



GOTLAND PONY

Perissodactyla
Family: Equidae
Genus: *Equus*
Species: *caballus*



Range: origins on Gotland Island, Sweden of the Baltic Sea

Habitat: Forests

Niche: Terrestrial, diurnal, herbivorous

Wild diet:

Zoo diet: Grasses, vegetable, plants

Life Span: (Captivity) 30 years

Sexual dimorphism:

Location in SF Zoo: Children's Zoo Family Farm

APPEARANCE & PHYSICAL ADAPTATIONS:

The Gotland Pony or Russ is the only pony breed native to Sweden. It has a light and narrow build with sloping quarters and a low-set tail. Their hooves are good and hard. The coat of the Gotland pony can be a variety of acceptable colors of black and brown by breed standards. This breed is very hardy.

The dental formula is $I3/3-C1/1-P3-4/3-M3/3 \times 2 = 40-42$. The incisors are shaped like chisels; the enamel on the tips folding inward to form a pit, or "mark" that is worn off in early life. The first permanent incisors spear at about 2.5 to 3 years in domestic horses. Age in horses is often estimated by the degree of wear of the surface pattern on the cheek teeth, but the rapidity of wear depends to a great extent on the abrasive character of the food.

Weight:

SH: 11.3- 13 hands
(Hand = 4", hand's breadth)

STATUS & CONSERVATION

Today a herd of semi-wild horses, the Gotland Russ lives on the island of Gotland in the Baltic Sea. Although they have lived wild on Gotland for thousands of years, Gotland Ponies almost became extinct in the 1920s following conflict with farmers over destruction of crops and then the meat shortages of World War I. Public attention saved them however, and today there are about 10,000 of them, mostly in Sweden. The Gotland breed has steadily gained popularity in North America and is now nearing 200.

COMMUNICATION AND OTHER BEHAVIOR

Despite their wild origins, these ponies have a pleasant disposition and can easily be managed by children and small adults. The pony is strong and hardy, intelligent and friendly and can be ridden by children and small adults. They are a very personable breed, although can be stubborn. In Sweden, they are highly valued both as children's ponies, and for their trotting abilities.

COURTSHIP AND YOUNG

Males use the lip-curl (Flehmen response) to assess the females sexual state. Mares are seasonally polyestrous, have an estrous cycle of about 3 weeks and are receptive for 3 to 7 days. They commonly first enter estrus in the early spring or within 11 days postpartum. There normally is a single foal, twins occurring rarely. Young are precocial and are usually up and standing within an hour of birth. Foals are born with nearly white eyes that darken to amber or hazel by maturity. Large breeds are not fully grown until 5 years, but physiological sexual maturity is attained after only one year. Females are potentially capable of producing a foal annually from the age of 2 to at least 22 years, but the actual reproductive rate depends on various environmental, physiological and social factors. Few horses live past the twenties, though maximum known longevity is ~ 50 years.

Estrous Period: Seasonally polyestrous	Sexual Maturity:
Gestation:	Weaning Age:
# of Mammae: 1 pair located in groin area	Weight at birth:
# of Young: one	

MISCELLANEOUS

The Gotland pony is called *Russ* in it's original home, the island of Gotland, Sweden. The word *Russ* is derived from the Viking *hross*, which simply means "horse". It is believed that this breed is descended from the [Tarpan](#), a prehistoric wild horse.

Sources:

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Walker's Mammals of the World Vol II © 1999 R. Nowak, Johns Hopkins Press, p 1015-1018

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