

VALLEY FIBER ARTS GUILD

WORKSHOP SERIES 2024-2025 SHEEP BREED STUDY

Breed: Gotland

The Gotland breed is part of the Northern European Short-Tailed Family and named after the Swedish island of Gotland where they are believed to have originated. Their origins are thought to be the result of cross breeding between native island sheep called Gute and Karakuls and Romanovs in the early 1900s.

Over time the breed was improved from the original Gute breed, and is largely found in Sweden, Great Britain, Denmark, Netherlands, New Zealand, and Australia. The breed was introduced as recently as 2003 into North America through artificial insemination.

The Gotland breed continues to be established in the US and is championed by the American Gotland Sheep Society

<https://americangotlandsheep.org/> and the Gotland Sheep Breeders Association of North America <https://gsbana.org/>.

I have found only one pure bred Gotland ewe in Alaska, and a few cross bred Gotland sheep. Interestingly the pure-bred ewe's lambs who are sired by non-Gotland sheep produce a fleece in keeping with their Sire, taking on more paternal fleece characteristics and losing the fabulous fleece characteristic of a pure bred Gotland.



Photo Credit: gsbana.org

The fleece resembles a fine mohair or Longwool rather than the typical characteristics found in the Northern European Short Tailed Family. The fleece locks are relatively long, high-luster, dense, and wavy to curly. The locks feel very soft and silky, and easily felt. The fiber diameter for US Gotland sheep is 27-34 microns. The fleece colors are predominately silvery grey to black, with subtle varieties in shading. The fleece characteristics can be impacted by commercial prep vs hand prep and can result in a matte vs shiny finish.

The fleece we are working with was sourced from a farm in Pennsylvania, USA.