

# Gotland Hound Breeding Strategy: Key Goals and Actions

The sources detail the breed-specific breeding strategy for the Gotland Hound, a Swedish hunting dog breed. The overarching goal is to ensure the **long-term health and viability of the breed**, preserving its unique characteristics and its role as a skilled and friendly hunting companion.

Here are the key goals and action plans outlined in the sources:

## Population Goals and Actions

- **Increase the population size:** The most urgent goal is to increase the number of Gotland Hounds to at least 250. This is considered crucial for the breed's long-term survival and to mitigate the negative impacts of inbreeding.
  - The breed club aims to achieve this by encouraging more breeders to produce litters and by increasing the number of litters born each year to at least five.
  - They also plan to raise awareness and promote the breed to attract more potential puppy buyers.
- **Reduce inbreeding:** The sources acknowledge the high level of inbreeding within the breed, a consequence of its small population size.
  - The strategy emphasizes using less related individuals for breeding while considering hunting abilities and show merits.
  - The goal is to keep the average pedigree inbreeding coefficient in litters below 10% over a five-year period, ideally even lower.
- **Utilize all available breeding animals:** The breeding strategy emphasizes the importance of using as many suitable dogs as possible for breeding, including older dogs that haven't produced litters before.
  - This is particularly important for females, as their optimal fertility occurs between 3 and 4 years of age.
  - The breeding council provides individual advice to potential breeders and helps them find suitable mates.
- **Fertility testing for older males:** For older males, fertility testing before mating is recommended as their fertility peaks between 3 and 4 years of age and can decline with age.
- **Consider genetic diversity when choosing males:** When selecting a male for breeding, the inbreeding coefficient of the potential litter is the primary factor, followed by the male's hunting abilities, temperament, and exterior.
- **Continue the breeding project:** The sources mention a breeding project that introduced genes from the Norwegian Hygen Hound to increase genetic diversity. While no immediate plans for further outcrossing exist, the breed club will evaluate the results of the project and consider future outcrossing if needed.

## Functional Characteristics: Hunting and Temperament

- **Maintain hunting abilities:** The breeding strategy stresses the importance of preserving the Gotland Hound's hunting skills.
  - The club encourages owners to participate in hunting trials and shares information and successes to promote the breed's working abilities.
  - They also offer mentorship programs to support owners in training and preparing for trials.
- **Preserve a friendly and stable temperament:** The Gotland Hound is known for its friendly and pleasant temperament, and the strategy aims to maintain this.
  - The sources note a concern about noise sensitivity in some dogs. To address this, the club encourages owners to participate in behavioral assessments (BPH) to better understand their dogs and provide necessary support.
  - They also plan to gather information on noise sensitivity and provide resources and support to owners of affected dogs.

## Health Goals and Actions

- **Maintain good overall health:** The Gotland Hound is generally a healthy and long-lived breed. The strategy aims to continue monitoring and maintaining this good health status.
- **Monitor specific health issues:** The strategy highlights specific health issues observed in the breed, including hip dysplasia, heart murmurs, umbilical hernias, cryptorchidism, and epilepsy.
  - While the current population size limits data collection and analysis, the breeding club emphasizes using only clinically healthy dogs for breeding and monitoring the occurrence of health problems through surveys and breeder questionnaires.
  - They also plan to gather more information about cancer in the breed and share it with owners.
- **Ensure healthy reproduction:** The strategy acknowledges the potential impact of inbreeding on reproductive health.
  - Breeder questionnaires will be used to monitor breeding, pregnancy, whelping, and maternal care to ensure that reproduction continues to function normally.

## Exterior: Maintaining Breed Type

- **Prioritize functional conformation:** The breeding strategy prioritizes a functional exterior that aligns with the breed standard and avoids exaggerated features.
  - While the breed displays variation in appearance, the goal is to select breeding animals that meet the breed standard and showcase typical breed characteristics.
- **Address white markings and potential hearing issues:** The strategy acknowledges that extensive white markings on the head could indicate a risk of hearing impairment.

- In cases of doubt, BAER testing (Brainstem Auditory Evoked Response) is recommended for puppies with significant white markings before they are sold.

**Overall, the breeding strategy for the Gotland Hound demonstrates a proactive approach to managing the challenges posed by a small population size while emphasizing the importance of preserving the breed's unique characteristics, hunting skills, temperament, and good health.** The strategy incorporates various data sources, including owner surveys, breeder questionnaires, health records, and hunting trial results, to guide breeding decisions and ensure the breed's well-being for the future.