to search every quarter the houses and shops of every clothier, draper, clothworker, dyer and presser to enforce the Act, including whether 'drawen or streyned or falsely died'. Cloths made after the Act must be marked with a crowned E.
An Act for the Making of Woollen Cloth	1551-2	5-6 Edward VI c. 6	Long list of specific named cloths showing lengths, breadths when fully wet and weights, the latter when fully scoured, milled and dried. Cloths should not be stretched above one yard in length and one-half quarter in breadth. No person shall stretch or strain a cloth using any wrench, rope or ring on tenters or shall use any other type of 'engine' (or possess the same) unlawfully to stretch or strain cloth. Searchers appointed to inspect dressed, dyed or cold pressed cloth (including excessive stretching). May enter houses and other areas as befits. Good cloths to be sealed showing arms of the city, borough etc. Faulty cloths marked with an F seal at both ends, and the list marked where the fault(s) are. Cloth must not be hot pressed.
An Act Against the Deceitful Stretching and Tentering of Northern Cloth	1597-8	39 Elizabeth c. 20	Northern Cloths (north of the Trent). 'Northern cloths and Kersies do yearly and daily grow worse and worse and are made more light and much more stretched and strained ... to the great deceit of all nations ... and to the great slander of the country ... and within short time like utterly to overthrow the trade of cloth ... whereupon so may thousands of your subjects do now live and are maintained, which great enormities your faithful subjects co chiefly impute to the great number of tenters and other engines daily used ... for the stretching and straining of the said cloths and Kersies. ... no person ... shall stretch or strain or cause to be stretched or strained and [list of cloths] made within the said county of York Lancaster or any other counties north of the Trent.' No person shall use or occupy a tenter to stretch or strain or any manner of wrench, rope or other engines. Such cloths shall be made of length and weight as required by statute and sealed with lead. Overseers to be appointed from hamlet to city borough. Once every month overseers, by force in necessary overseers shall inspect clothiers', drapers' and clothmakers' premises. Cloths inspected should be sealed 'searched' and weight and length noted. JPs, constables, overseers have powers to enter premises and search for tenters, wrenches etc. and deface them. Northern cloths brought to London shall go to Blackwell Hall and be searched dry.

An Act for the True Working and Making of Woollen Cloth	1601	43 Elizabeth c. 10	Repealed by 49 George III c. 109. 'Cloths being put in water and found to shrink rewey, pursey, squally, cockling, banding, light and notably faulty to the great dislike of foreign princes'. Hair, flocks, thrums, lambs wool yarn shall not be put in cloths. Rough or unwrought cloth shall not use tenters, engines or other devices, nor a lower bar pin ring. Wrought broad cloth may be stretched one yard and one half quarter, half cloth one half yard, Kersies etc one half yard, and one nail in breadth. All shall be made (scoured fully thickened milled and dry) to former statutes. 38 Eliz c. 20 applies to all cloths. A number of former acts repealed. Exported cloths unduly stretched will be returned to the maker/seller.
An Act for the True Making of Woollen Cloths	1606-7	4 James I c. 2	Lengths, breadths and weight of a large range of cloths - wetted and dried - from various counties. Certain cloths shall not be raised with oil/grease. List and sides of cloth shall not be fulled raised or rowed better than the middle. Nor shall the sides or list be wetted to show it better than the crest. Lawful to make cloth containing flocks, lamb's wool etc but must have a black list. Every clothier can make any type of woollen cloth. Act extends to end of ensuing parliamentary session.
An Act for the Continuance of a Statute Made for the Making of Woollen Cloths	1623-4	21 James I c. 18	Continues 4 James I c. 2 until end of first session next parliament. S. 6 of above re. cloth from flocks, lamb's wool etc repealed. Broad cloth shall not contain flocks etc. Overseers searching etc. Churchwardens. Yorkshire broad cloths – tenters underbar shall only have liberty of half a quarter of a yard at most; for narrows half of a half quarter. Searchers under 39 Eliz c. 20 s. 4 may destroy faulty tenters. Pressing by heated planks put in cold press prohibited. Penalties for false length etc distributed 1/3 to searcher and 2/3 to the poor.
An Act for Taking Away the Benefit of Clergy From Such as Steal Cloth from the Rack and from Such as Shall Steal or Embezzle His Majesty's Ammunition and Stores	1670	22 Charles II c. 5	Persons indicted for felony of cutting and taking stealing carrying away cloth or other woollen manufactures from the rack or tenter in the night time or for any offence in 31 Eliz c. 4 excluded from benefit of clergy 'and shall suffer death in such manner and form as they should if they were no clerks'. Judges may transport offenders for seven years. Refusal or return early will lead to execution.
An Act for the Better Ascertaining the Lengths and Breadths of Woollen Cloth Made in the County of York	1708	7 Anne c. 13	Broad cloth scoured and fully milled shall be at least five quarters and a half by the Standard Yard Wand in breadth within the lists in the water fully wet. End of half cloth shall not exceed 23 yards fully wet; a Long of Whole cloth shall not exceed forty six yards fully wet; Kerseys and Plains shall not be under seventeen yards and not less than three quarters and a half in breadth fully wet. Miller shall affix lead seal with his

			name, exact length and breadth when wet scoured and milled. Cloths in some parts may be less in breadth if not by wilful default.
An Act for Regulating Improving and Encouraging the Woollen manufacture of Mixt or Medley Broadcloth and for the Better Payment of the Poor Therein	1711	10 Anne c. 26	Not in Yorkshire. After wet sealing and stamping, no stretching above 1 yard in twenty or one nail of a yard in breadth. Millman to have a table twelve feet long and three feet wide, marked with a yard and a nail (one inch). Clothiers to pay workmen in money not goods. Existing cloths to be fully wetted and measured and sealed.
	1714	1 George I c. 15	Does not apply to Yorkshire [but confusing whether does or not apply to Yorkshire – see section XIV p. 212]. 10 Anne c. 26 proving ineffectual. This Act sought to improve that Act and 7 Anne c. 13. Wetting cloths in disputes. Overstretching certain Yorkshire cloths such as Kersies no more than one inch in every quarter or more than half-yard in every 18.
	1723	9 George I c. 22	Waltham Black Act
An Act or the Better Regulating the Manufacture of Cloth in the West Riding of Yorkshire	1724	11 George I c. 24	Relates to 7 Anne c. 13; found wanting ‘deceitful working, and unreasonable stretching and straining, and dressing the said cloths’. Broad cloth shall not exceed five quarters and a half in breadth fully wet, in length shall not exceed twenty four yards (end or half-cloth) or forty eight yards whole cloths. Mill-man to measure and seal thoroughly wet. Suspicious buyer may wet the cloth not exceeding four hours and measured by two persons (one for each side). Cloth maker to fix his mark on the cloths – woven or sown. Shall not be strained end or half cloth more than one yard, two yards for whole or more than one inch every quarter in breadth. All parts of the cloth (lists & centre) to be dressed the same. All tenters to marked by their true length, individual yards numbered on the top bar on the front. Searchers appointed by Justices of the Peace. Inspect the mill (not Sundays); may enter premises of merchants looking for overstrained cloth or altered seals. Pressed cloths packed for exportation not to be examined unless by warrant. Broad cloths made by persons with seven years apprenticeship, and two years’ experience.
An Act for the Better Regulation of the Woollen Manufacture and for Preventing Disputes Among the Persons Concerned Therein...	1726	13 George I c. 23	‘...for preventing ill practices used in the excessive straining of mixed or medley woollen broadcloth’ owners of tenters or racks within the counties of Gloucester, Wiltshire, and Somerset to mark the true length beginning at ‘1’ on the fore-side of the top bar each yard to be 36 inches plus one inch over measure; failure is penalty five pounds for each rack. Inspectors to be appointed. Can inspect all premises (except Sundays) making said cloths and measure and seal the cloth (seal provided by the cloth maker), Inspector’s name, length and breadth, and keep a book showing millman’s

			name, clothier or other persons, number, length and breadth. Millman must not send cloth home before it is inspected.
An Act for the Better Regulating the Manufacture of Narrow Woollen Cloths in the West Riding of the County of York.	1738	11 George II c. 28	Yorks searchers; Stamping Act. Makers of <u>narrow</u> cloth to put initial letters of their names at head of cloth. Cloth measured wet at fulling mill; seal fixed with fuller's name, length and breadth, also same by the searcher, and the mill-man must keep a record including name and location of owner. Justices to appoint searchers who were apprenticed seven years and three years' experience in the trade. Have power to enter premises and tenters and measure cloth they suspect is overstrained. Can be stretched one inch in every yard in length and two inches in every three quarters in breadth, and in such proportions for different lengths. Stamps should not be altered before sale or export. Maker can make narrow cloths at whatever length or breadth he wishes (some exceptions). Cloths sent for milling in counties of Lancashire, Chester and Derby must, before dried and tentered, go to nearest mill-man and searcher in the West Riding for measuring and stamping .
An Act for the More Effectual Preventing of Any Cloth or Woollen Goods Remaining Upon the Rack or Tenters or any Woollen Yarn or Wool Left Out to dry From Being Stolen, or taken Away in the Night-Time	1742	15 George II c. 27	Difficulty proving the identity of the good stolen. Search by constable or other peace officer may enter and search houses and other premises after complaint to Justices within ten days. Owner, upon swearing, can declare suspects. If materials found suspected to be stolen, persons taken before justices and give an account of how they acquired such materials; can produce witnesses to depose upon oath the right to possession. Not giving a satisfactory account or producing credible witnesses shall be convicted of the offence. For first offence forfeit and pay to the owner three times the value; failure to pay lead to sale of accused goods, or in default three months in gaol; second offence is six months; further offence is felony with transportation for seven years.
[Theft of linen, fustian, cotton when whitening, bleaching and drying]	1745	18 George II c. 27	Death without benefit of clergy. Justices may transport to America for fourteen years.
An Act for Repealing Several Laws Relating to the manufacture of Woollen Cloth in the County of York...	1765	5 George III c. 51	Stamping Act. 7 Ann, 11 Geo I, 7 Geo II, 14 Geo II, latter three repealed. '..particularly in the unreasonable stretching and straining of the said cloths [woollen cloth made in West Riding of Yorkshire], which ill practices tend very much to the debasing, undervaluing and discrediting of the said manufacture, both at home and in foreign parts'. Searchers appointed to mills. Shall measure milled cloths which shall be 'streamed or washed in the goit in the mill stream'. Sealed with searchers name, length and breadth. Can also be measured within four hours of the stocks. Record kept in book of where and by who made, colour, length etc. Owner pays six pence for whole

			<p>cloth longer than 35 yards; end or half cloth four pence less than thirty five yards and more than thirty, but less than thirty three pence. Cloth maker cannot take cloth away if streamed less than six hours before, or before four hours if out of the stocks. For broad cloth, must be sealed before put on tenters with length and breadth. Twelve inspectors to be appointed by justices (not dealers in woollen industry or occupiers of fulling mills) to inspect cloths and premises including tenter grounds. Also up to four supervisors to be appointed and stamp and inspect cloths and transmit to the justices such records and those of searchers in their area. If merchants suspect fraud may, with notice to all parties, wet the cloth up to four hours and ask the inspector searcher to measure the cloth. Clothiers must weave their names and place of abode in the cloth. Whole or ends/half cloth must not be stretched more than one yard in twenty or in breadth more than one inch in twelve (yard containing 36 inches only); penalties for overstitching eg for every quarter yard ten shillings, and every inch in breadth twenty shillings. All tenters to be marked in yards of thirty-seven inches. If not done penalty of five pounds. Penalties to treasurer to pay wages of searchers inspectors and supervisors</p>
An Act to Amend an Act made in the Last Session of Parliament..	1765	6 George III c. 23	<p>Stamping Act. Last Act inconvenient to dealers; not sufficient to curb abuses, may inadvertently penalize fair practice. For example, wetted cloth thought fraudulent must be hung across a rail for 2-4 hours before being measured. Inspectors not to enter merchants' premises (except used for dressing, keeping wet or undressed cloth) or cloths ready to be sent to be pressed/frizzed. Overstretching - one yard overstretch is 37 inches. Act extends to all woollen cloths except narrow cloths specified in 11 Geo II and blanketing.</p>
An Act for Punishing Persons Wilfully and Maliciously destroying any Woollen, Silk, Linen or Cotton Goods ...	1782	22 George III c. 40	<p>Persons entering by force a house or shop by day or night to destroy serges or woollen goods on the loom or on the rack or damage any rack drying the same, or tools to make, is a felony without benefit of clergy. (Same for other cloths mentioned).</p>
Woollen Manufacture Act (1809)	1809	49 George III c. 109	<p>To repeal several Acts respecting the Woollen Manufactures, and to amend other Acts; and for allowing Persons employed in any Branch of the Woollen Manufacture to set up Trade in any Place (from http://www.defreitasbooks.com/acts/actwool.html#30061808)</p> <p>See also for list of acts repealed The Justice of the Peace and Parish Officer: In Six Volumes, Volume 6 p 243</p>

An Act for Repealing the Laws relating to the Stamping, Straining and Searching of Woollen Cloth, within the West Riding of the County of York, and for substituting other Regulations of the Cloth Trade within the said Riding [23d June 1821]	1821	1&2 George IV c. 116	<p>Repeal of straining and stamping laws.</p> <p>11 G. 2. c. 28, 5 G. 3. c. 51, 6 G. 3. c. 23, 48 G. 3. c. Ixix, 59 G. 3. c. cxii. all repealed as therein mentioned.</p> <p>'Local and Personal Acts Declared Publick, and to be Judicially Noticed'</p>
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