

MARKETING SHEEP & GOATS

# THE SHEPHERD

*A guide for sheep and farm life*

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*Antibiotics Rule*

**SHEEP EXPERIMENT STATION**

*Foot & Mouth  
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# Gotland Wool

BY KIM GOODLING, GOTLAND WOOL COMPANY

**In** Sweden, Gotland sheep are known as, Pälshår, or pelt sheep. Swedish shepherds raise their sheep primarily for their pelts, which command a high price. Depending upon its purpose, the wool on the pelt is either left at full length or cut to two different lengths. If used for making clothing, the wool is trimmed to 18 mm whereas, pelts used for pillows, throws, or chair covers are typically trimmed to 35 mm in length. On Gotland Island, shepherds open their farm stores, where they sell their pelts and handmade clothing to the Europeans that vacation there.

In the United States, most Gotland sheep farms sell fleeces rather than pelts. The curly gray fleeces have become very popular, and are highly prized by many fiber artists. With the heightened interest in knitting with pure breed wools, Gotland wool has even caught the eye of many knitters.

## Pure Breed Yarn

The world of fiber has finally embraced true breed wool yarn. No one speaks more eloquently about pure breed yarn than Clara Parkes, knitter, teacher, and author of several well read books.



Kim Goodling

"Imagine if all the wine in the world—red and white alike were mixed together and sold as generic 'wine.' Think of how many centuries of craftsmanship and flavor would be lost, and how mediocre it would taste compared with how it would taste if the grapes had been kept separate or selectively blended. Such an act would be almost unthinkable in the food world. But in the knitting world, just as much nuance is lost every day when flat, bouncy,

long, short, matte, and lustrous fibers from ancient and modern sheep breeds alike are bundled together and sold as generic 'wool' yarn." ~ Clara Parkes

## Unique Characteristics

Every breed of sheep has its own unique wool qualities, which bring life to the yarn. Some wool, like Gotland, has little or no crimp. The long lustrous curls lend themselves well to shawls, throws, and wraps. Other breeds, have springy, lofty wool, perfect for holding in warmth when knit into mittens, hats, and vests. Clara's book, *The Knitter's Book of Wool*, educates knitters about the different breeds and their wool, opening our eyes to the joy of knitting with pure breed wool yarn.

## Nurtured with Love

When purchasing pure breed yarn, you directly support the very hands that nurture that sheep. Small family farms raise their flocks out of a love for the land and the animal. They pour their hearts and souls into what they do and share that with you— one skein of yarn at a time.

## Supporting a Community

When a customer purchases yarn from the farm that raises the sheep, they do not only support the shepherd, but an entire commu-



Sarah's Shawl: by Sarah Hunt





Gotland Shawl3-Ginny: Ginny Sheller

nity of workers that surround that farm and its flock. Many hands tend a flock and help produce the yarn that passes from their hands to yours. A farm community includes, the local feed and grain store owner, the vet, that dedicates his life to driving from farm to farm caring for the sick, the neighboring farmer, who grows, cuts, and bales hay for the flock, the family mill that washes and spins the wool, and the shearer who bends over each sheep to clip their wool. As Clara Parkes states, "so many traditions and locales and livelihoods are impacted by the choice of a skein, and the vast majority of those skeins are wool."

So what's the big deal about knitting with Gotland yarn?

#### **Ginny Sheller**

Ginny is a homeschooling mom to seven children who lives on a little homestead in Virginia. She shares her family's life in pictures and words on her popular blog, *Small Things*. Knitters know Ginny through her weekly *Yarn Along*, where she invites knitters and avid readers to join her for a day of sharing knitting projects and good reads.

Ginny purchased a few skeins of Gotland Sport Weight yarn from the Gotland Wool Company. She knit the *Lonely Tree Shawl*, a lacey, triangular shawl. Ginny donated her Gotland shawl to a raffle for Iraqi refugees. Her shawl raised \$1665. This is what Ginny says about



Kim Goodling

knitting with Gotland yarn: "I loved knitting with the Gotland yarn! It's unlike any other yarn I have worked with. The natural gray color and sheen are so unique that even my husband commented on it. I knit a shawl with it and I really loved it. The Gotland yarn has such a nice drape and a lovely halo."

#### **Sarah Hunt**

Sarah is most known for her project *Fiber Trek*, a TV program in the making, dedicated to connecting community,

craft, farms and fiber. She lives in the Maine North Woods, T3 Indian Purchase. She has a strong passion for supporting local foods, fiber and farms. Sarah knit a color affection shawl, using three different shades of Gotland yarn. Here are her thoughts about knitting with Gotland:

"The Gotland yarn was magic. It was silky and when knit, retained a sense of loftiness and airiness about it. It is exceptionally warm without being bulky. There is noticeable luster in the yarn, which enhances the gray tones to almost iridescent. My color affection shawl is stunning, which has nothing to with me or the knitting, but everything to do with the design and the yarn."

#### **Conclusion**

So what's the big deal about knitting with Gotland wool yarn? Luster, silkiness, drape, and its halo effect stand out as the qualities that sets Gotland yarn apart from other pure breed wool yarns.