

A black and white photograph of a sheep and its lamb in a field. The sheep is in the foreground, facing right, with a smaller lamb behind it. A large, leafless tree is in the background. The text is overlaid on the image.

# Correct Conformation and Structure in Gotland Sheep

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High Hill Gotlands

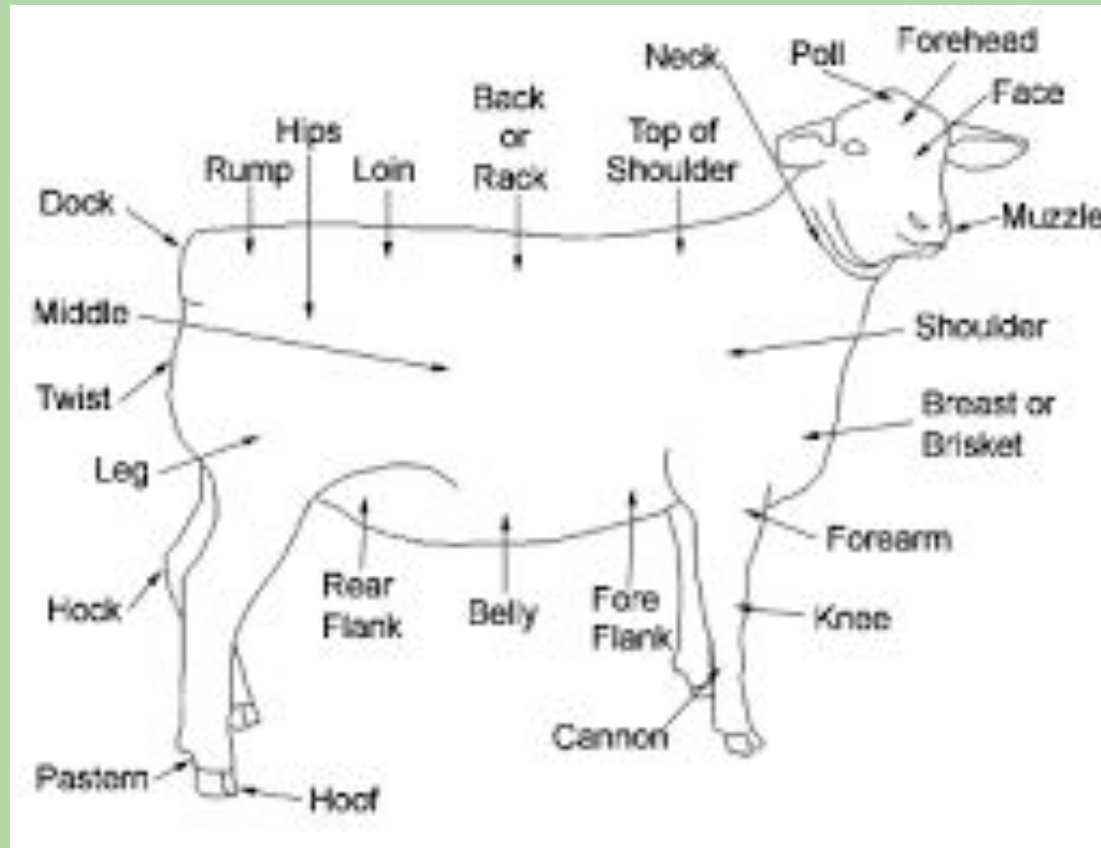
**Click on link below to view  
Conformation of Gotland Sheep Instruction Video:**

<https://youtu.be/jtwc54AoxjU>

# **What is conformation and why is correct conformation important in Gotland Sheep?**

**Conformation is the skeletal and muscular structures of the animal and how they tie together. Correct conformation is important because it contributes to the longevity, productivity and profitability of Gotland sheep. Gotland sheep with correct feet and leg conformation should stay sound longer, forage more efficiently and hold up longer during breeding. Gotland ewes with good conformation have the capacity to raise multiple lambs and lamb easily. Gotland sheep with good conformation have higher percentages of meat and muscle which contribute to larger, heavier and more profitable carcasses.**

# Parts of a Sheep



# Jaw Conformation

Correct-Bottom front teeth should meet end of top pad.

Parrot Mouth-Upper jaw extends over lower jaw. This can create problems foraging and if too far extended lambs may have trouble nursing.

Monkey Mouth-Lower jaw extends out farther than upper jaw, teeth don't meet pad. This can create problems eating and foraging.

If graphic does not appear below, click on slide!



Overshoot  
"parrot-mouth"



Undershoot  
"monkey-mouth"



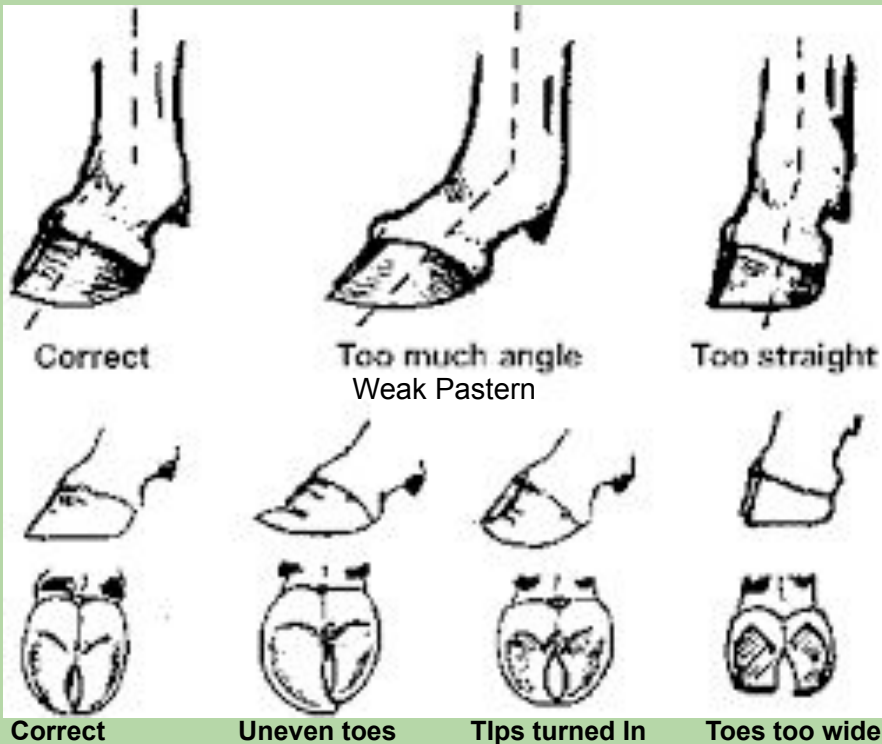
Normal



Correct

# Hoof and Pastern Structure

## Structure of the Pastern



Correct Pastern



Incorrect-Weak Pastern



Incorrect-Uneven sides on hoof



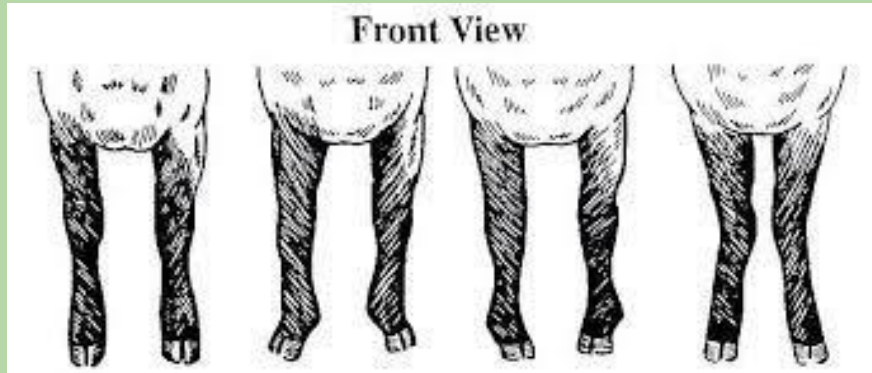
Incorrect- Uneven hoof sidewall



Legs should be connected at the four corners of the body. This ewe has correct leg placement.



# Front Leg Structure



Correct

Splay  
Footed

Pigeon  
Toed

Knock  
Kneed



Correct

Calf  
Kneed

Weak  
Pastern

Buck  
Kneed



# Example of Correct Gotland Front Leg Structure



**Correct Front Leg Side View**



**Correct Front Leg Front View**

# Examples of Incorrect Front Leg Structure

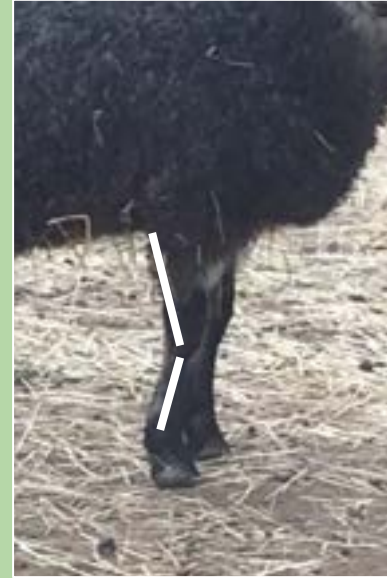


Toes turn out slightly

**Slightly Splay Footed**

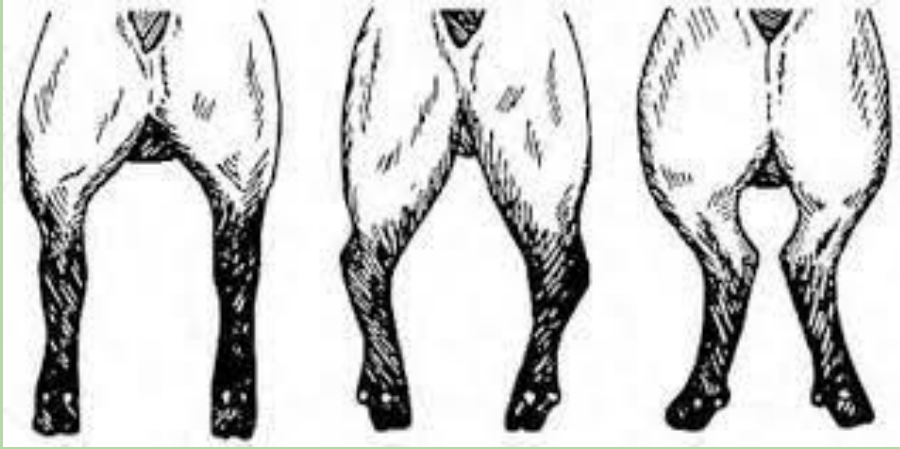


**Slightly Knock Kneed**



**Slightly Buck Kneed**

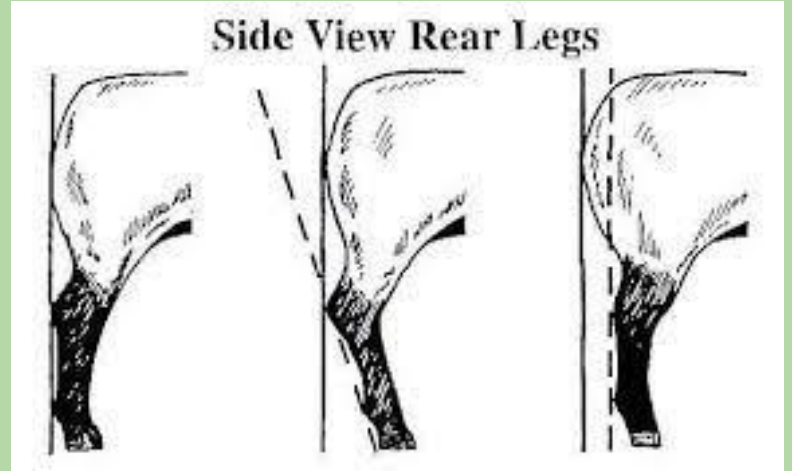
# Rear Leg Structure



**Correct**

**Bow Legged**

**Cow Hocked**



**Correct**

**Sickle Hocked**

**Post Legged**

# Example of Correct Gotland Rear Leg Structure



**Correct Rear Leg Hind View**

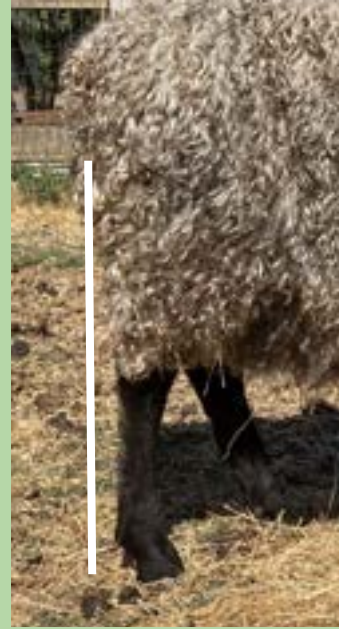


**Correct Rear Leg Side View**

# Examples of Poor Gotland Hind Leg Structure



**Slightly cow hocked**



**Post Legged**



# Conformation of Front End and Shoulders

- Shoulders should tie in smoothly, have some width but not too wide and bold.
- Chest floor should be elevated, not too deep chested.
- Fore flank should be higher than rear flank.
- Neck should attach at the top of the shoulders, not low on the chest.



Neck and top of shoulder should form a 90 degree angle when neck is held perpendicular to the ground.

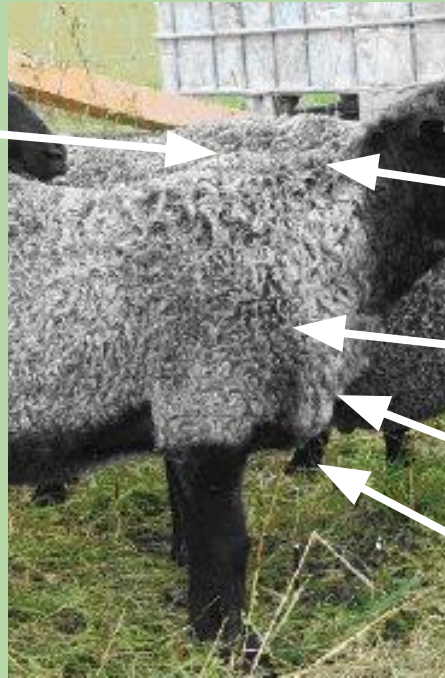


This ewe has a very correct front end with an elevated chest floor, smooth shoulders and neck attaching at the top of the shoulders.



# Incorrect Front End

High withers



Neck ties in low forming a dip between neck and top of shoulder which is called u necked.

Too Rough/Bold Shouldered

Heavy front end/brisket

Chest floor too deep

# Conformation of Top Line

## Correct Topline-Side View

Top line should be long and straight. If a yardstick were laid along top, very little daylight should be seen underneath. This ewe has a very correct top line.



## Incorrect Topline-Weak Topped

This sheep has a weak top with a big sway in the back. The top of shoulder and hip are the highest points in the top line. Very weak across the rack and loin. There is a lot of daylight visible under the line. Rump has a steep slope.



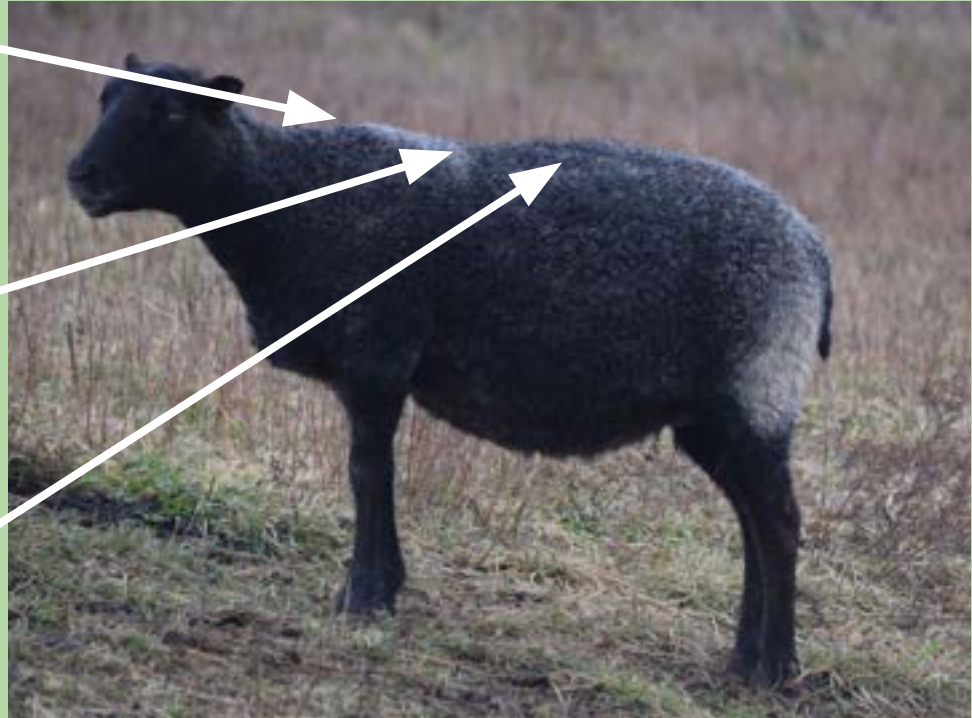
Lots of daylight is visible under the line indicating a weak top.

# Incorrect Topline- Break behind the shoulder

High withered-spine is above shoulders

This ewe breaks or dips behind her shoulder which is poor topline structure.

This ewe is high over the ribs. Spine is above the muscle creating a peaked top instead of a flat table top like top.



# Incorrect Topline-Roached Loin

**This lamb's loin is the highest point on his top. His loin is roached or humped up.**





# Top of Shoulder

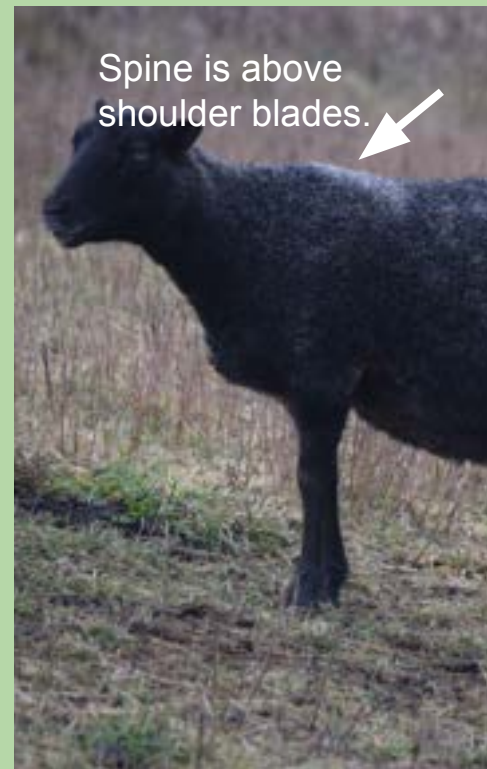
**Correct**



**Incorrect-Open Shoulder**



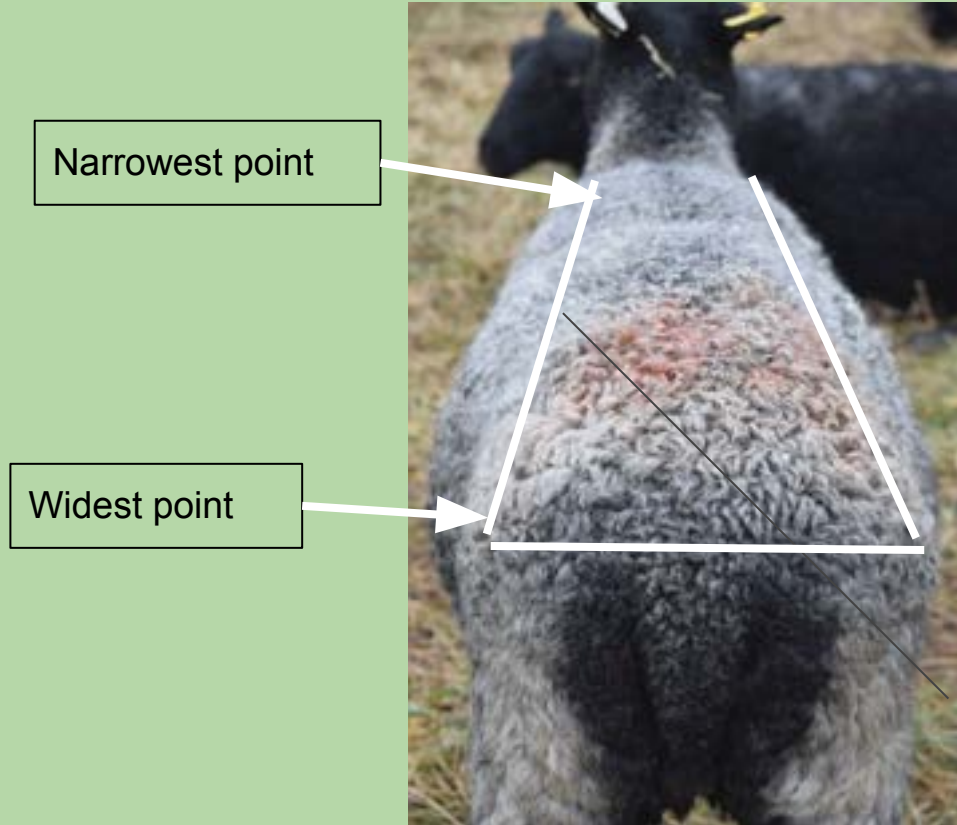
**Incorrect-High Withers**





# Correct Topline Structure Over The Top

Top should be in a wedge shape with the narrowest part of the top at the top of shoulders, getting progressively wider down the top with the widest part across the rump. Top should be wide, long, flat and square. Muscle should be even with spine creating a wide flat table top like top. This ewe has a very correct top. It is long and level, wide, square and flat widening out to the widest point at the rump.



# Length of Hindsaddle

**Loin + Rump = Hindsaddle**

Rump

Loin

Rack

Top of Shoulder



Length of hindsaddle should be greater than 50% of total body length. This ewe has good length of hindsaddle.

# Correct Rump Structure

Rump should be long, wide and level. The rump should not have a steep slope. This is an example of good rump structure.

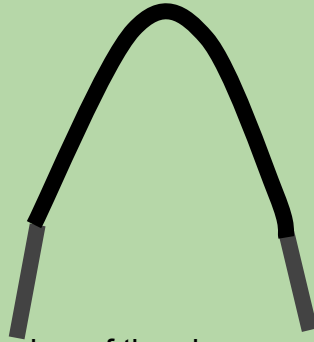


Rump should stay wide all the way out to the tail head like this ewe's does.



# Example of Incorrect Rump Structure

Incorrect-Very steep sloping and narrowing rump.



The top view of the sheep rump on the left probably looks something like this. The rump on the left not only has a steep slope, but also narrows out towards the tail head, which is very poor structure. Sheep with structure like this generally have very little rump and leg muscle and may also have a very narrow pelvic that can cause lambing difficulties in ewes.

Incorrect-This rump narrows slightly out towards tail head.



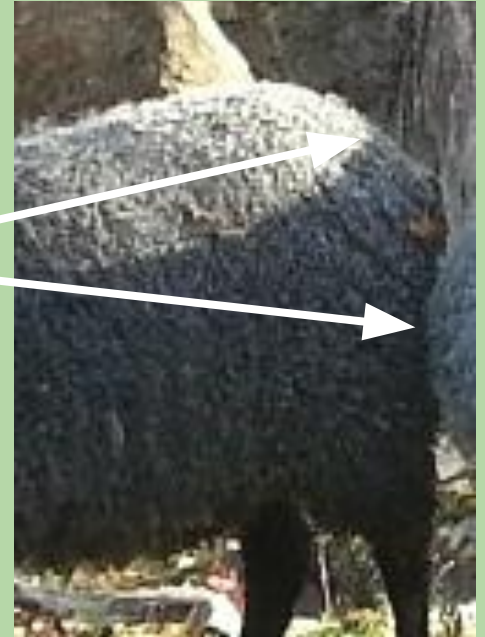


# Lower Leg Muscle

This ewe has very good lower leg muscle. She carries her muscle out across the rump and into the lower leg.



This sheep has very little lower leg muscle. The sloped, narrowing rump is a good indication that the muscle in the lower leg will be very light.



**Correct conformation is very important and should be included in the list of traits that Gotland breeders are selecting for along with high quality Gotland fleeces, mothering ability, prolificacy, growability, etc. Correct conformation can lead to an increase in longevity and productivity which in turn leads to an increase in profitability in Gotland sheep.**



# **Questions/Comments**

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