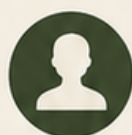




GOTLAND SHEEP ASSOCIATION UK

Welcome to the first GSAUK Newsletter



Chairman's Message



GSA News



An invitation to members to spotlight their achievements & experiences



What 'Claude' had to say



BTV-3 & Drought



Registration reminders



Other News

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CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

Dear Members,

As we move through another busy summer season, I want to take a moment to reflect on what we have achieved together as the Gotland Sheep Association UK. Every success our Association enjoys is built on the passion, dedication and generosity of our members. Whether you are breeding pedigree Gotlands, exhibiting at shows, introducing new people to the breed, or simply enjoying keeping these remarkable sheep, you are all helping to secure the future of Gotlands in the UK.

It has been particularly encouraging to see the continued growth of our Association. We are welcoming new members, seeing increasing interest in pedigree registrations and witnessing more Gotlands appearing at events across the country. If you are exhibiting or attending events with your sheep, please let us know. We are always keen to promote both our members and their flocks through our website and social media. Every new flock, every registered lamb and every conversation about the breed helps strengthen our community and raises the profile of these unique sheep.

One of the things I am most proud of is the willingness of our members to support one another. Experienced breeders continue to give their time and knowledge freely to those just starting out, ensuring that best practice, good breeding principles and the welfare of the breed remain at the heart of everything we do. That spirit of cooperation is something special and something we should never take for granted.

Our Association exists not only to maintain an accurate pedigree register but also to protect, promote and develop the Gotland breed throughout the UK. However, I believe we offer something more than that. We are here to support our members at every stage of their Gotland journey—whether that is offering advice, sharing knowledge, promoting members' successes or encouraging new breeders into the fold. I genuinely believe that no other Gotland breed society in the UK provide the same level of support, encouragement and promotion that our Association does. It is something that makes the Gotland Sheep Association UK unique, and something of which we should all be immensely proud.

As Chairman, I believe we have an exciting future ahead. By continuing to encourage responsible breeding, supporting our members and promoting Gotland sheep to a wider audience, we can ensure the breed continues to flourish for generations to come.

I would like to thank every member, volunteer and committee member who gives their time to the Association. The progress we have made would not be possible without your commitment, enthusiasm and shared passion for the breed.

As we look towards the coming months, I encourage everyone to make the most of the opportunities ahead—register your stock, attend shows and events wherever possible, share your successes with the Association and, perhaps most importantly, continue being ambassadors for this wonderful breed. Together, we can continue building an Association that members are proud to belong to and ensure a bright future for Gotland sheep in the UK.

Thank you for your continued support, and I wish you every success with your flocks throughout the rest of the year.

Mark Rees

Chairman
Gotland Sheep Association UK



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Invitation to contribute to the Newsletter and Association

By way of brief introduction my name is Margaret Skerritt & I am currently the Treasurer of the GSAUK and 'volunteered' to write the newsletter. My sister and I have a small flock of Gotlands in Essex. We have benefitted enormously from the help and support of other Gotland owners and are delighted to be part of the Association.

We would love to hear from Members, in particular your personal journeys with Gotlands; your successes/achievements and of course lessons learned along the way, reports on events visited, books read, etc. By sharing news and knowledge we all gain. Any contributions are most welcome & age is not a restriction. If you felt able to write a regular piece regarding your region, or country as we have an international member, that would be wonderful

Please send any articles/requests for topics/images to:

secretary@gsauk.co.uk



Claude

Some of you tech-savvy people may have already done this but we asked AI 'Claude' to write a report about Gotlands in the UK for us. All the caveats about AI generated commentary apply. We cannot check all the sources so this is shared out of mutual interest. To be honest if you are relying on Gotlands to make your fortune the conclusion was negative, but you probably know this already. Here are some extracts:



Breeding characteristics and advantages

This is where the breed genuinely excels, and why it is valued as a maternal animal well beyond its pelt. Gotlands are easy to lamb, prolific, milky and strongly maternal. From two years of age ewes normally produce twins, with triplets not uncommon, and the lambs are active and fast-growing from birth — reaching 30–50 kg by six to seven months depending on litter size.

The breeding value extends to crossing, which supports a tiered system. The standard guidance is to keep the best ewes for pure breeding and put lower-pelt-quality ewes to a terminal meat sire; the prolific, milky, hardy Gotland half-bred ewe is well regarded for extensive and rough-grazing commercial systems. One practical limitation: Gotlands are not an early-lambing breed, with most British flocks lambing in March or April.

Breeding advantages in brief *[next page]*



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- Easy lambing and strong mothering instincts reduce intervention and losses.
- Prolific: twins as the norm, triplets not uncommon, with ample milk to rear them.
- Fast-growing lambs from birth.
- Versatile crossing: half-bred ewes valued for extensive systems and as dams for terminal-sire prime lambs.
- Hardy and adaptable across management systems where forage is adequate.



Sources: British Gotland Sheep Society; GSBANA; American Gotland Sheep Society.

£ Cost of rearing

There are two layers to the cost picture: the generic cost of keeping any ewe in the UK, and the factors specific to a small Gotland flock. On the generic side, a breeding ewe's annual keep — forage and supplementary feed, winter forage, routine veterinary care, shearing, bedding and a replacement allowance — typically falls in the region of £60–£110 per ewe per year, before fixed costs, land and labour, and heavily dependent on system. Spring-lambing flocks on well-managed grass sit at the lower end, housed and supplemented systems at the upper. The table below is indicative.

Cost component (per ewe / year)	Indicative range	Notes
Forage / grazing	£15–£30	Lower if owned grazing; spring lambing cuts feed need
Supplementary feed & winter forage	£20–£35	Concentrates/hay around lambing and over winter
Veterinary & medicine	£8–£15	Vaccination, worming, lamb health
Shearing	£2–£5	Per head; small-lot contractor minimums raise effective cost
Bedding & sundries	£5–£10	Housing bedding, tags, consumables
Replacement / flock overhead	£10–£20	Allowance for replacement ewes and ram share
Indicative total	≈ £60–£110	Excludes land, fixed costs and labour

Indicative figures synthesised from FAS Scotland Farm Management Handbook (grass-based systems) and typical UK smallholding inputs; ranges, not single-source quotations.

The Gotland-specific factors are mostly about scale and management rather than the breed being inherently expensive. Small flocks lose the economies of scale a large commercial unit enjoys, so per-head costs run higher. Shearing economics are effectively inverted: for most breeds wool barely covers shearing, but here the fleece is a product, making shearing a value-capture step — though many flocks shear in winter with a second spring trim to protect fleece and pelt quality, which adds management. The largest breed-specific cost only arises if you want pelts: a raw skin is nearly worthless, and the cost (and the value) sits in tanning at a specialist tannery before sale.

The honest framing on margin: as a commodity prime-lamb producer a pure Gotland flock will lose against Texel-type terminals on conformation and finishing speed. Even well-run UK lowland sheep enterprises achieve only modest gross margins — AHDB's study of top-

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performing farms cites figures such as around £50 per head for store ewe lambs and roughly £190 per head for a grazing system, and those are the strong operators. Commodity sheep is not the way to make a niche pelt breed pay.

Stream	Indicative UK value	Comment
Tanned sheepskin (direct retail)	£150–£350 per skin	The flagship; value created by tanning – direct retail
Hand-spun yarn (retail)	≈ £23 / 100g (≈ £230/kg)	Niche craft market; ‘only truly grey fleece’
Raw fleece (to spinners)	£10–£30 per kg	Low value unless processed further
Pedigree breeding stock	Low–mid hundreds £/ewe; more for proven rams	Pedigree premium; register before sale
Prime / cross lamb (commodity)	Thin margin (≈ £50–£190/head GM benchmark)	Pure Gotland uncompetitive vs terminal sires



Return on investment — where the money actually is

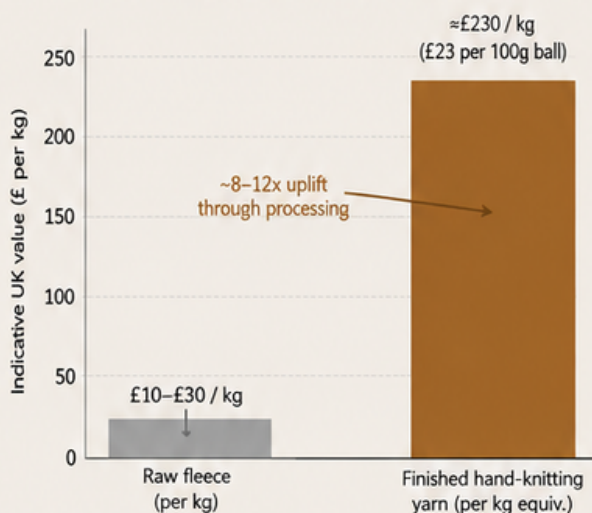
The ROI case rests almost entirely on premium, value-added, direct-sale outputs rather than the commodity chain. Three revenue streams matter, and a fourth (commodity lamb) is best regarded as a by-product rather than a driver.



Revenue streams

The single most important insight is the value uplift from processing and direct sale. Raw fleece sells to hand-spinners at roughly £10–£30 per kilogram; processed into finished hand-knitting yarn the value climbs to around £230 per kilogram-equivalent (from about £23 per 100-gram ball). The same logic governs pelts: a near-worthless raw skin becomes a £150–£350 retail item once tanned and sold direct.

Fleece value ladder: raw wool vs finished yarn



Sources: raw fleece – Northland Textile £10–£30/kg; yarn – Baa-ber Yarns Gotland DK (£23/100g). Indicative.

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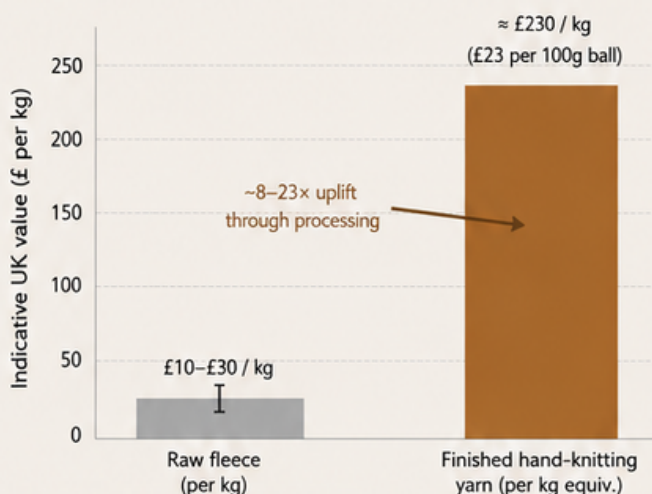
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Figure 3. Indicative fleece value ladder. Processing raw wool into finished yarn multiplies its value roughly eight- to twenty-three-fold (stock figure; illustrative).

Fleece value ladder: raw wool vs finished yarn



Sources: raw fleece — Westland Barton (£10–£30/kg); yarn — Blicker Yarns Gotland DK (£23/100g). Illustrative.

Figure 4. UK Gotland sheepskin retail prices across sampled sources. The typical band is around £150–£350 per skin.



Sources: Savernake Trading Co. (cushion £149); Natureyskins (£150); Sheepskin Place (direct from flock skins £150–£220).

Pedigree breeding stock is the highest-value individual sale.

There is no published UK price series (the breed is too small), but as a guide the established US market prices registered ewes from roughly \$300 for an unregistered animal to \$1,000+ for elite registered ewes; UK pedigree minority-bred registrations typically in the low-thousand hundreds of pounds for proven stock. Proven rams, with the breed society advising buyers not to purchase unregistered sheep — which protects that premium. There is also a softer return: Gotlands are unusually attractive and tame; which suits agritourism, smallholding and provenance-led direct marketing.



Return on investment — where the money actually is

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Direct retail — whether online, at shows, on-farm or via stockists who understand the premium — is the key. It captures the full value of the product and the story behind it.

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• BTV-3 & Drought

We would be negligent if we didn't touch on two subjects plaguing most small-holders and farmers today.

I think everyone is now alerted to the Bluetongue Virus (BTV-3). It is a personal decision about whether to vaccinate and we know of a few farms and small-holders in our area who have decided against it. Our local Veterinary Practice (Westpoint) held an excellent seminar about the virus and its ghastly effects. The 'dummy' calves were particularly distressing to see.

In case you want to read what the NSA said in its newsletter earlier this month: <https://nationalsheep.org.uk/our-work/news/btv-3-cases-continue-to-expand-rapidly/>



Essex 2024 vs 2025

Drought, as with BTV, is regional in its severity. In Essex we have been hit hard. We've been supplementing the feed of our flock for at least 3-4 months and now assume they are getting almost nothing from their pasture. We finished our first bale of hay and are working our way through our second order. We supplement the hay with lick buckets and the occasional trough of grain ... especially if we are gathering them for a treatment of some sort, such as Nose Bot which struck us in force last week.

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OTHER NEWS



Registration Reminders

Our Registration forms are on the website: <https://www.gsauk.co.uk/>.

Please reach out to any of the committee, particularly Natasha (Secretary) & Mark (Chairman) if you have additional questions but we have tried hard to make it as clear as possible on the website.



Other News

We are so lucky to have a new wool processing facility opening up near us. The Felsted Scour and Mill. They have a flock of Gotlands and so we know we will be in good hands! <https://felstedfleece.co.uk/pages/contract-fleece-processing-for-micro-flocks-spinners-weavers>.

In the past we used Rampisham Mills <https://www.rampishamhillmill.co.uk/>. They were wonderful but did find Gotland wool a challenge to process.

My sister and I are slowly becoming spinners & weavers and have joined our local Guild: The Mid Essex Guild of Weavers, Spinners & Dyers <http://midessexguildwsd.org.uk/>. What an amazing group of people with such a range of skills. We have been very warmly welcomed and learned so much from so many talented people.

Gotland wool is justly praised. We'd love to hear what you do with your wool! Articles and pictures would be warmly received and shared.



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