



The Sheep Sweater

Rosa Pomar

Introduction

The idea for this sweater originated from a conversation I had in Oslo in 2024 about how sheep in our days are represented graphically. Sheep aren't easy to draw (have you tried?) and, in the last decades (maybe because of the immense popularity of Shaun the Sheep), a mass of white fluff with a black dot at the top seems to have become the standard, most effective way of drawing a recognisable sheep.

None of the 16 breeds of native Portuguese sheep look like this (although Churra Badana and Saloia have reddish-brown muzzles and legs) so why not try to draw a sheep motif that looked more like our own sheep? I browsed the 1628 photos of sheep in my phone library and sketched away...

The sweater design itself must have been influenced by Princess Diana's iconic sheep sweater (designed by British brand Warm & Wonderful in the 1980s), although I didn't realise it when I started. It's a beautiful design and I love how she wore it publicly as a way to express her personality.

Yarn recommendations

PEGULHAL mixes Campaniça and Merino Preto, two native breeds from Alentejo, and is entirely sourced and manufactured in Portugal.

If you're not using PEGULHAL, let me ask that you choose a yarn made from native and/or local wool for your sweater. Many small businesses from different parts of the world are trying to raise awareness about this precious but undervalued material and creating wonderful yarns for knitting. Make this an opportunity to learn more about the breeds of sheep native to your region or country and to support the people (mostly women, by the way) behind these initiatives.

Construction

This sweater is knitted bottom-up, in the round, with steeks for the arm and neck openings. The construction is quite simple, following the century-old techniques used on traditional sweaters from different parts of Europe, with just basic shaping at the base of the armhole and neck. Two short rows are added at the top of the body for a little extra shaping at the shoulder.

Afraid of STEEKING?

Steeks are an ingenious way of knitting an entire sweater in the round, which is especially useful for stranded knitting projects. As risky as it may sound, as long as you choose a sticky, wooly, wool yarn for your project and secure your steeks, you will be fine. Really. If you are not using PEGULHAL for your sweater, choose a rustic, woolen-spun, 100% wool yarn. And, of course, experiment with steeking on a swatch first!

If you absolutely want to avoid steeking you can knit the top of your sweater back and forth using the charts provided. I recommend putting two less sts on hold at the base of the arms and neck opening to create an edge st.

PATTERN INFO

Sizes 1 (2, 3, 4) (5, 6, 7, 8).

Recommended ease: 12 to 27,5 cm | 4.7 to 10.8 in of positive ease at the bust.

IMPORTANT: smaller sizes were designed with more ease at the bust and size 3 has comparatively more ease than other sizes.

Standard bust sizes based on which the sweater design was based: 73,5 (83,5, 94, 104) (113, 124, 134, 144,5) cm | 28,94 (32,87, 37,01, 40,94) (44,49, 48,82, 52,76, 56,89) in

Suggestion: if you're used to following knitting patterns, choose your usual size. For your reference, my measurements are 1.70m and 85cm bust and I am between standard industry sizes S and M: I have knitted a size 2 (more fitted sweater, great for wearing under other layers) and size 3 (slightly oversized fit).

Note that the sweater has a dropped shoulder so please use the chest circumference rather than the shoulder to shoulder measurement as your main reference.

FINISHED GARMENT MEASUREMENTS

Chest circumference: 96,5 (107,4, 121,4, 127) (132,6, 142,5, 149,5, 156,5) cm | 37,99 (42,28, 47,8, 50) (52,2, 56,1, 58,86, 61,61) in

Shoulder to shoulder: 42,5 (45,3, 52,3, 55,1) (57,2, 58,6, 60, 61,4) cm | 16,73 (17,83, 20,59, 21,69) (22,52, 23,07, 23,62, 24,17) in

Armhole depth: 16,7 (17,6, 19,1, 20,6) (22,1, 23,9, 25,5, 27) cm | 6,57 (6,93, 7,52, 8,11) (8,7, 9,41, 10,04, 10,63) in

Length from neckline to back hem: The length of your sweater is defined by how many rows of sheep you knit. Choose between

Shorter version: 50,5 cm | 19,88 in - For your reference, this version will fall approximately 8,5 (7,5, 7, 6) (5,5, 5, 5, 3,5) cm | 3,35 (2,95, 2,76, 2,36) (2,17, 1,97, 1,97, 1,38) in below your natural waist. This is my favorite look.

Medium length version: 58,7 cm | 23,11 in - Recommended if you like hip-length sweaters (sizes one to 7)

Longer version: 65,7 cm | 25,87 in - Closer to hip length for size 8.

MATERIALS

YARN

Shorter:

MC 5 (6, 6, 7) (7, 7, 7, 8) skeins of Rosa Pomar Pegulhal (100% Campaniça and Merino Preto wool, 220 m | 240 yd, 50g). Shown in shade 20.

CC 3 (4, 4, 4) (4, 4, 4, 4) skeins of Rosa Pomar Pegulhal (100% Campaniça and Merino Preto wool, 220 m | 240 yd, 50g). Shown in shade 01.

Or approximately 926 (995, 1090, 1137) (1184, 1253, 1309, 1364) m | 1014 (1089, 1193, 1244) (1296, 1371, 1433, 1493) yd (MC) and 558 (601, 664, 692) (723, 769, 805, 841) m | 611 (658, 727, 758) (791, 842, 881, 921) yd (CC) of a fingering weight, woolen spun, 100% wool yarn in two contrasting shades.

Medium length:

MC 6 (6, 7, 7) (7, 8, 8, 8) skeins of Rosa Pomar Pegulhal (100% Campaniça and Merino Preto wool, 220 m | 240 yd, 50g)

CC 3 (4, 4, 4) (4, 4, 5, 5) skeins of Rosa Pomar Pegulhal (100% Campaniça and Merino Preto wool, 220 m | 240 yd, 50g)

Or approximately 995 (1071, 1176, 1227) (1278, 1354, 1414, 1475) m | 1089 (1172, 1287, 1343) (1399, 1482, 1547, 1614) yd (MC) and 614 (662, 733, 764)

(799, 850, 890, 930) m | 672 (725, 802, 836) (875, 930, 974, 1018) yd (CC) of a fingering weight, woolen spun, 100% wool yarn in two contrasting shades.

Longer:

MC 6 (7, 7, 7) (8, 8, 9, 9) skeins of Rosa Pomar Pegulhal (100% Campaniça and Merino Preto wool, 220 m | 240 yd, 50g)

CC 4 (4, 4, 4) (4, 5, 5, 5) skeins of Rosa Pomar Pegulhal (100% Campaniça and Merino Preto wool, 220 m | 240 yd, 50g)

Or approximately 1064 (1146, 1261, 1316) (1371, 1453, 1519, 1584) m | 1165 (1254, 1380, 1440) (1500, 1590, 1662, 1733) yd (MC) and 669 (723, 802, 837) (874, 931, 975, 1019) m | 732 (791, 878, 916) (957, 1019, 1067, 1115) yd (CC) of a fingering weight, woolen spun, 100% wool yarn in two contrasting shades.

NEEDLES

Suggested sizes (please swatch and adjust sizes to match gauge): 3 mm | US 2 1/2 and 2.25 mm | US 1 circular needles, suitable for large and small circumferences.

NOTIONS

Stitch markers, tapestry needle, waste yarn.

For steeking: small, sharp scissors, wool darning thread, sewing needle.

GAUGE

28.5 sts x 33 rows to 10 cm | 4in in stranded stockinette st (after washing and blocking)

CAST-ON

With smaller needle and MC, cast-on 276 (304, 344, 360) (376, 404, 424, 444) sts. Place BOR marker.

Rib

Making sure your cast-on is not twisted, join and work 27 rounds in 2/2 rib (knit 2 sts, purl 2 sts).

Body

Important notes regarding the charts

All sizes except size 2: the same sequence repeats across the front and the back. Start at BOR, follow chart to the end of Front, repeat across back.

Size 2 only: start at BOR and work pattern all around. Use **SIZE 2 BODY FRONT AND BACK** or **PATTERN REPEAT** chart for reference.

PATTERN REPEAT chart suggests where to catch floats. For most of the body, this is the only chart you will need.

For Short and Long sweaters, start with Round 1 of **SECTION B** chart. See below instructions for Round 1.

For Medium length sweater, start with Round 1 of **SECTION A** chart. See below instructions for Round 1.

Start working Body

Round 1 (increase row)*: With larger needle and MC, work** 138 (152, 172, 180) (188, 202, 212, 222) sts, increase one st, place marker, work to end, increase one st. 278 (306, 346, 362) (378, 406, 426, 446) sts in total.

*This is the first round of the chart (SECTION A or B depending on the length preference). Note that the increases aren't represented graphically on the chart.

**Work in stockinette stitch (knit all sts for left-hand/continental and right-hand/English method and purl all sts for Portuguese method).

Rounds 2 to 23: follow chart.

Tester tip: On first row of the sheep pattern, add contrasting stitch markers to signal the placement of the lamb motifs. This will prevent distractions when following the pattern repeat chart.

IMPORTANT: The two vertical lines on the charts correspond to the placement of the two markers on the needles. The vertical line on the right is the BOR (beginning of the Front section and end of the Back section) and the vertical line on the left is the end of the Front section / beginning of the Back section.

Next, work the other **SECTION** chart.

Work the following sequence of alternating **SECTIONS** (in total):

SIZES 1 to 5 ONLY

BAB (short), ABAB (medium), BABAB (long).

SIZES 6 to 8 ONLY

BA (short), ABA (medium), BABA (long).

ALL SIZES

Next, start working **SECTION C** chart:

Work the first 18 (15, 10, 5) (0, 17, 12, 7) rounds of **SECTION C** chart.

Next, work the following row of **SECTION C** chart until 6 (7, 7, 7) (7, 9, 11, 11) sts before the end. Thread the last 6 (7, 7, 7) (7, 9, 11, 11) sts onto waste yarn.

Thread the first 6 (7, 7, 7) (7, 9, 11, 11) sts of the following round onto waste yarn (see photo).

Don't break working yarns. Next, cast-on 12 steek stitches on right hand needle for the base of the steek. Use your preferred method for casting-on and alternate sts of MC and CC, following chart. Place BOR marker at the center of the steek sts. Also, place optional markers at the beginning and end of the steek.

How to cast-on sts for the base of the steek (wrong side / Portuguese knitting view): <https://youtu.be/Upj34-88L8Y>



Stitches on hold



Cast-on 12 sts for the base of the sleeve steek

Continue working row 20 (17, 12, 7) (2, 19, 14, 9) of **SECTION C** chart until 6 (7, 7, 7) (7, 9, 11, 11) sts before the end of the front. Thread the last 6 (7, 7, 7) (7, 9, 11, 11) sts of the front onto waste yarn. Thread the first 6 (7, 7, 7) (7, 9, 11, 11) sts of the back onto waste yarn. Next, cast-on 12 stek stitches on right hand needle for the base of the second sleeve stek, just like you did for the first one. Place optional markers at the beginning and end of the stek.

Continue working round number 20 (17, 12, 7) (2, 19, 14, 9) until the end. Note that your last 6 sts will be stek sts (follow stek pattern).

Follow **SECTION C** chart, working decreases on both sides of the sleeve steeks as charted, until the end of round number 49 (49, 49, 49) (49, 71, 71, 71).

Round 50 (50, 50, 50) (50, 50, 72, 72) of **SECTION C** chart: Follow chart, binding-off 21 (21, 23, 23) (23, 25, 25, 27) sts for the base of the neck (bind-off* sts on the Front of the sweater only).

*Bind-off: use a simple bind-off technique: work 2 sts, pass st on the right over st on the left and off the right hand needle, *work one more st, pass st on the right over st on the left and off the right hand needle, repeat from * until desired number of sts have been cast off.

Next round: work to the bind-off and cast-on 12 stek sts the same way you did for the arm steeks. Place optional markers at the beginning and end of the stek. Continue working this round to the end. From this point on, refer to **SECTION A** chart for the back of the sweater when necessary (the red vertical lines mark the beginning and end of the back).

Continue to follow **SECTION C** chart, working decreases on both sides of the stek as charted, until the end of round 74 (74, 74, 74) (74, 97, 97, 97). Break CC yarn (leaving a tail long enough for darning).

SHORT ROWS

Next, you will work short rows to shape the shoulder, first on the front of the sweater and then on the back (follow chart for visual reference):

Front:

Short row 1: with MC, work 72 (78, 90, 93) (96, 97, 99, 101) sts. Turn work, GSR, work 37 (41, 47, 47) (49, 49, 49, 51) sts. Turn work.

Short row 2: GSR, work to DS, resolve DS, work 13 (15, 18, 19) (20, 20, 21, 21) sts. Turn work, GSR, work to DS, resolve DS, work 13 (15, 18, 19) (20, 20, 21, 21) sts. Turn work.

GSR, work to DS, resolve DS, work to end of Front.

Back:

Short row 1: work 99 (105, 119, 124) (129, 132, 134, 138) sts. Turn work, GSR, work 64 (68, 76, 78) (82, 84, 84, 88) sts. Turn work.

Short row 2: GSR, work to DS, resolve DS, work 13 (15, 18, 19) (20, 20, 21, 21) sts. Turn work, GSR, work to DS, resolve DS, work 13 (15, 18, 19) (20, 20, 21, 21) sts. Turn work.

GSR, work to DS, resolve DS, work to BOR.

FINISH BODY

Last round: work to DS, resolve DS, work to neck opening steeek, bind-off 12 steeek sts, work to next steeek, bind-off 12 steeek sts, work 41 (45, 54, 57) (59, 60, 62, 63) sts (and resolve DS), bind off 39 (39, 41, 43) (45, 47, 47, 49) sts back of neck sts, work to next steeek, bind-off last 6 sts before BOR and first 6 sts after BOR. Don't cut yarn.

Next you will bind-off back and front sts together using a three needle bind off:

On the wrong side of your sweater and using a third needle (same size as larger needle), work a three needle bind-off on the first shoulder sts. Break yarn and repeat on the second shoulder. Break yarn.

Note: the three needle bind-off can also be worked on the right side of the work. It will result in a decorative textured seam running along the shoulder that is found on some traditional European sweaters.

STEEKS

The orange line in the photo marks the center of one of the arm steeeks, where the fabric will be cut open. Before cutting, the side stitches should be reinforced to make sure the stitches won't unravel in the process. There are many ways to do this and many tutorials available on YouTube. My current favorite consists of threading through the side stitches with a sewing needle

and darning thread. This technique doesn't add any bulk to the steek stitches, which is an advantage and makes for a neater finish.

Video tutorial: <https://youtu.be/yD1GnH4KW9c>



Vertical line marks the center of the steek

Thread a fine sewing needle with one strand of darning thread (tie a knot at one end like for hand-sewing). Locate the second and third columns (vertical lines) at the right of your steek (see photo on next page).

Starting at the cast-on of the steek, thread horizontally through the cast-on stitches of columns 2 and 3. Going through (not under or over) the yarn is important. Now, thread in the opposite direction, so that the cast-on stitches



Thread through the stitches

are secured. Don't pull the thread tightly as the elasticity of the knitting should be maintained all along the steek. Continue threading back and forth through the sts of columns 2 and 3, moving up one row at a time to make sure you don't miss any stitches. Finish by threading back and forth through the bind-off and secure with a knot.



Repeat with columns 10 and 11 so that both edges of the stek are secured.

Repeat with the other two steeks.

CUT STEEK

To cut through the stek, use small and very sharp scissors. Locate the central columns of the stek (6 and 7) and cut between the two columns, slowly (one strand at a time), without pulling at the fabric.

Video tutorial: https://youtu.be/kthlnn0_DMQ

SLEEVES

Note: Stitches for the sleeve should be picked-up in the middle of the st that is right before/after the stek. On decrease rounds, pick up in the center of the decrease.

With larger needle and MC, work the left half the sts from the base of the armcye that were left on hold and then pick-up/work one stitch on each round. Finish by working the other half of sts that were left on hold at the base of the armcye. 126 (132, 142, 152) (162, 174, 184, 194) sts in total.

Note for Portuguese style knitters: although the sleeve is worked on the wrong side, I pick-up sts on the right side of the sweater: pull a length of yarn that is 2 to 3 m | yd long (like you would for a long-tail cast-on) and work the pick-up round clockwise on the right-side of the work using this long tail (work towards the end of the “tail”). At the end of the pick-up round your working yarn will be at BOR and on the correct side for purling your sleeve.

Round 1 (decrease row): place BOR marker, work 4 sts, work 2 sts together. Repeat to end, ending with 105 (110, 119, 127) (135, 145, 154, 162) sts.

Follow **SLEEVE CHART**, working decreases as charted (after and before the two central sts), every 11 (11, 8, 7) (6, 5, 4, 4) rounds. Note that Round 1 on the chart shows the final number of sts (after decreases). At the end of the sleeve you will have 81 (84, 87, 87) (89, 89, 90, 92) sts left.

CUFF

With smaller needle and MC, work in 2 x 2 rib, adjusting the number of sts so that it is divisible by 4. You will need to decrease 1 (0, 3, 3) (1, 1, 2, 0) sts in the first round:

To decrease 1 st, work to 2 sts before end and make a decrease.

To decrease 2 sts (size 7), (work 43 sts, make a decrease) twice.

To decrease 3 sts (sizes 3 and 4): (work 27 sts, make a decrease) 3 times.

Work a total of 27 rounds in 2 x 2 rib.

Bind-off using an elastic method.

NECK

With smaller needle and MC, pick-up 38 (38, 40, 42) (44, 46, 46, 48) sts from the back of neck (pick-up between sts), 28 (28, 28, 28) (28, 29, 29, 29) sts from the side of the neck (use the same method as for the sleeves: pick-up in the middle of the st that is right before the steek. On decrease rounds, pick up in the center of the decrease), 20 (20, 22, 22) (22, 24, 24, 26) sts (pick-up between sts) from the base of the neck and 28 (28, 28, 28) (28, 29, 29, 29) sts from the other side of the neck. 114 (114, 118, 120) (122, 128, 128, 132) sts in total.

First round note: in the first round you will need to decrease 2 (2, 2, 0) (2, 0, 0, 0) sts to make the total number of sts divisible by 4. I suggest decreasing one st at each end of the sts from the base of the neck opening by working them together with the last / first st from the side of the neck.

First round: k 2 sts, p 2 sts to end.

Work a total of 40 rounds of 2 x 2 rib. I suggest trying on your sweater a few times while working the neck to adjust length to your personal taste.

Bind-off using an elastic method.

Optional folded crew neck: pick up and decrease the same number of sts but work 7 rounds of 2 x 2 rib only. Next, (k2, slip 2 wyif) 3 rounds. Work another 7 rounds of 2 x 2 rib, fold and cast-off sts in place using a very elastic bind-off.

FINISHING

Sleeve steeks

Trim each steek carefully to reduce bulk. I suggest trimming each section through the center of stitch 5 / 8 (see detail photo with stitch numbers above).

Next, unfold each steek towards the sleeve and stitch it in place. Don't pull the thread too tightly to avoid puckering.



Neck steeks

Proceed in the same manner but stitch the steeks in place towards the body of the sweater.

Weave in ends with tapestry needle. Soak in warm water and wool wash. Wash gently, rinse and remove excess water without wringing. Lay flat for drying and block to size.

ABBREVIATIONS

CO - Cast on

DS - Double Stitch (results from working GSR)

GSR - German Short Row

k - knit

p - purl

st(s) - stitch(es)

wyif - with yarn in the front of the work

Tag your project with #thesheepsweater

Pattern page on Ravelry: <https://www.ravelry.com/patterns/library/the-sheep-sweater>

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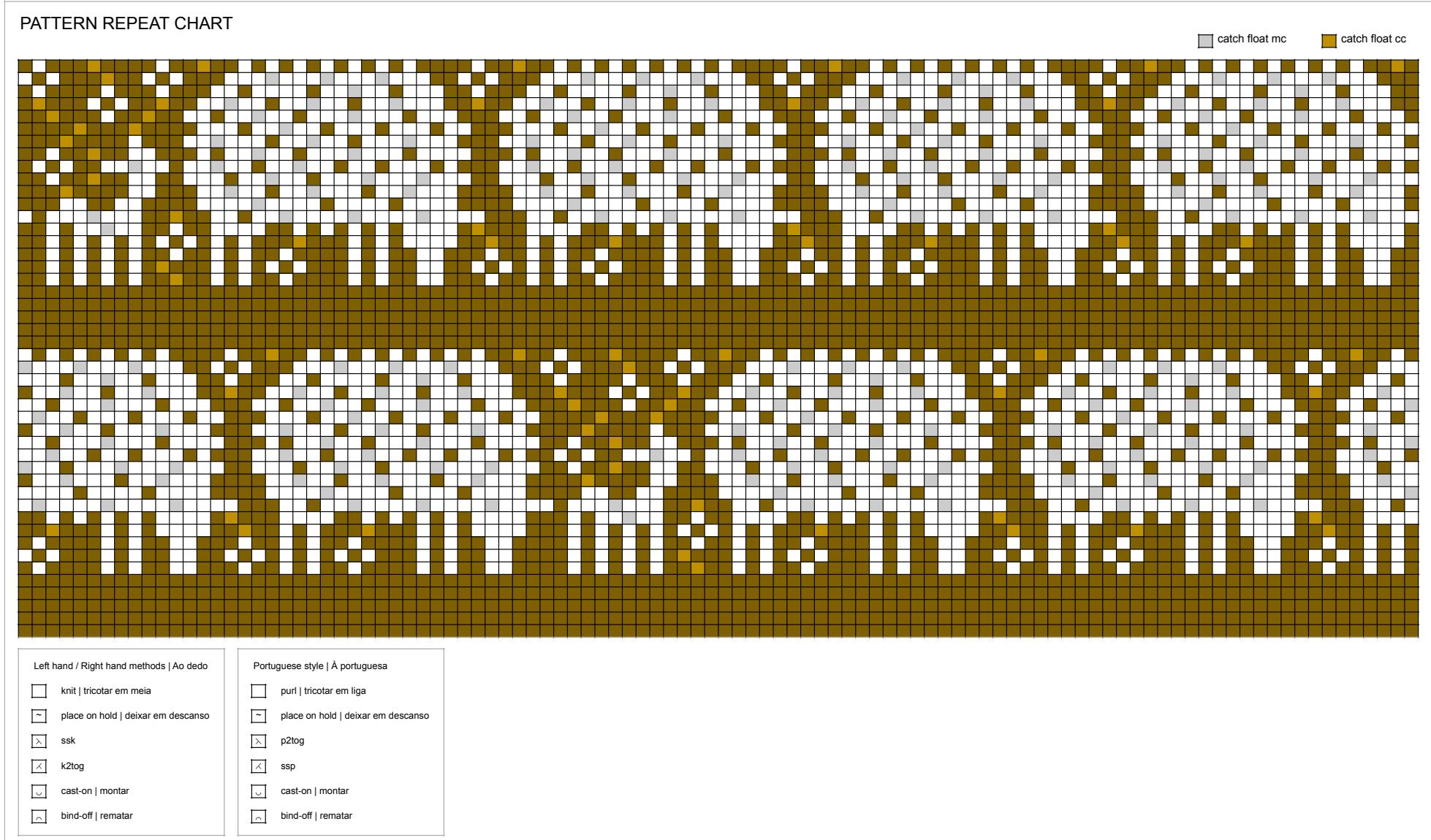


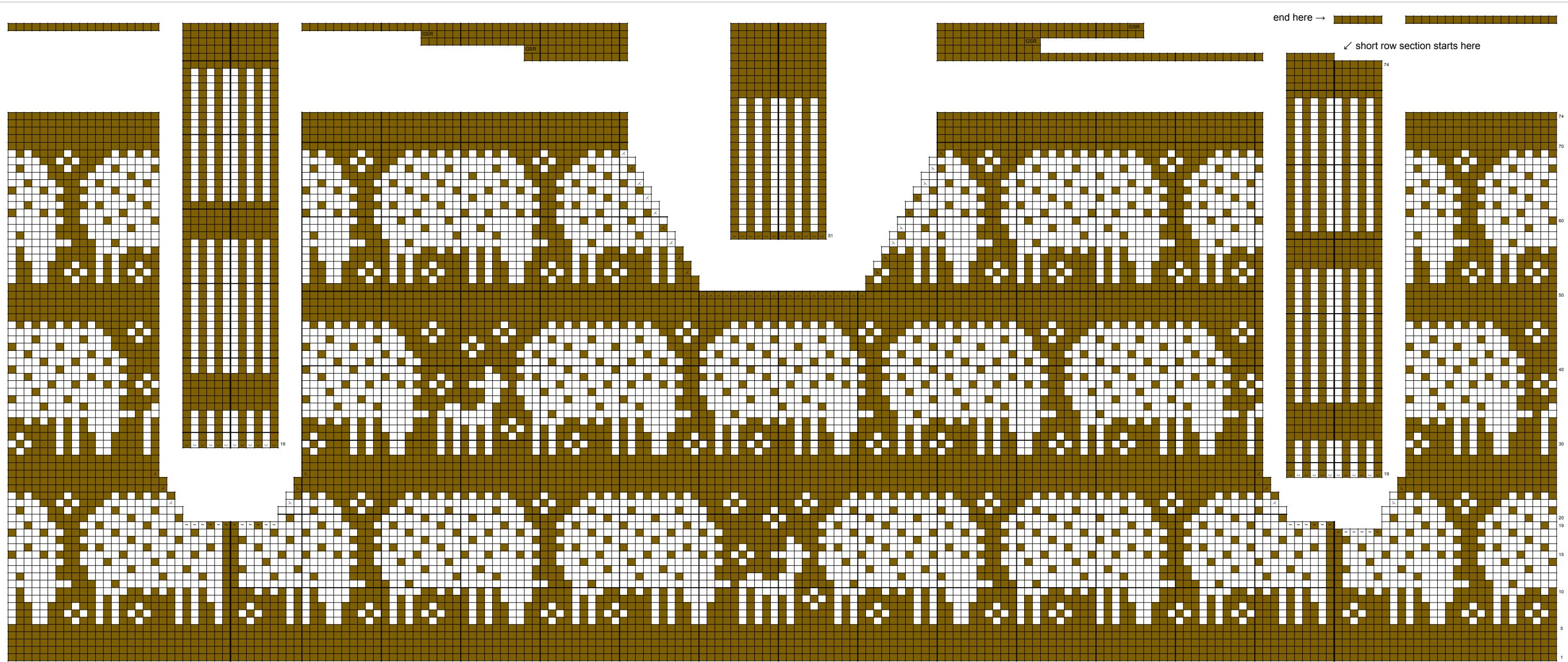
The Sheep Sweater

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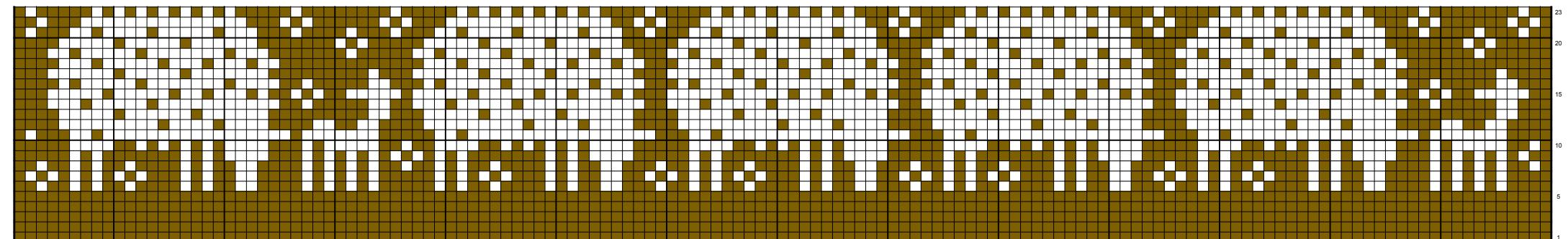
CHARTS

SIZE 1

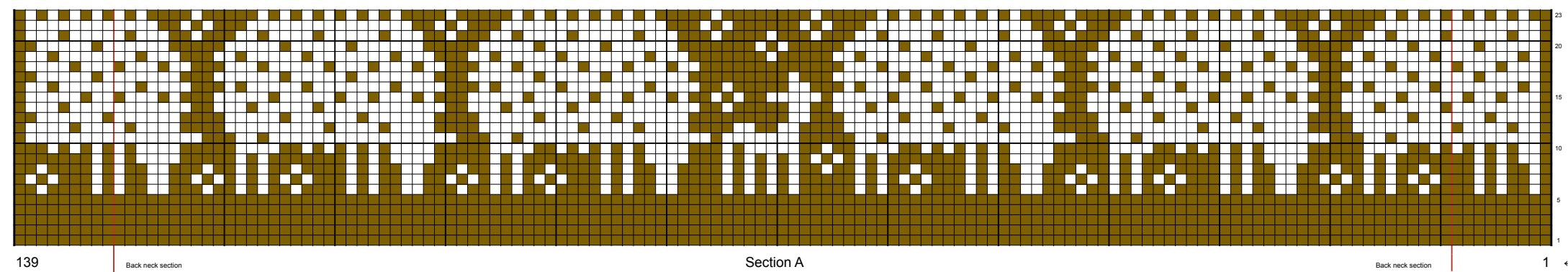




139 Section C 1 ← BOR

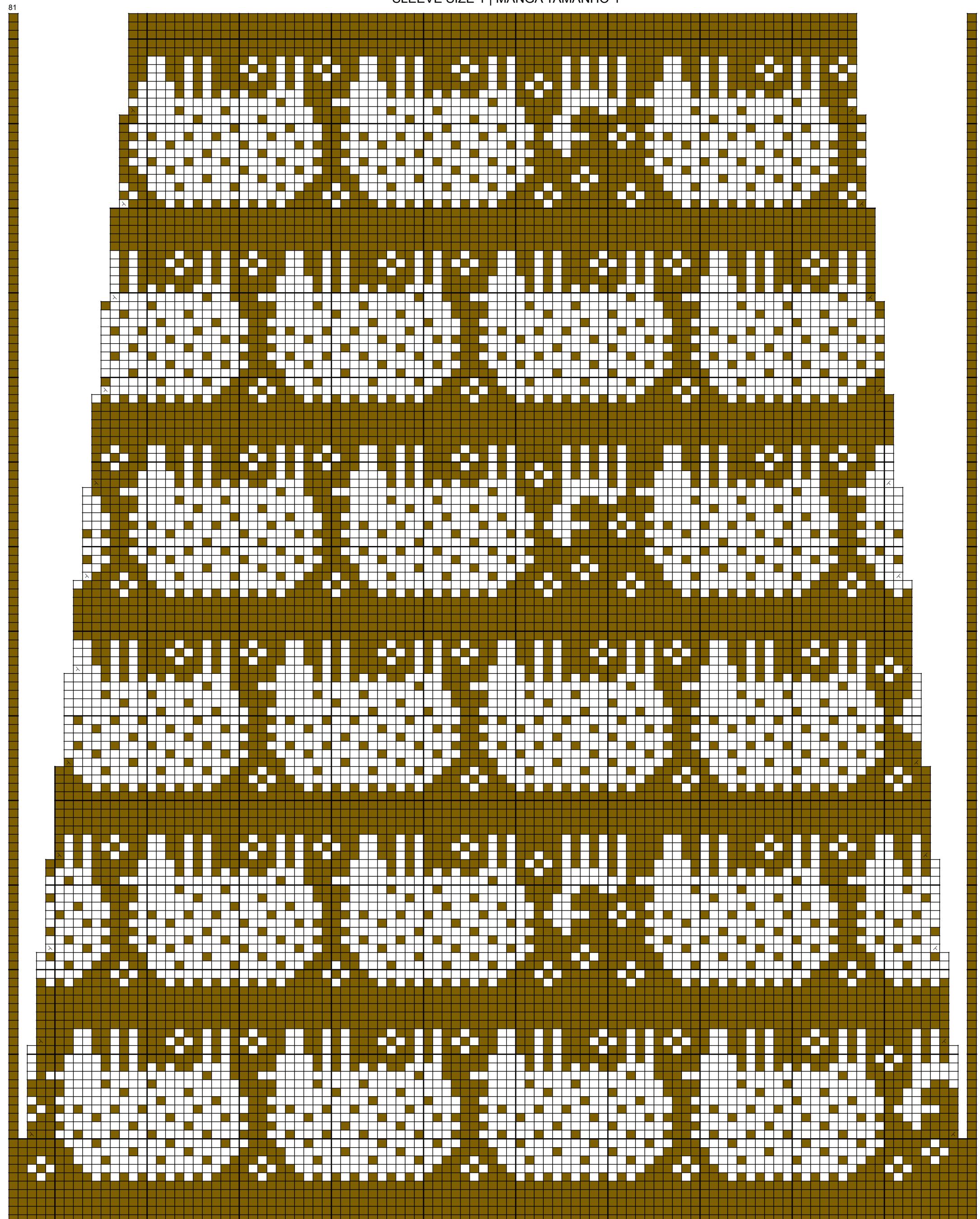


139 Section B 1 ← BOR

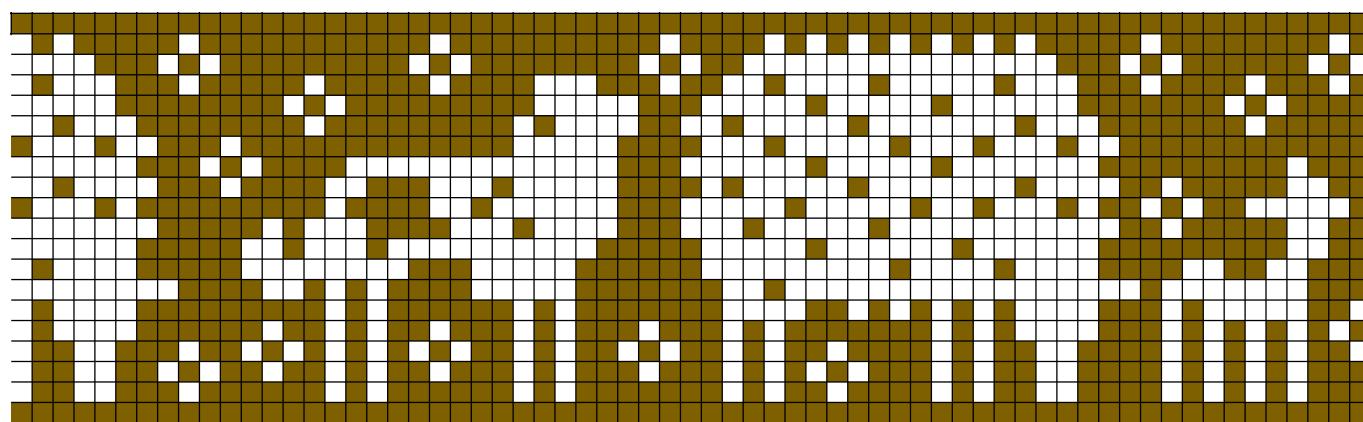


139 Back neck section 1 ← BOR

SLEEVE SIZE 1 | MANGA TAMANHO 1

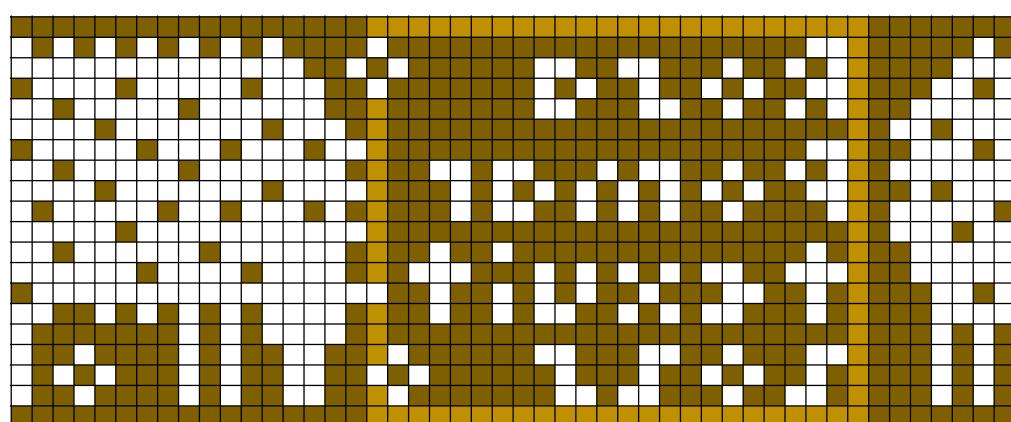


EXTRA CHARTS for adventurous knitters



The Sheep Dog: add a Rafeiro Alentejano sheep dog to your sweater to make sure the flock is safe from foxes and stray dogs!

Designed by Amélia Pomar to fit in the same number of sts as a sheep.



Sign your sweater! Write right to left if purling on the wrong side (Portuguese style) or left to right if working on the right side of the sweater. *Texuit* is Latin for “wove this”. Make your text fit in rectangle above.

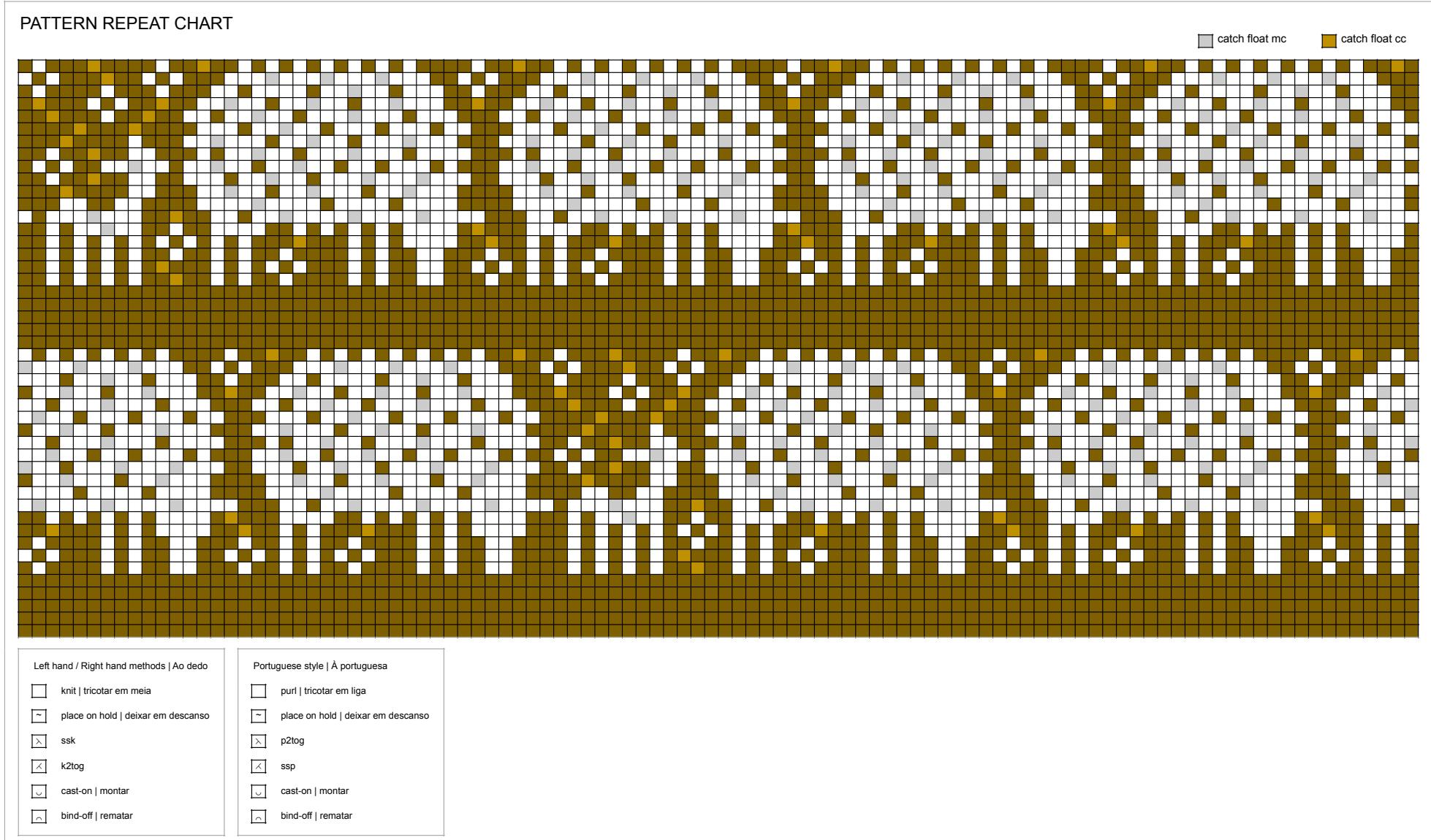
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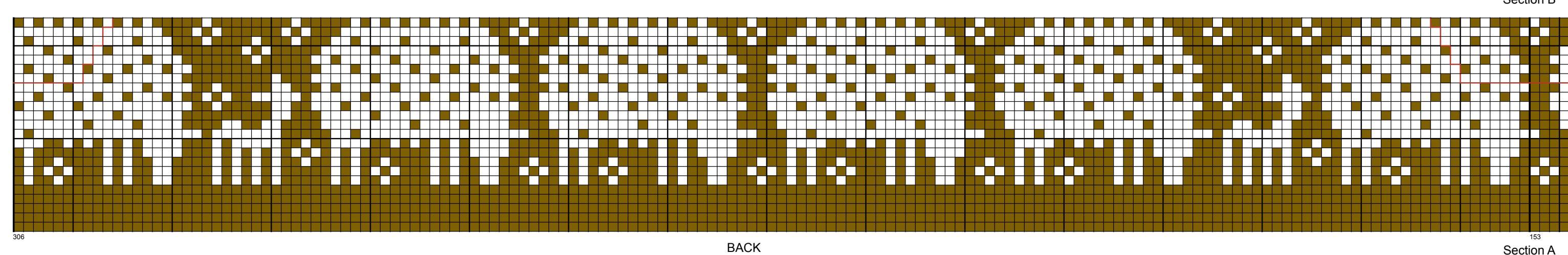
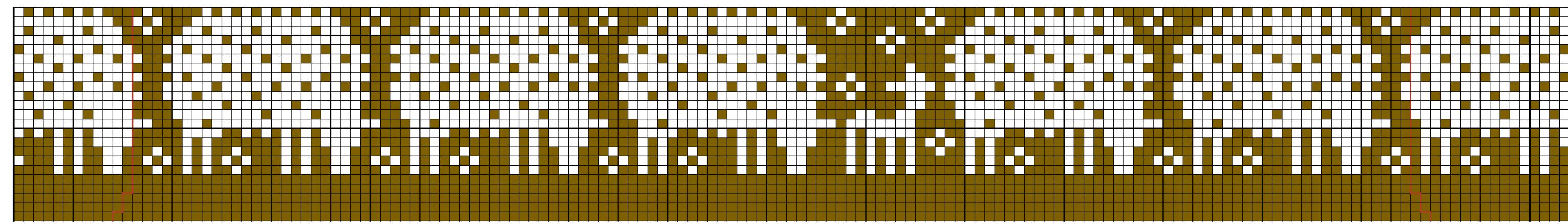
The Sheep Sweater

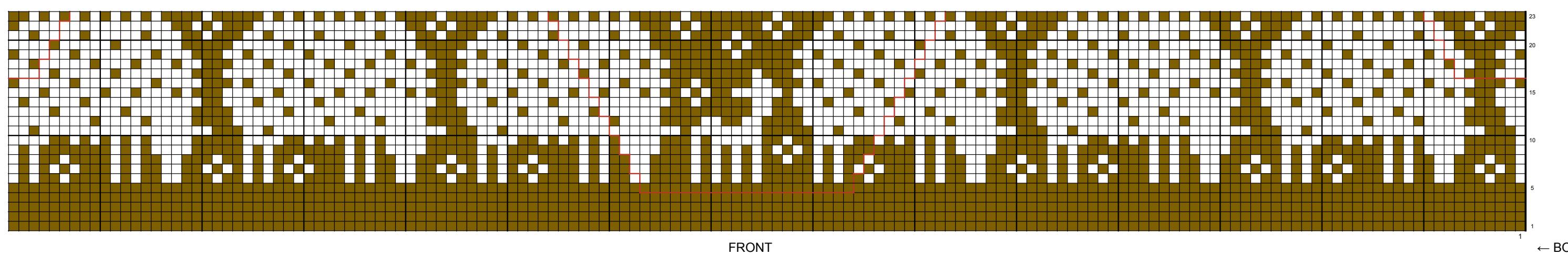
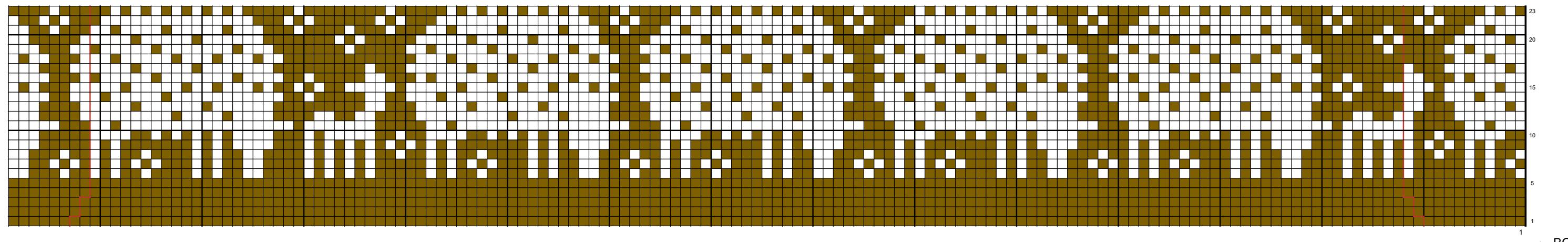
Rosa Pomar

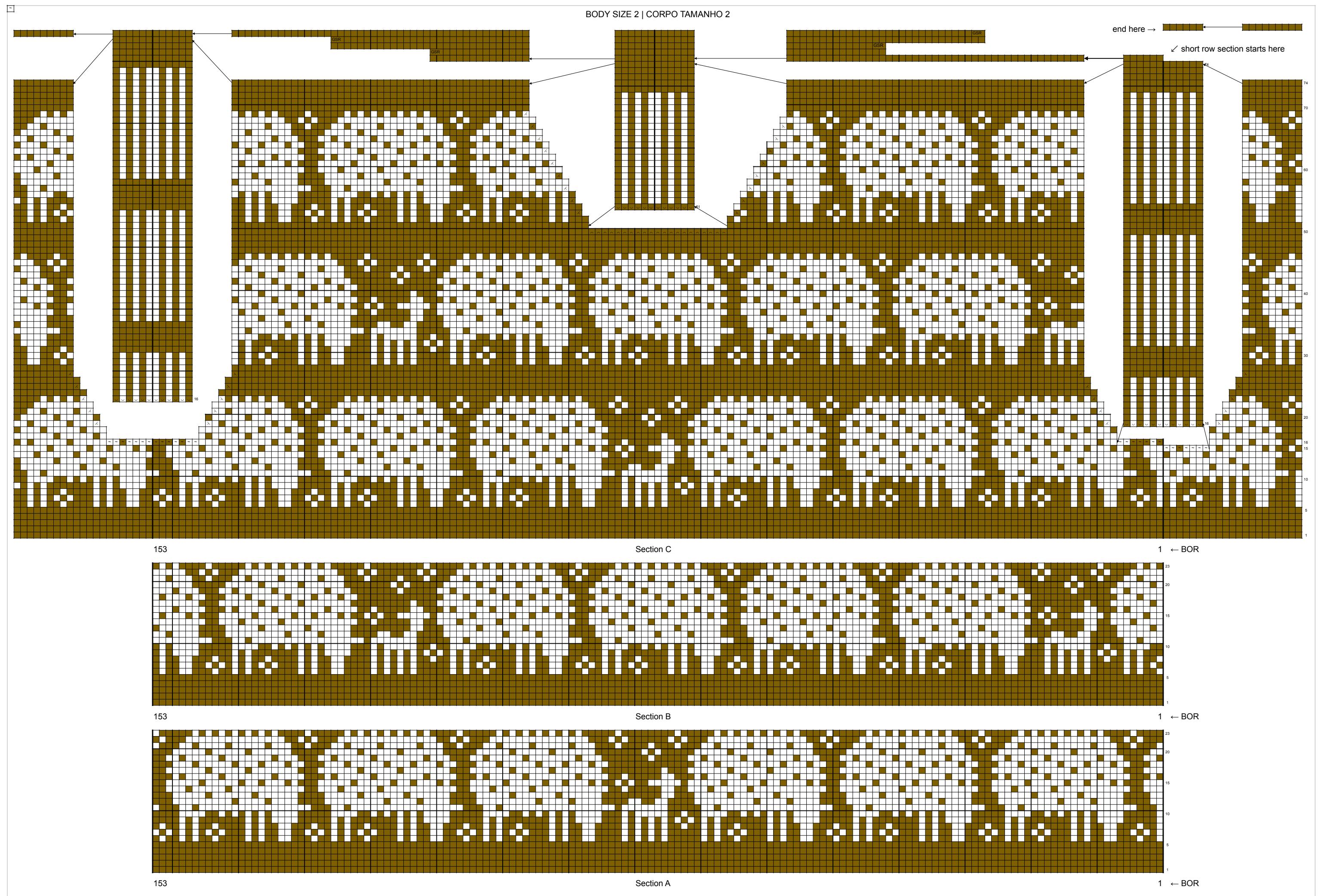
CHARTS
SIZE 2



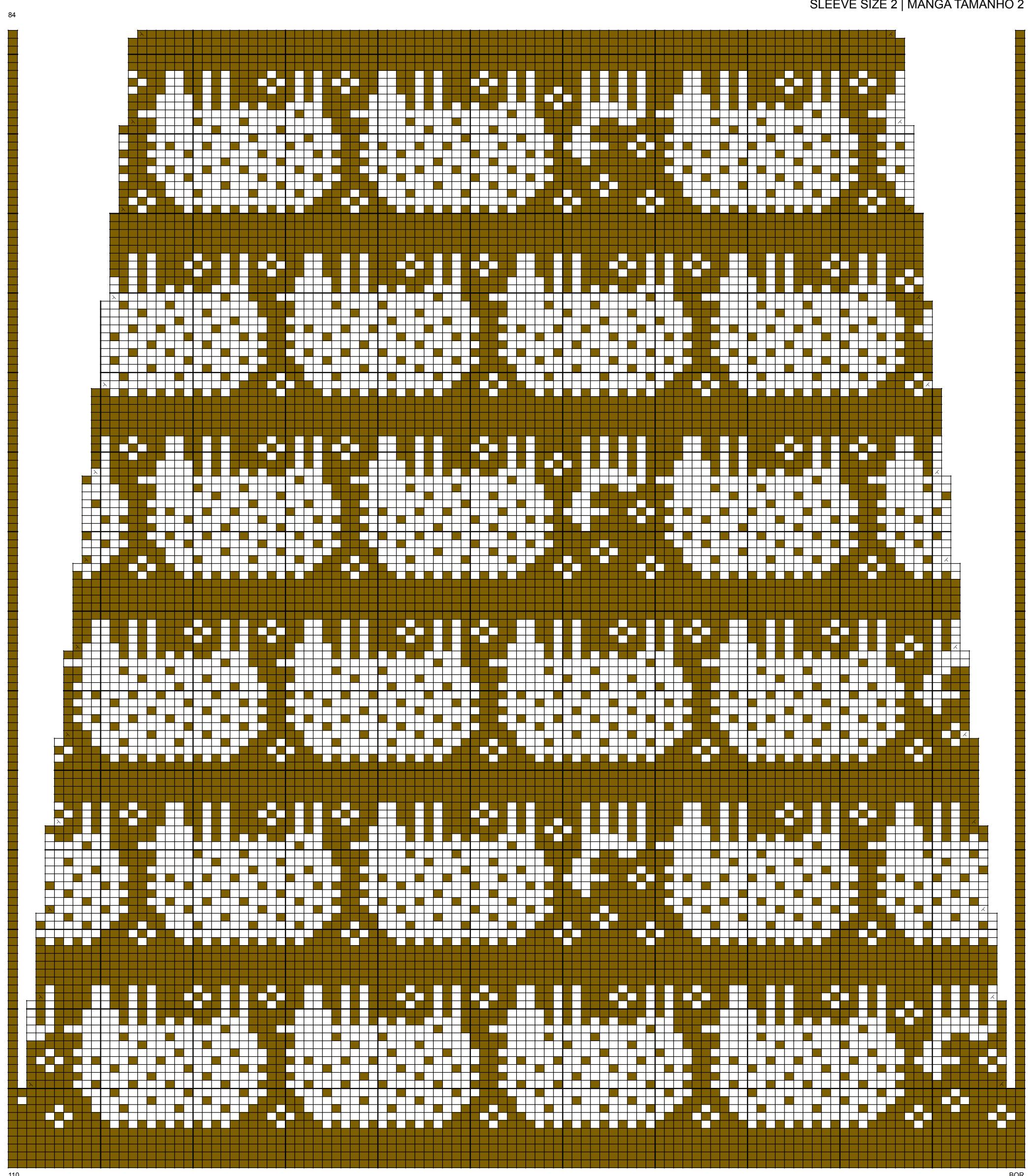
SIZE 2



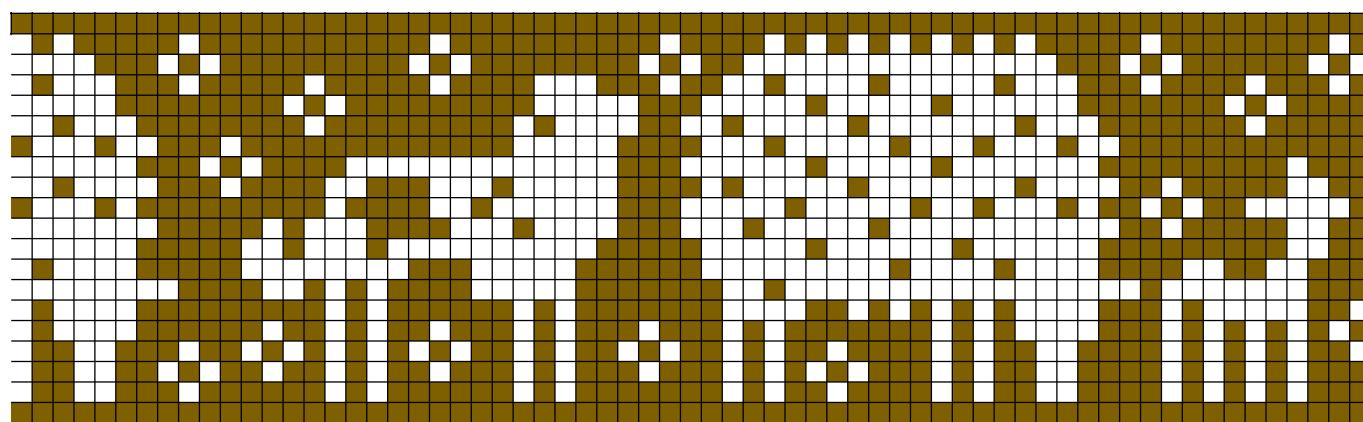




SLEEVE SIZE 2 | MANGA TAMANHO 2

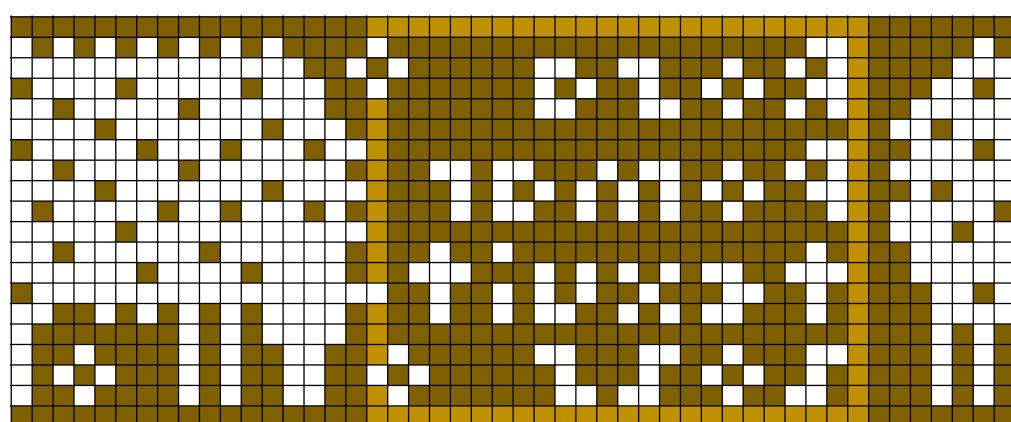


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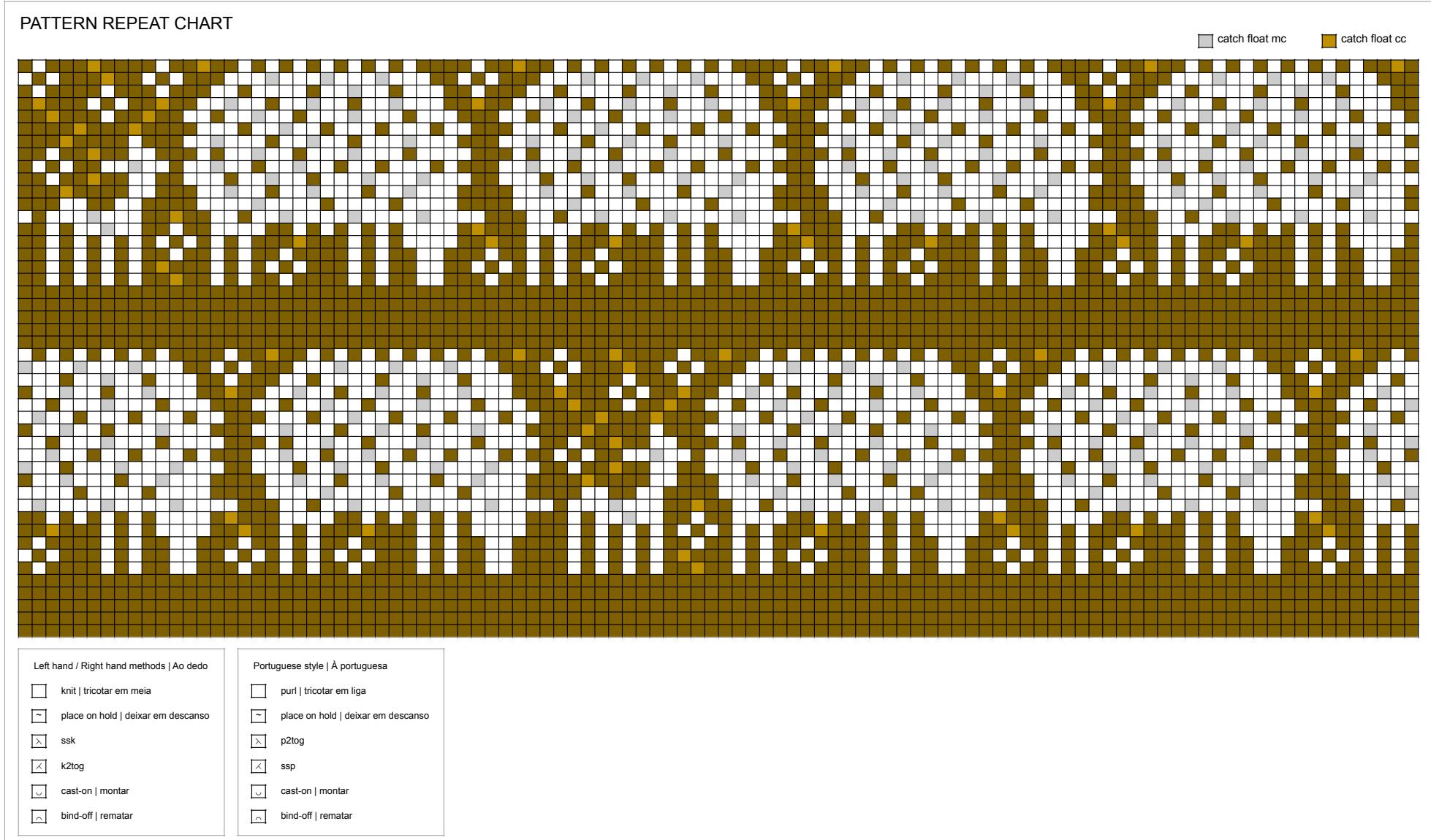
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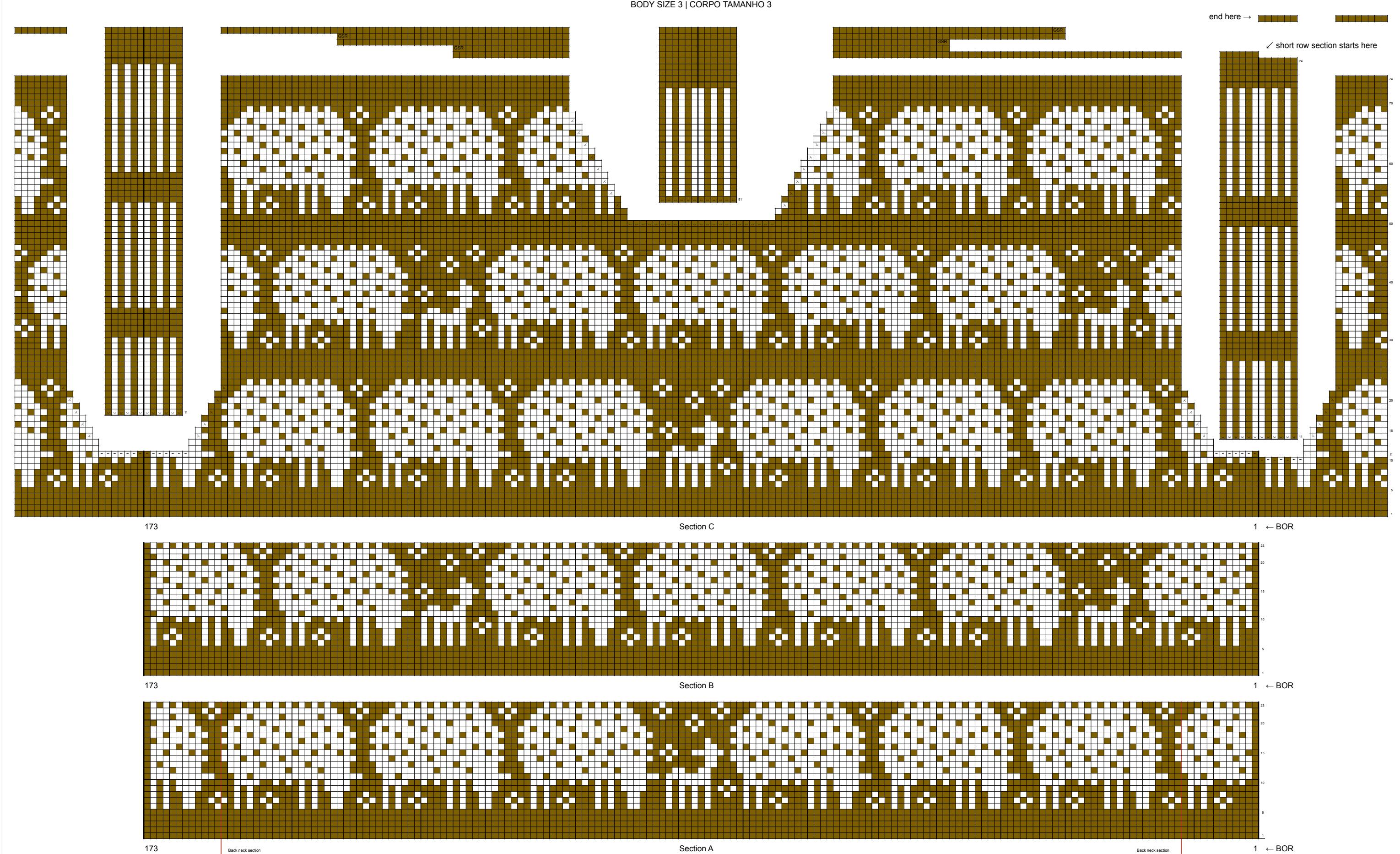
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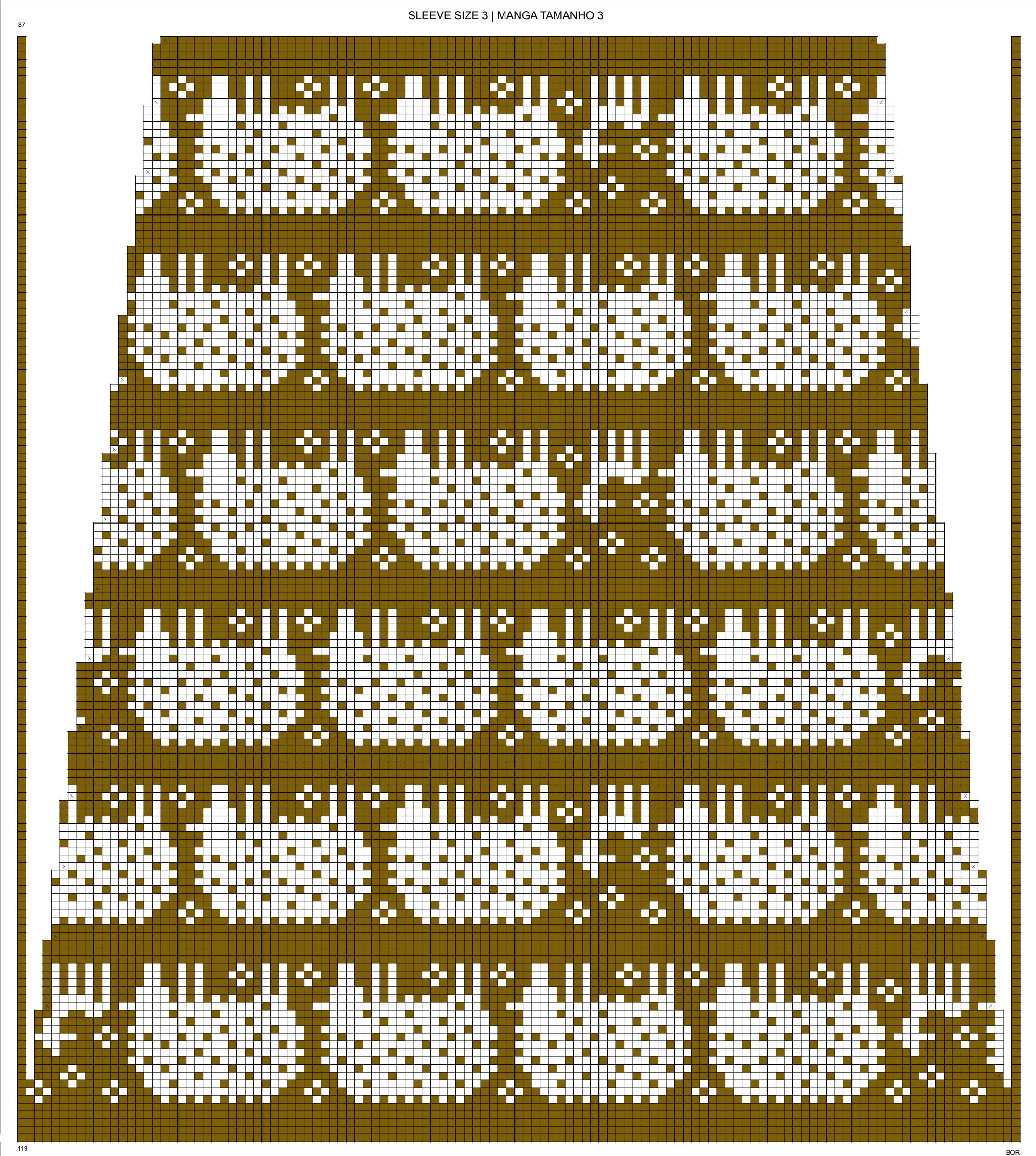
**CHARTS
SIZE 3**



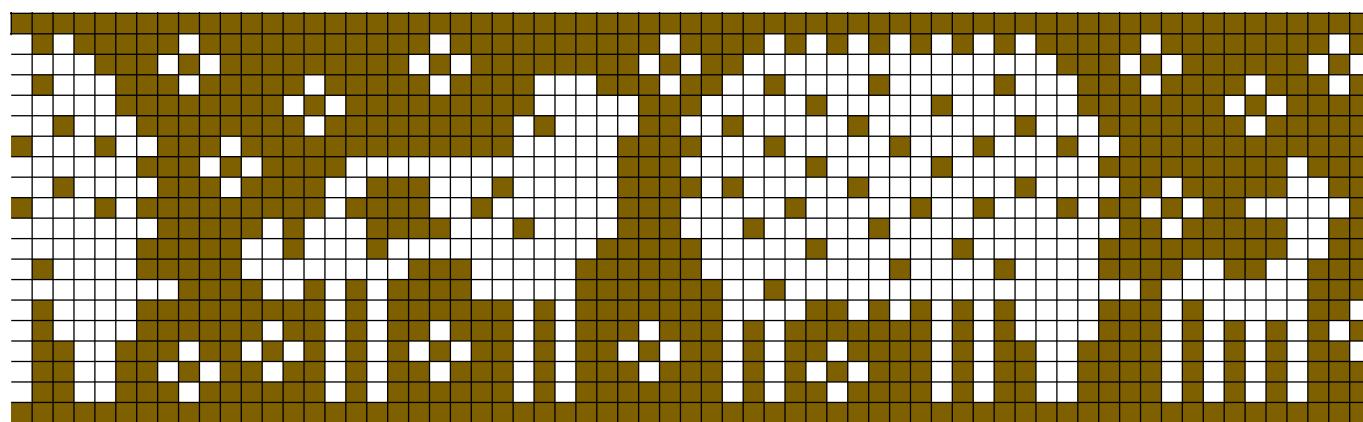
BODY SIZE 3 | CORPO TAMANHO 3



SLEEVE SIZE 3 | MANGA TAMANHO 3

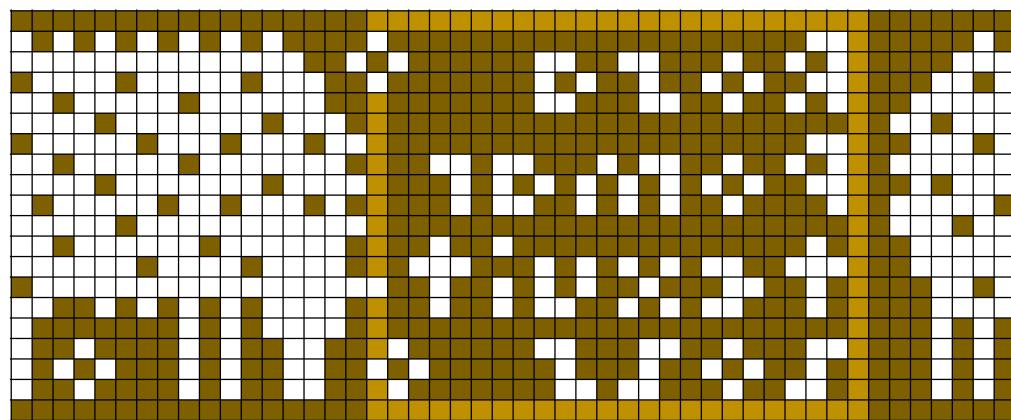


EXTRA CHARTS for adventurous knitters



The Sheep Dog: add a Rafeiro Alentejano sheep dog to your sweater to make sure the flock is safe from foxes and stray dogs!

Designed by Amélia Pomar to fit in the same number of sts as a sheep.



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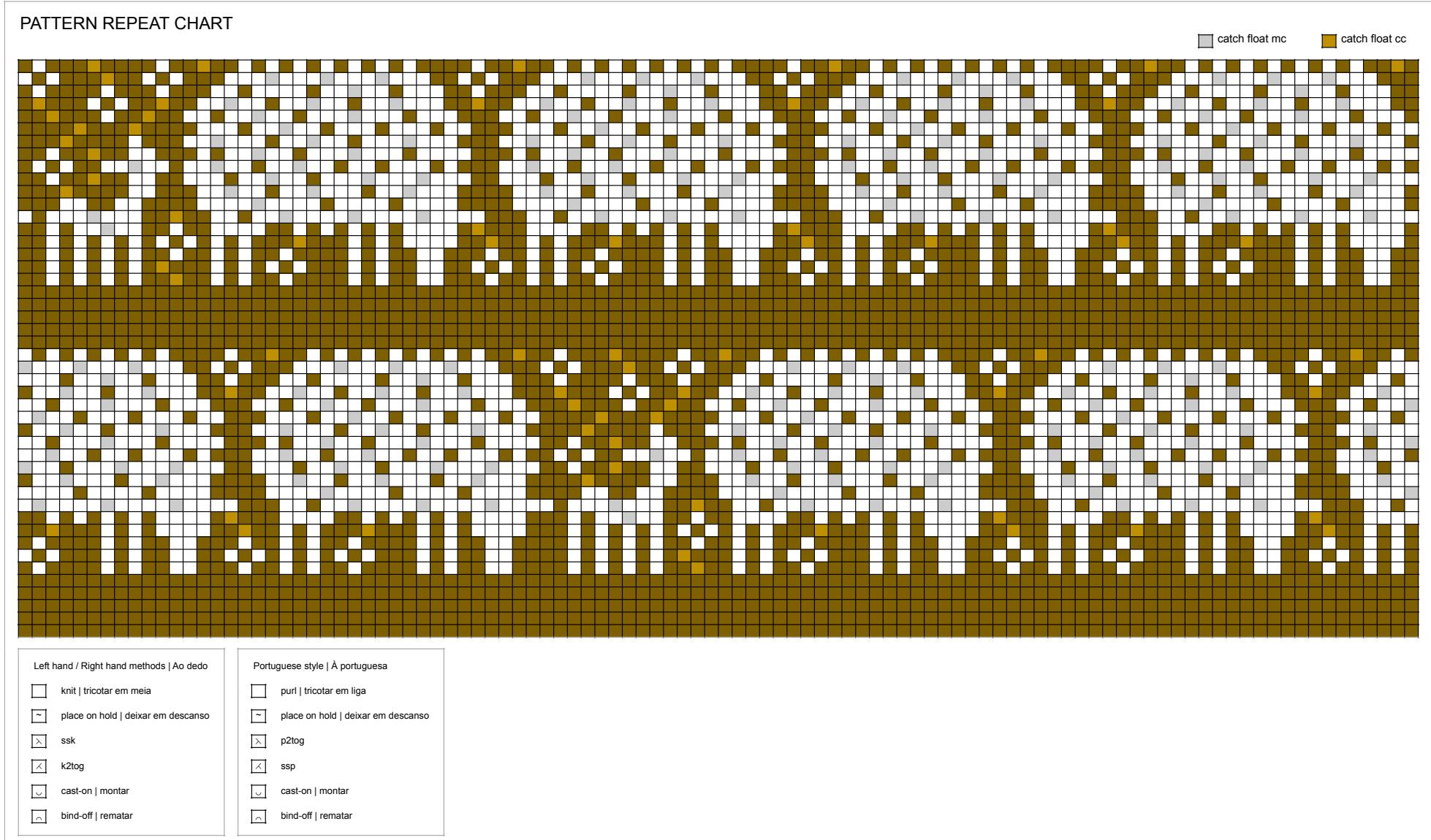


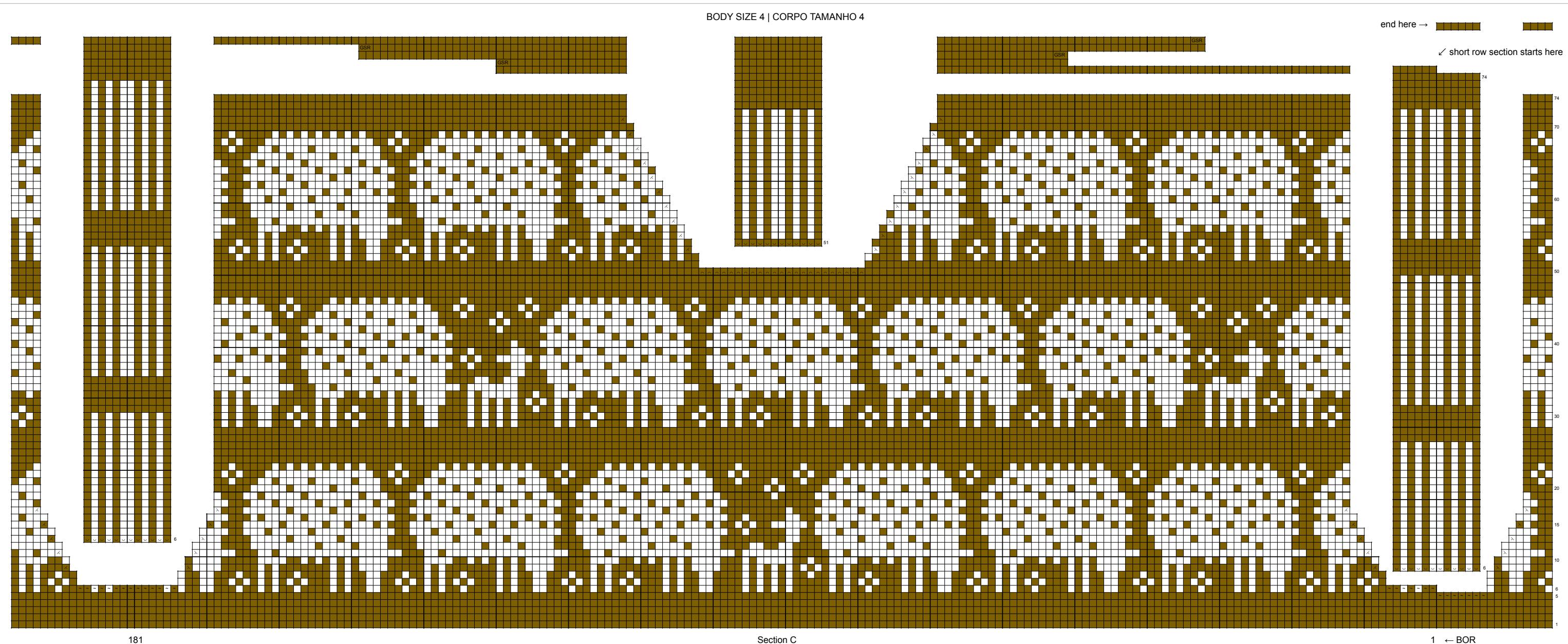
The Sheep Sweater

Rosa Pomar

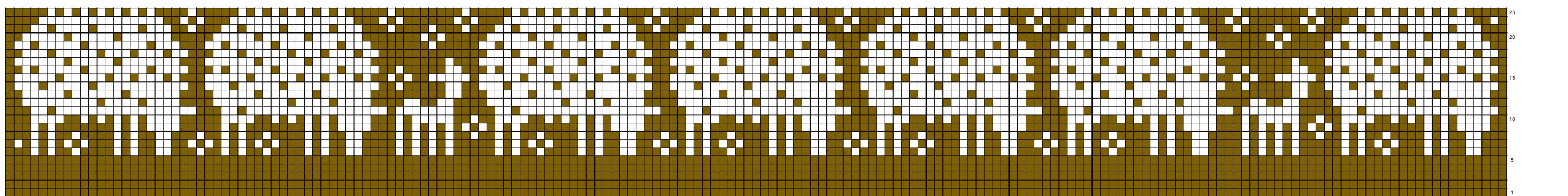
CHARTS

SIZE 4

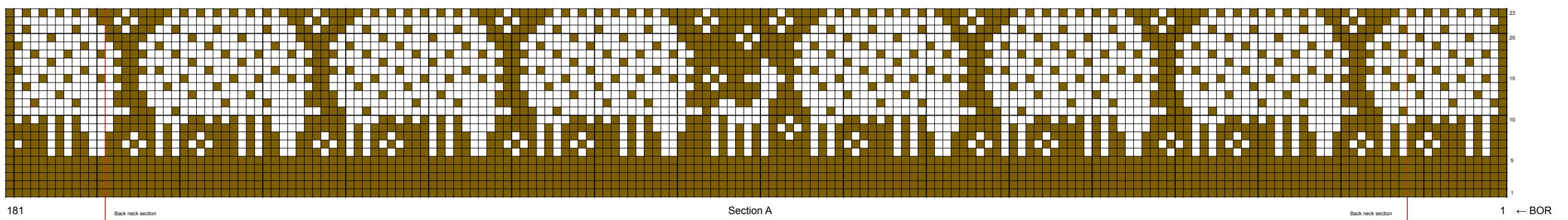


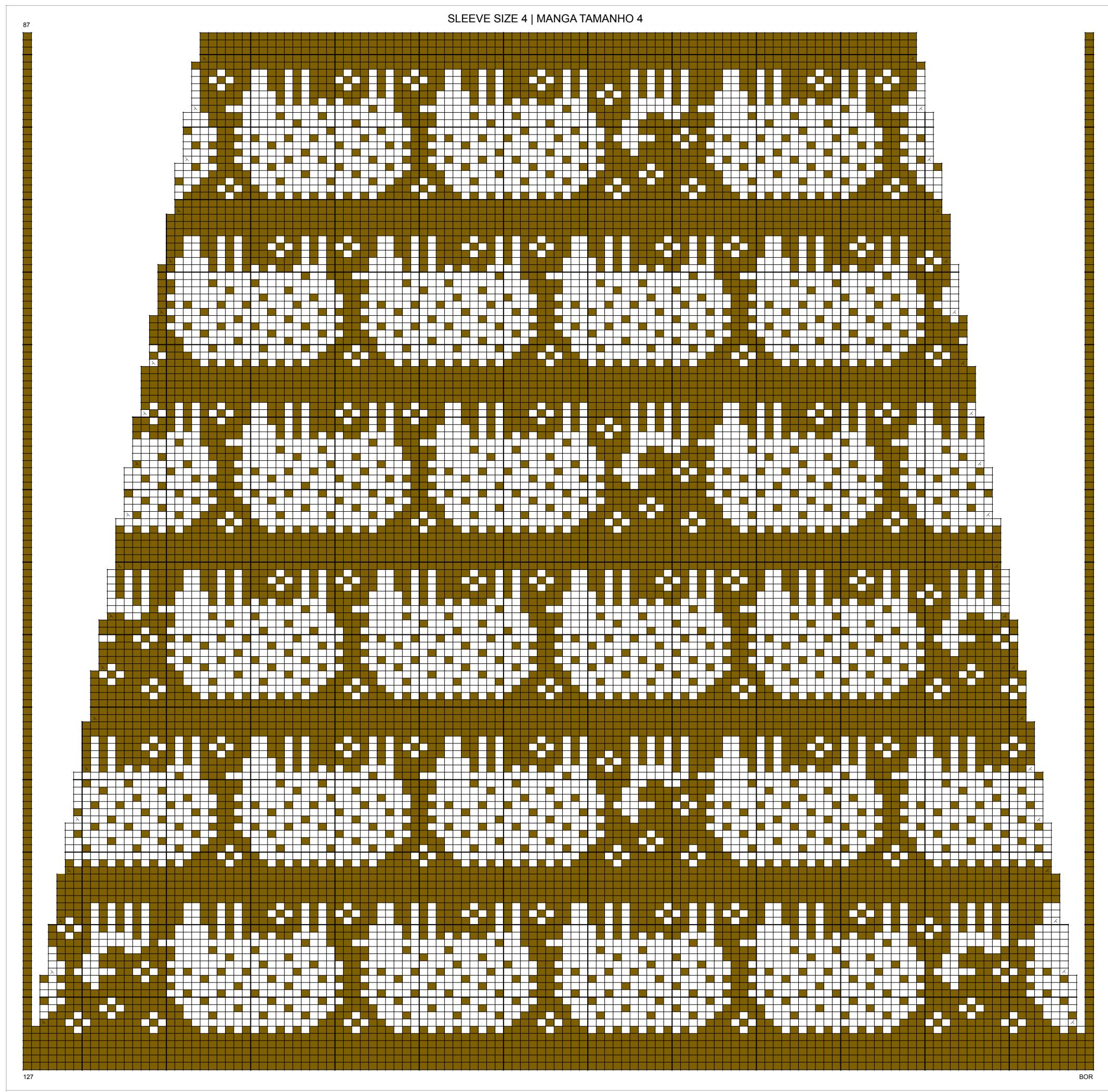


Section C

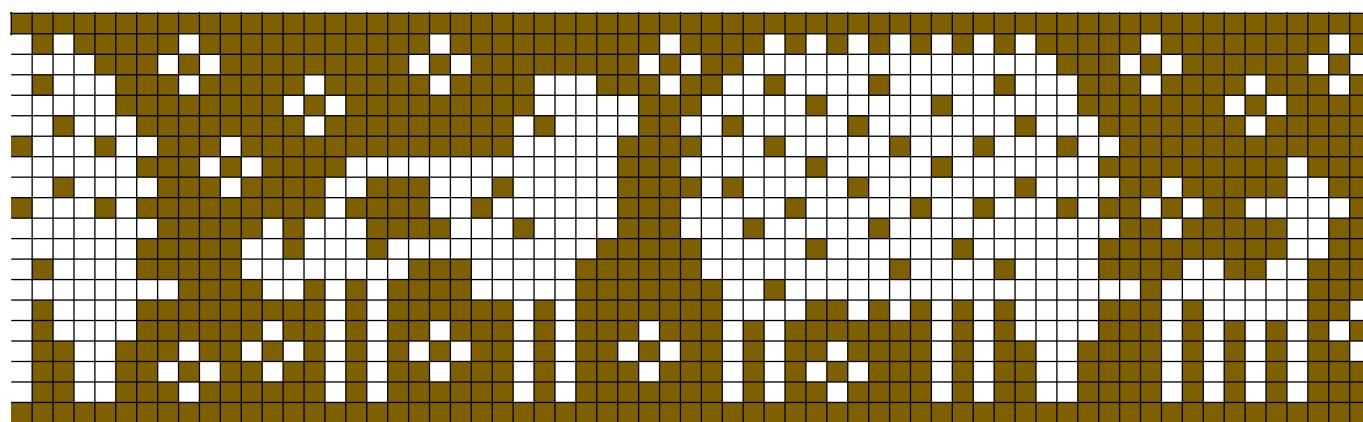


Section B



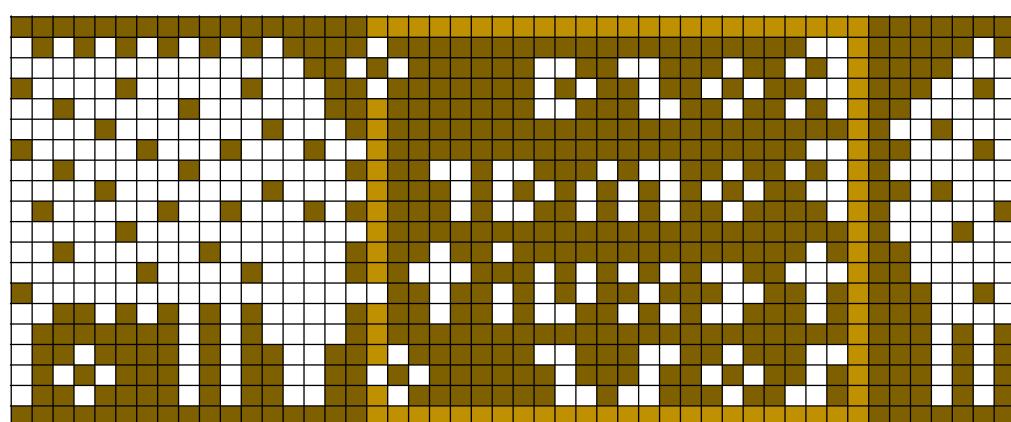


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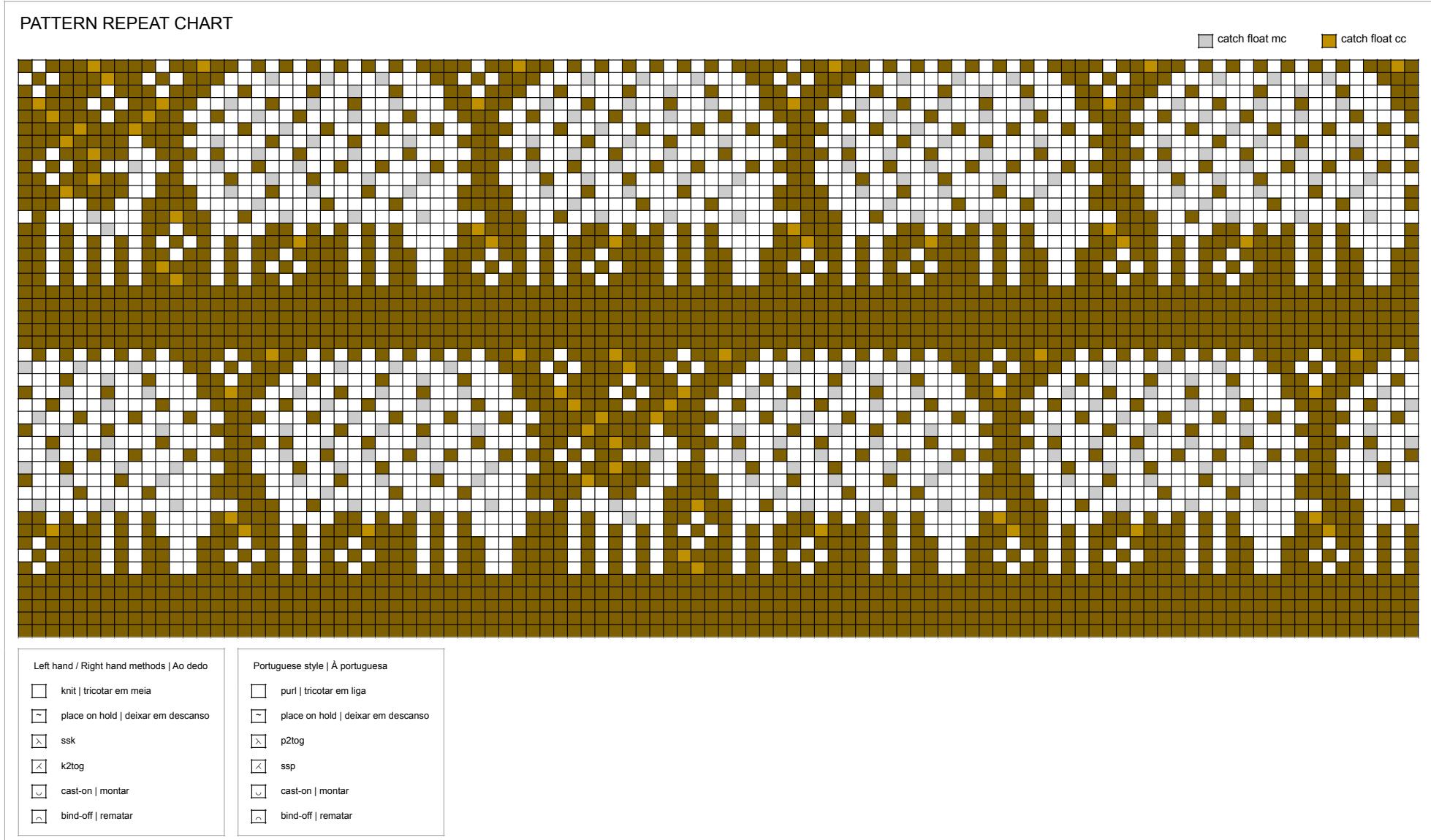
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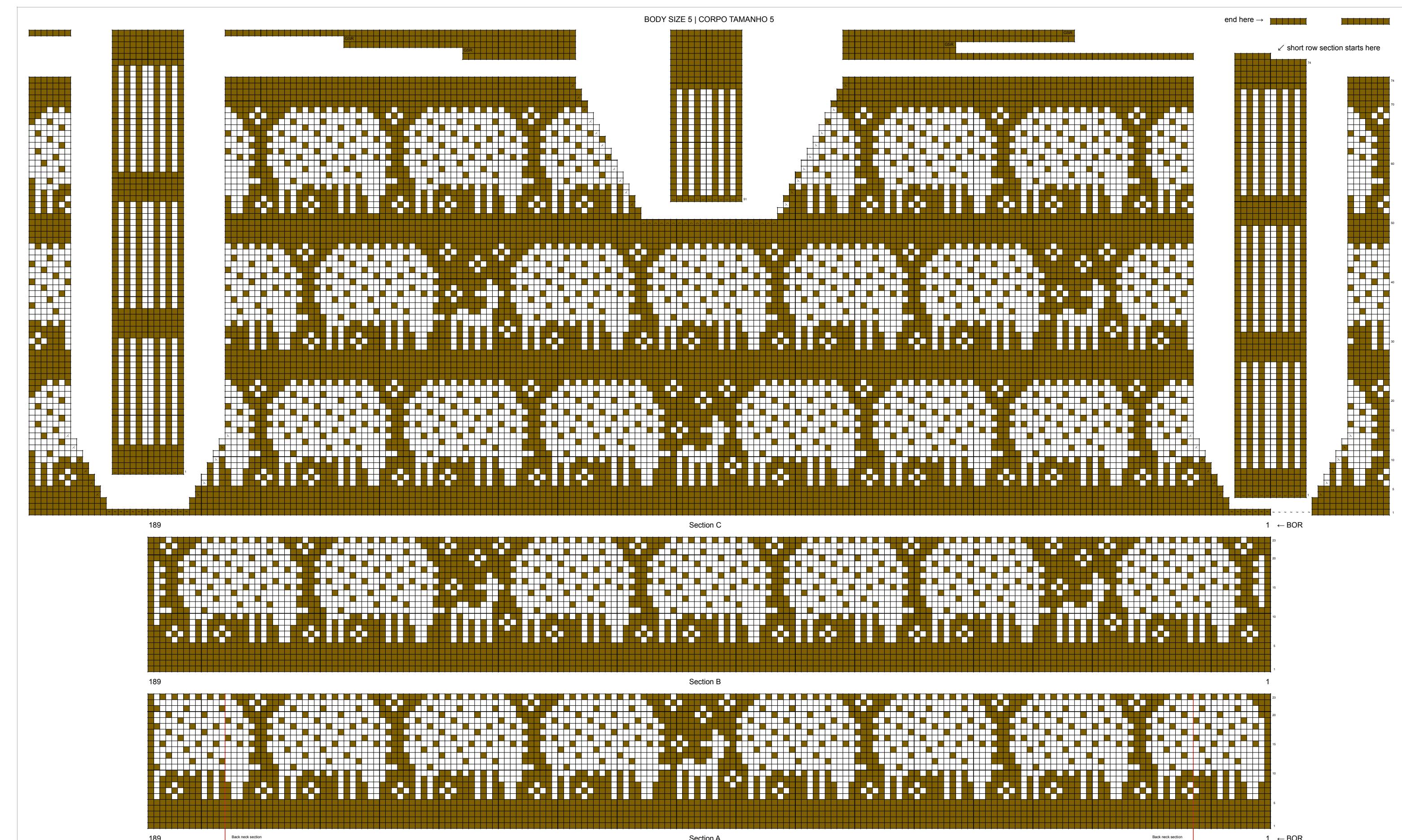


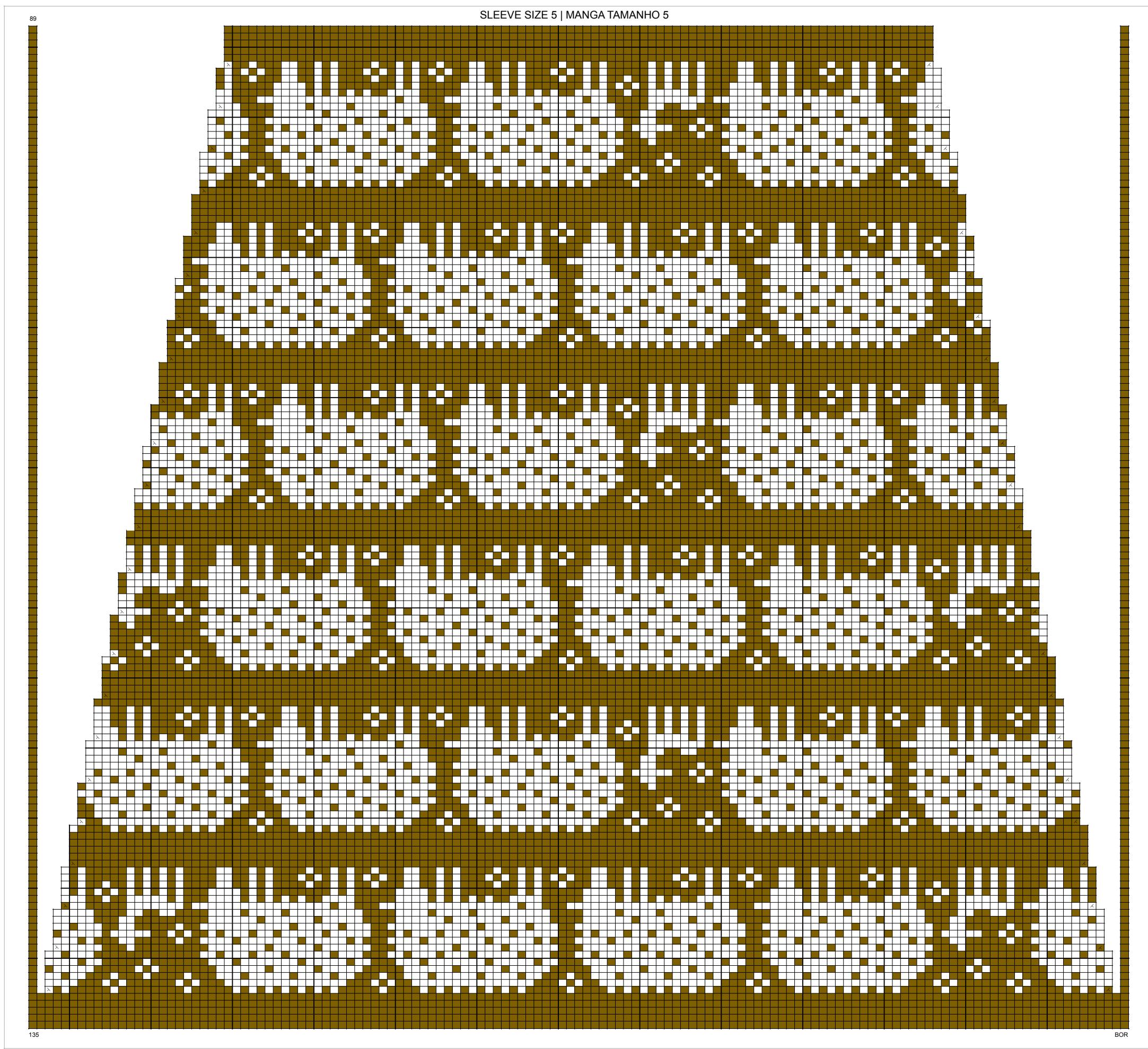
The Sheep Sweater

Rosa Pomar

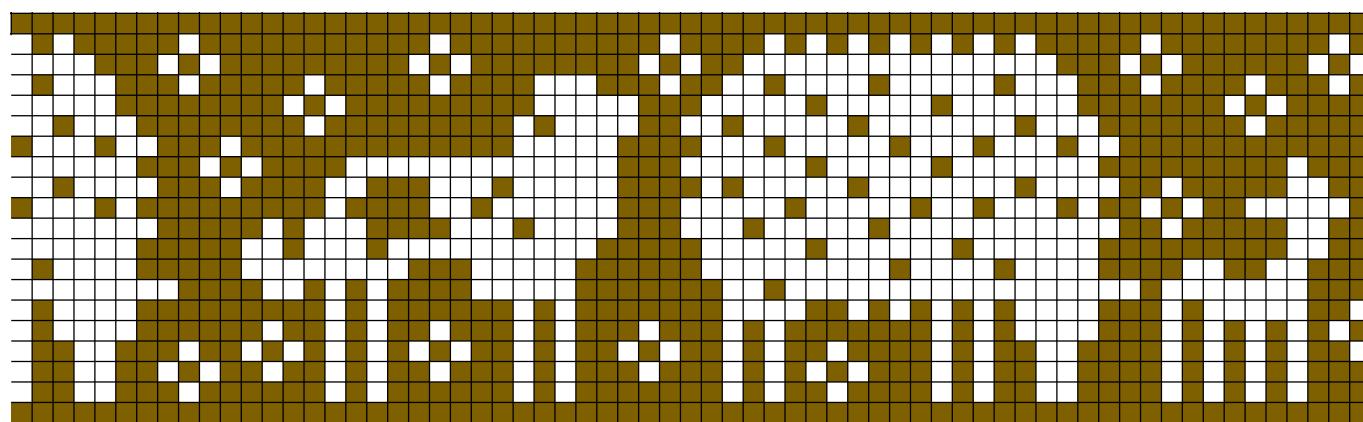
**CHARTS
SIZE 5**





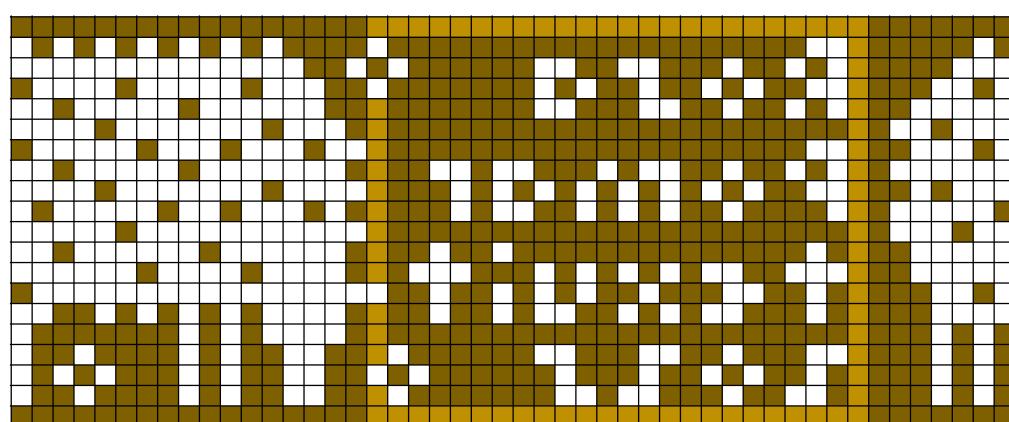


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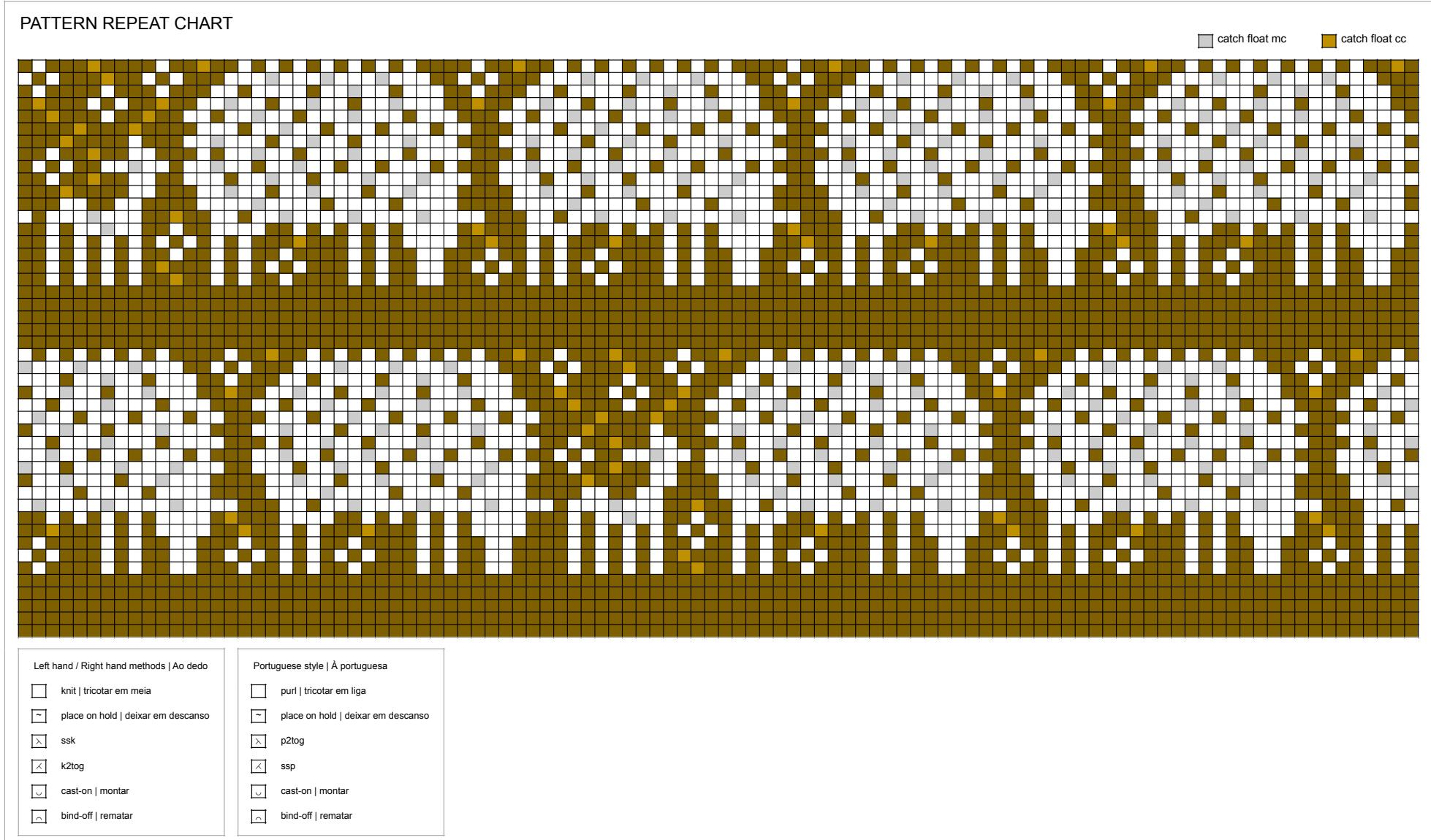
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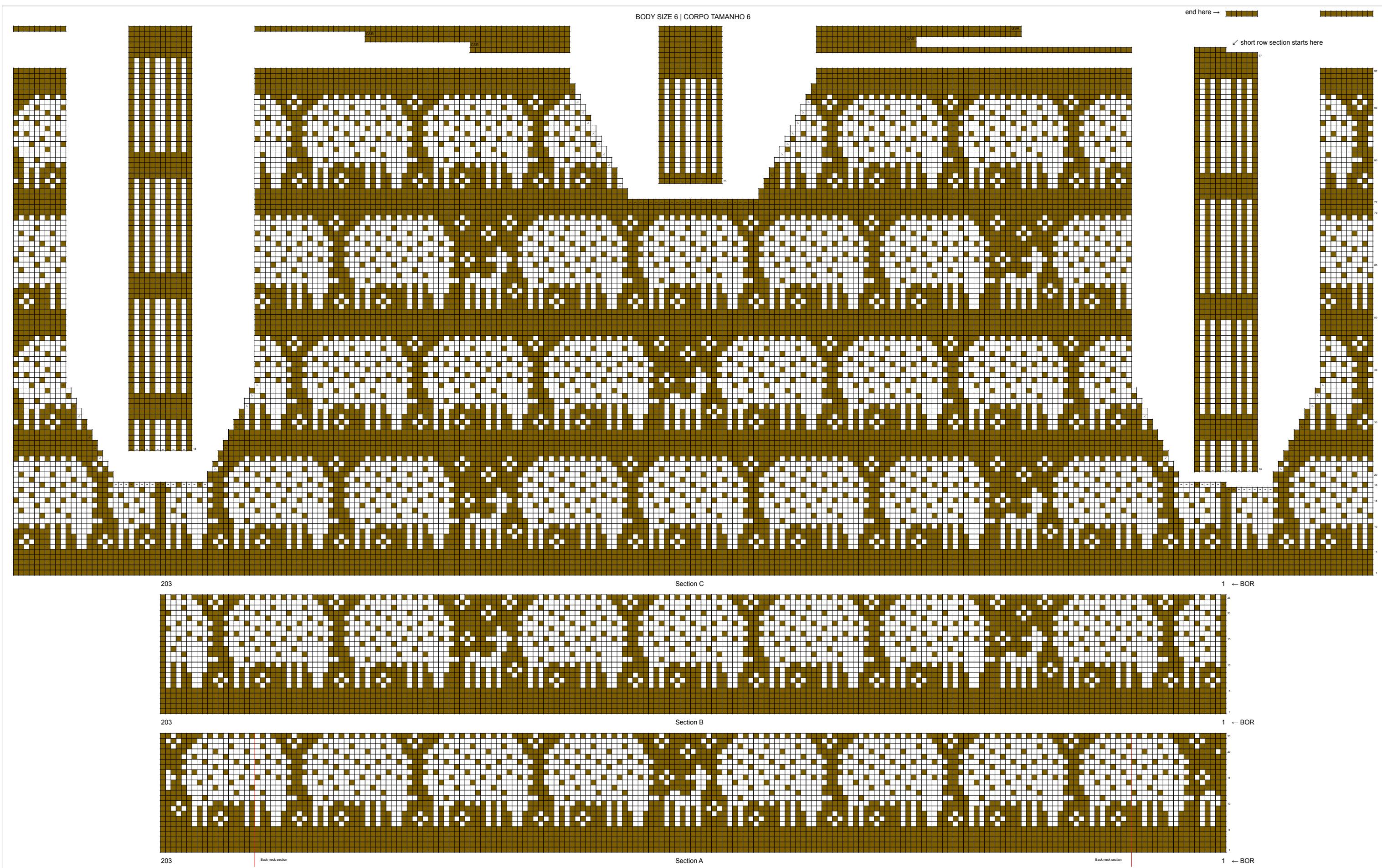


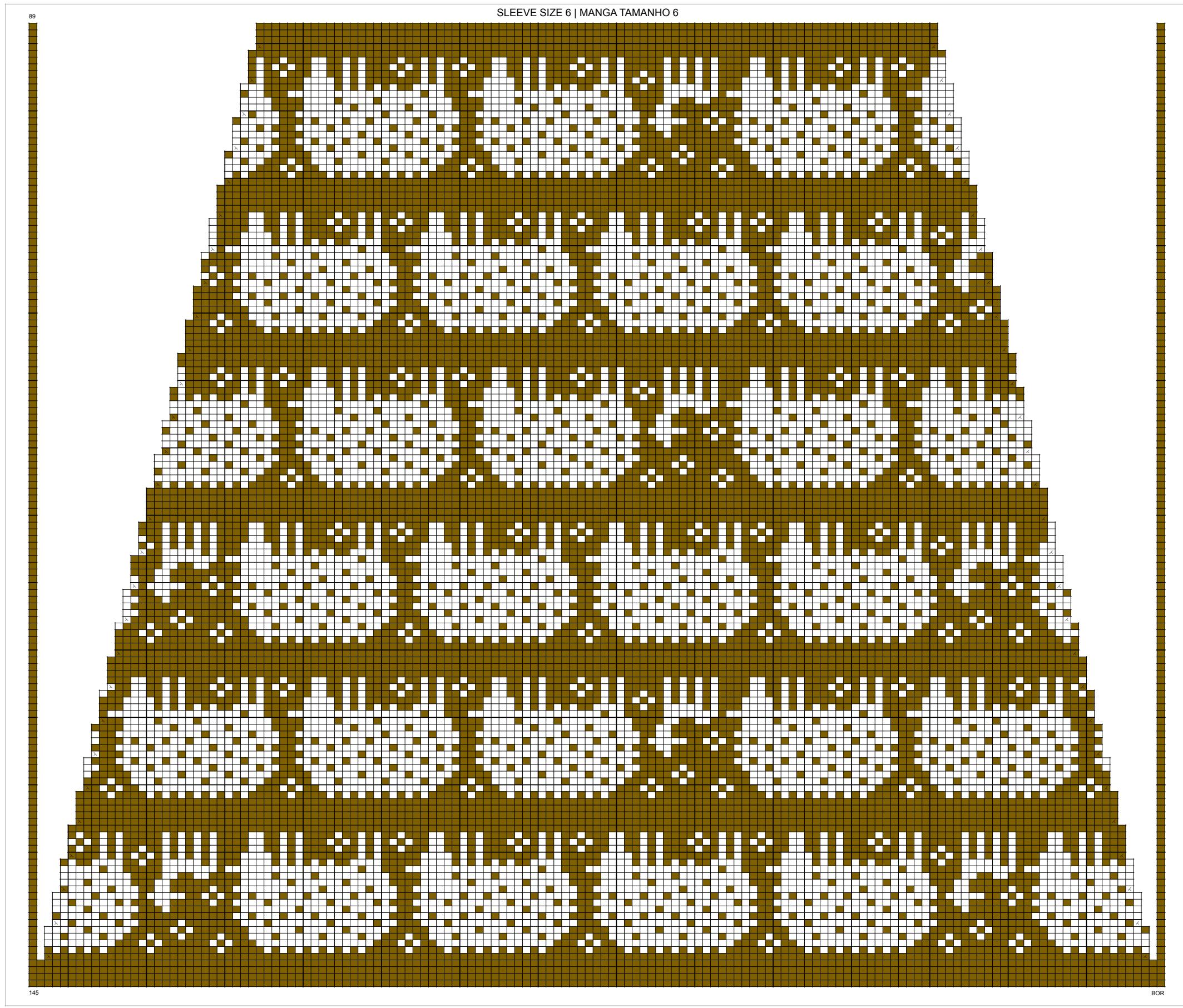
The Sheep Sweater

Rosa Pomar

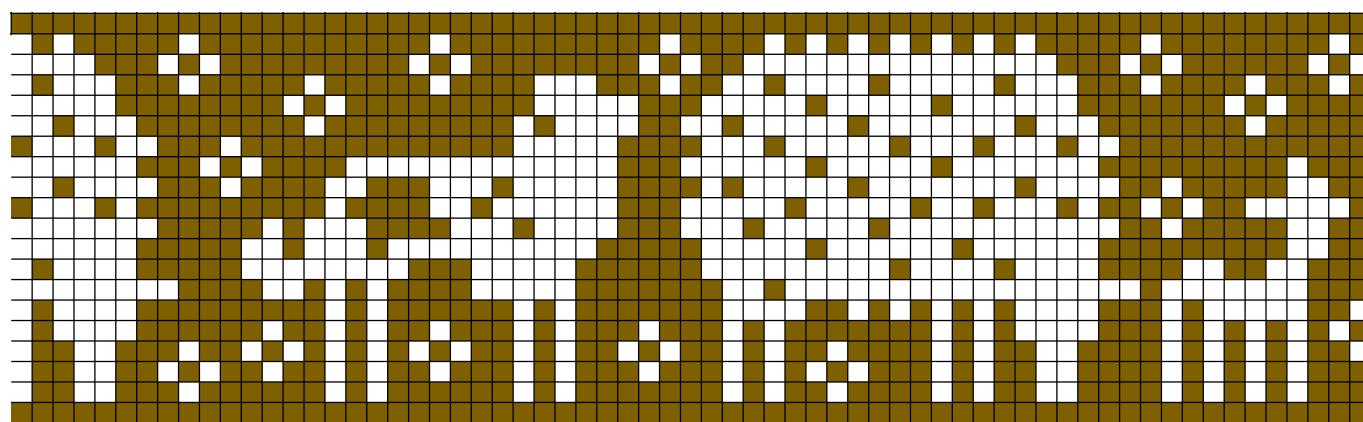
CHARTS
SIZE 6





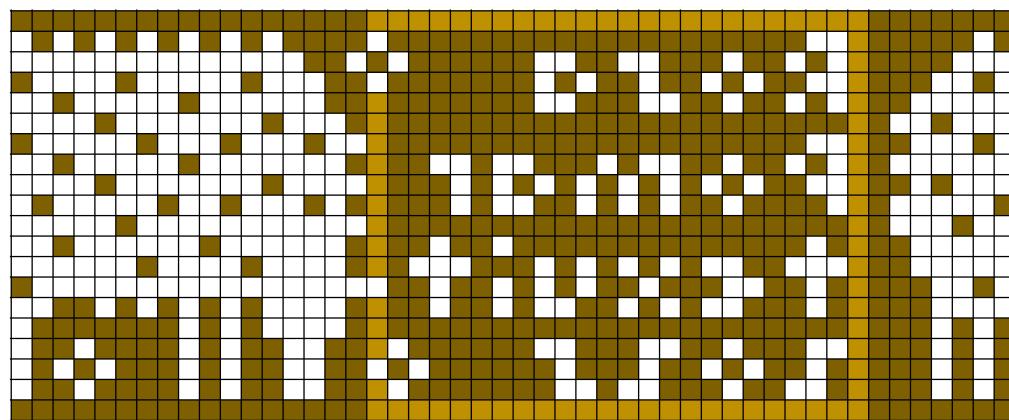


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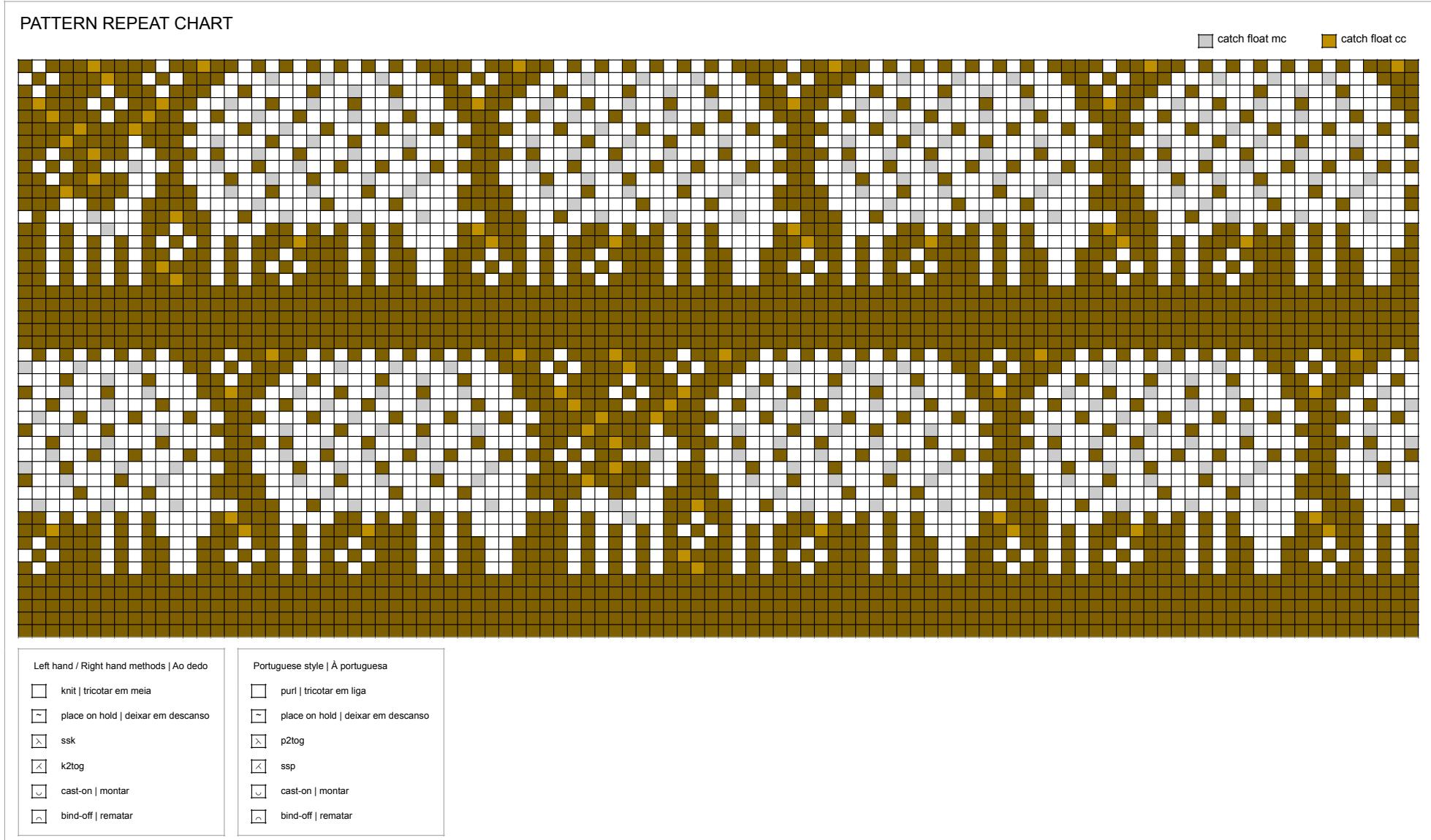
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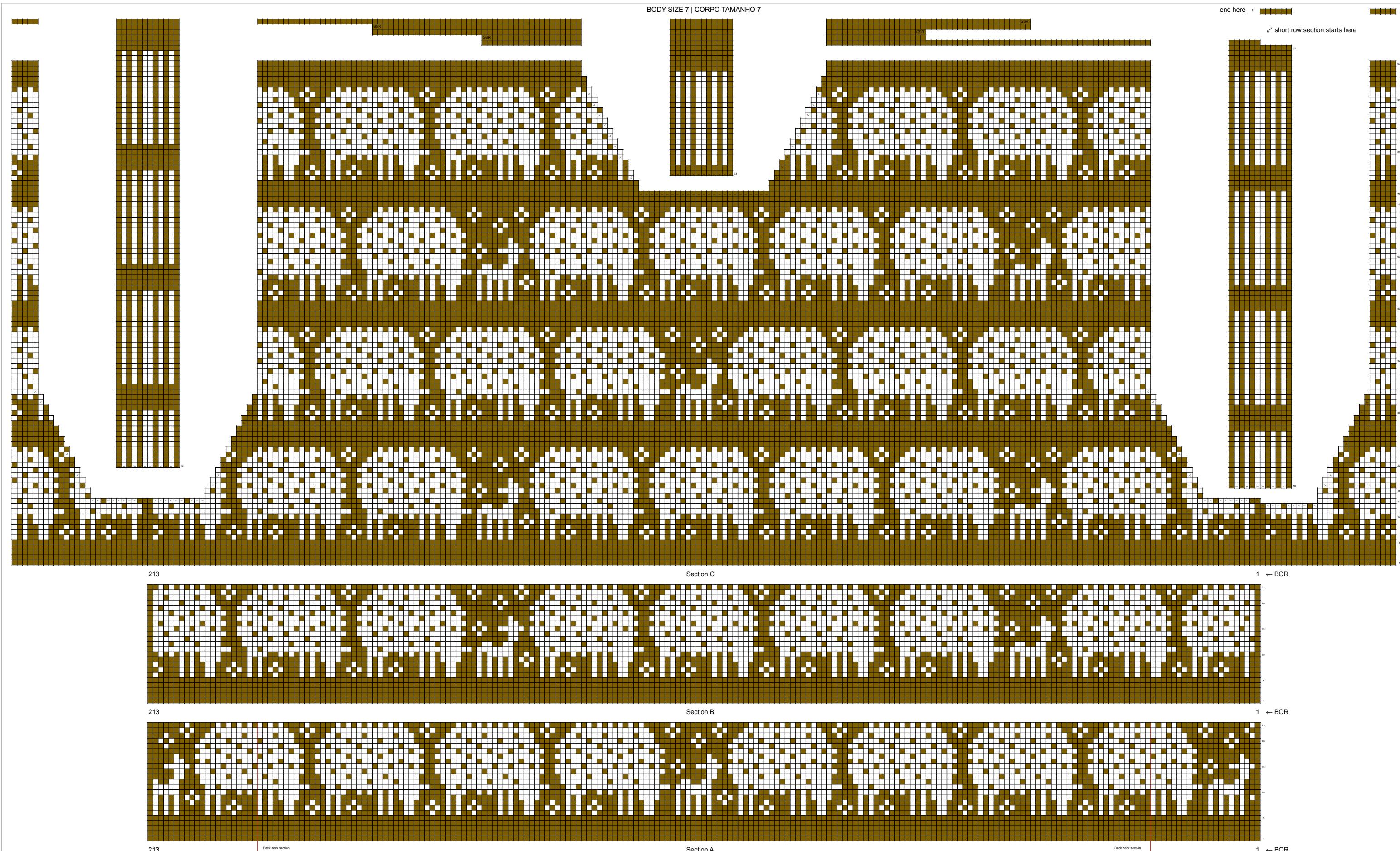


The Sheep Sweater

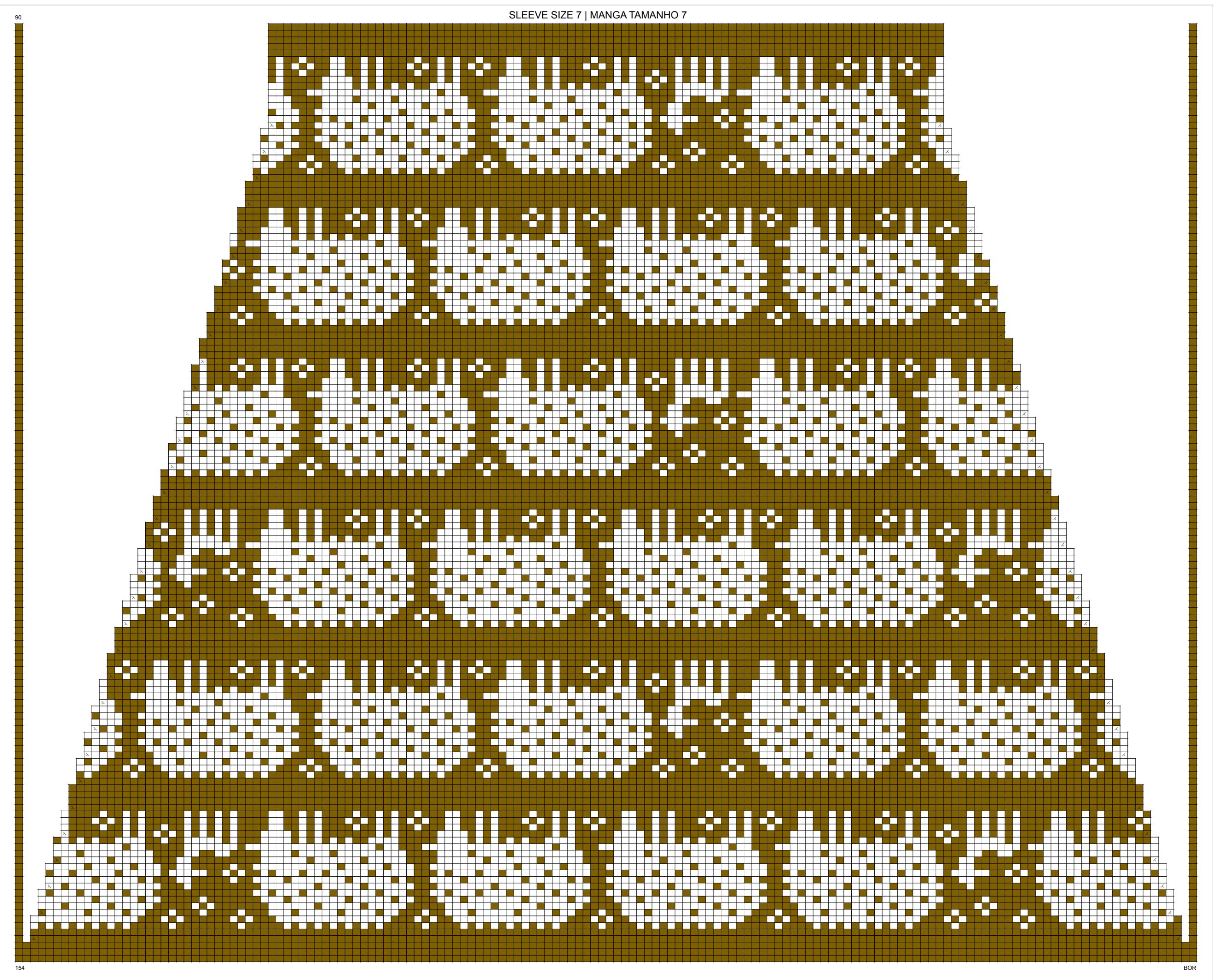
Rosa Pomar

CHARTS
SIZE 7

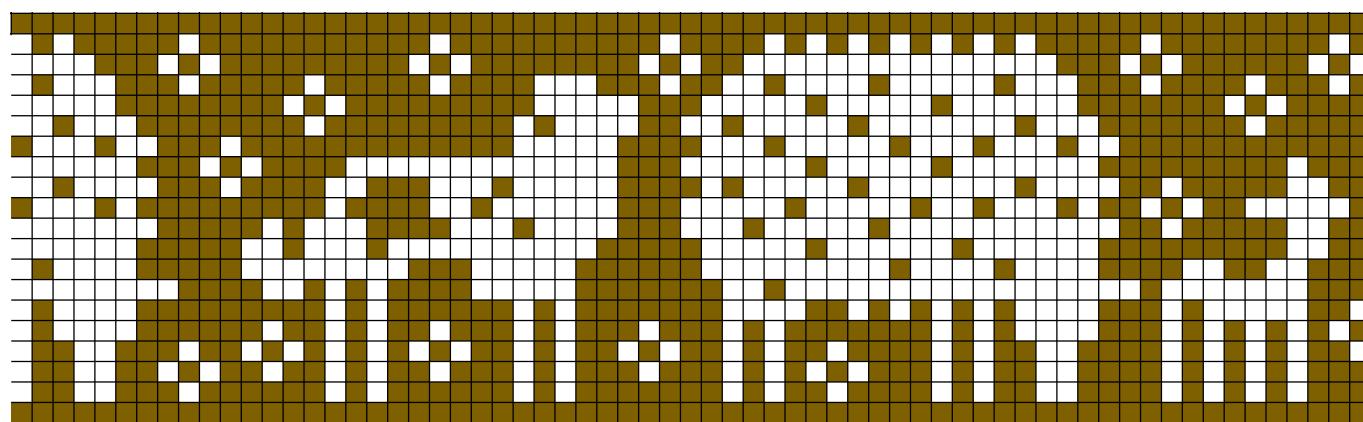




SLEEVE SIZE 7 | MANGA TAMANHO 7

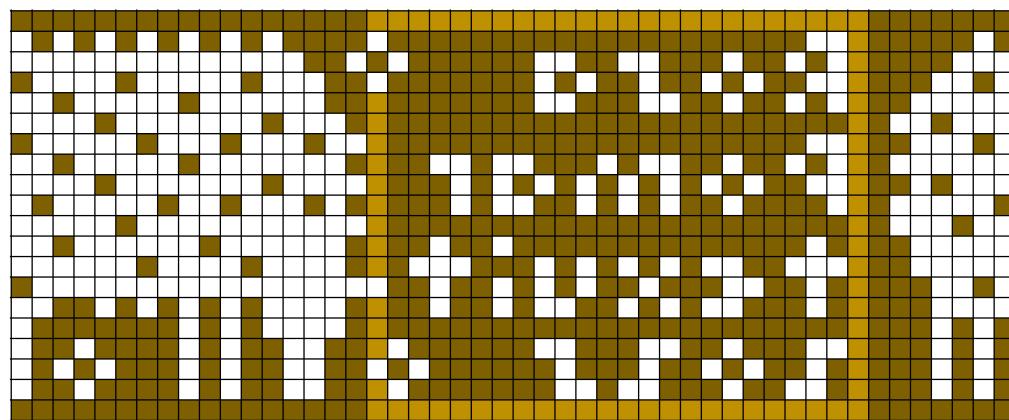


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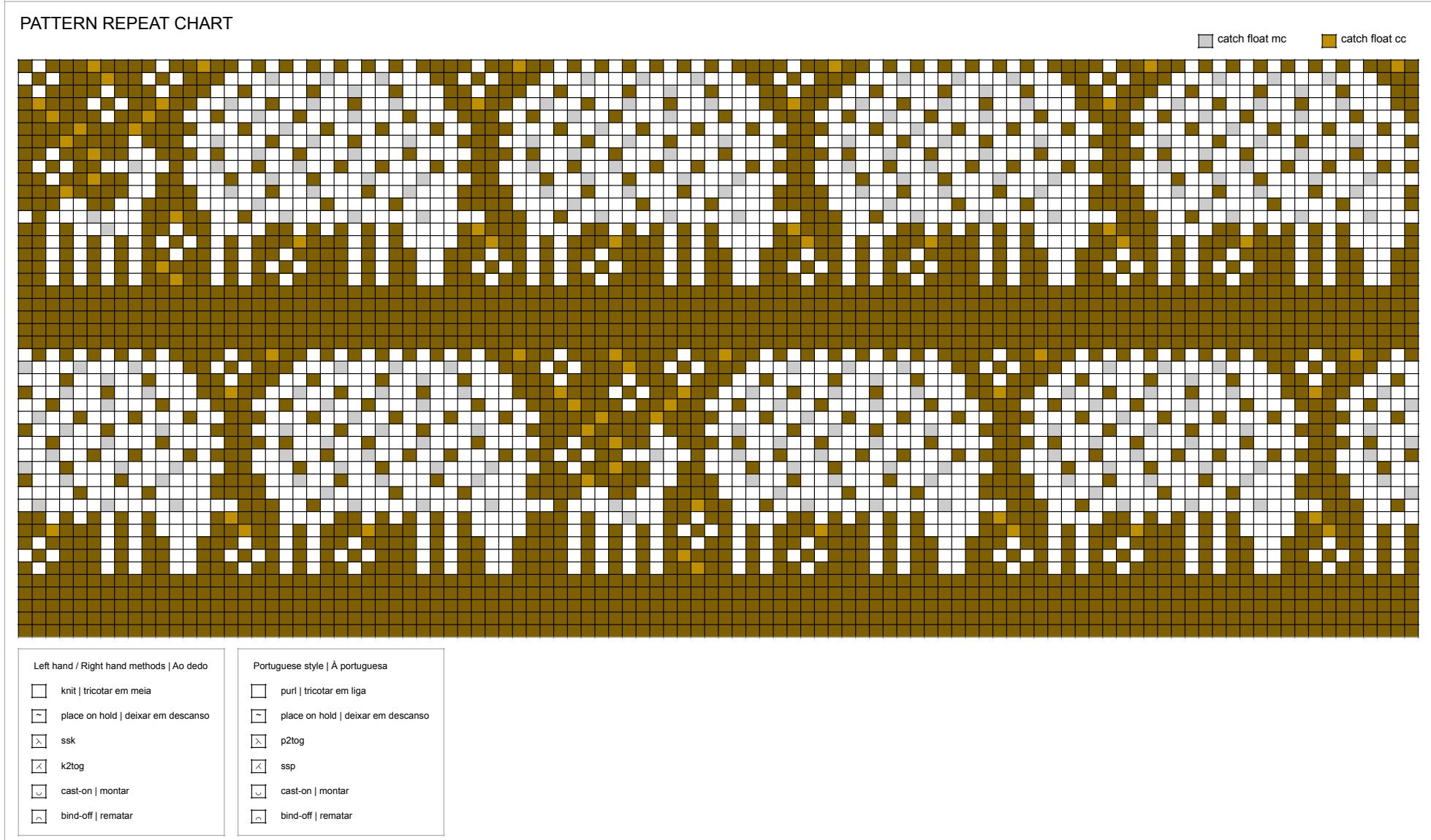
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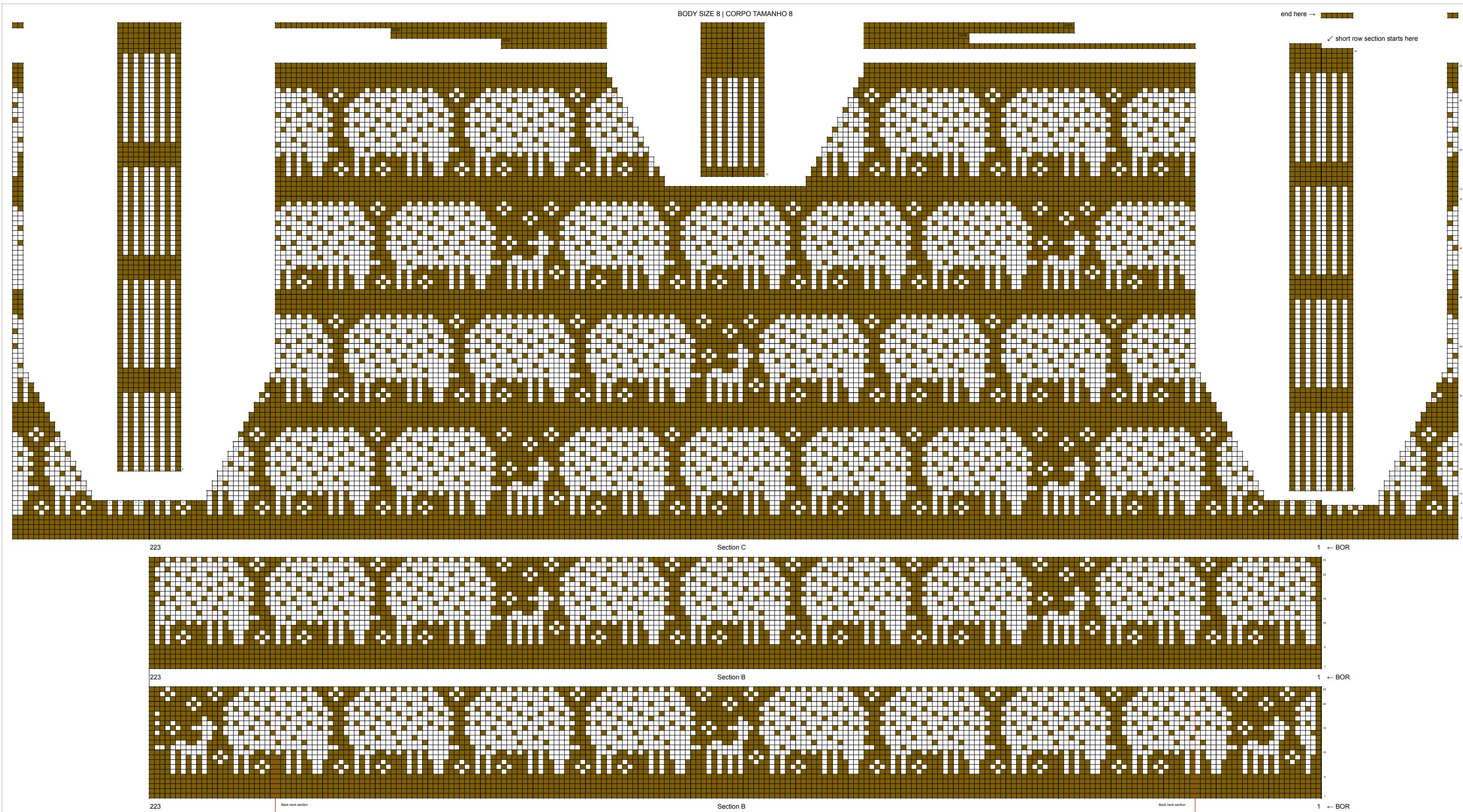


The Sheep Sweater

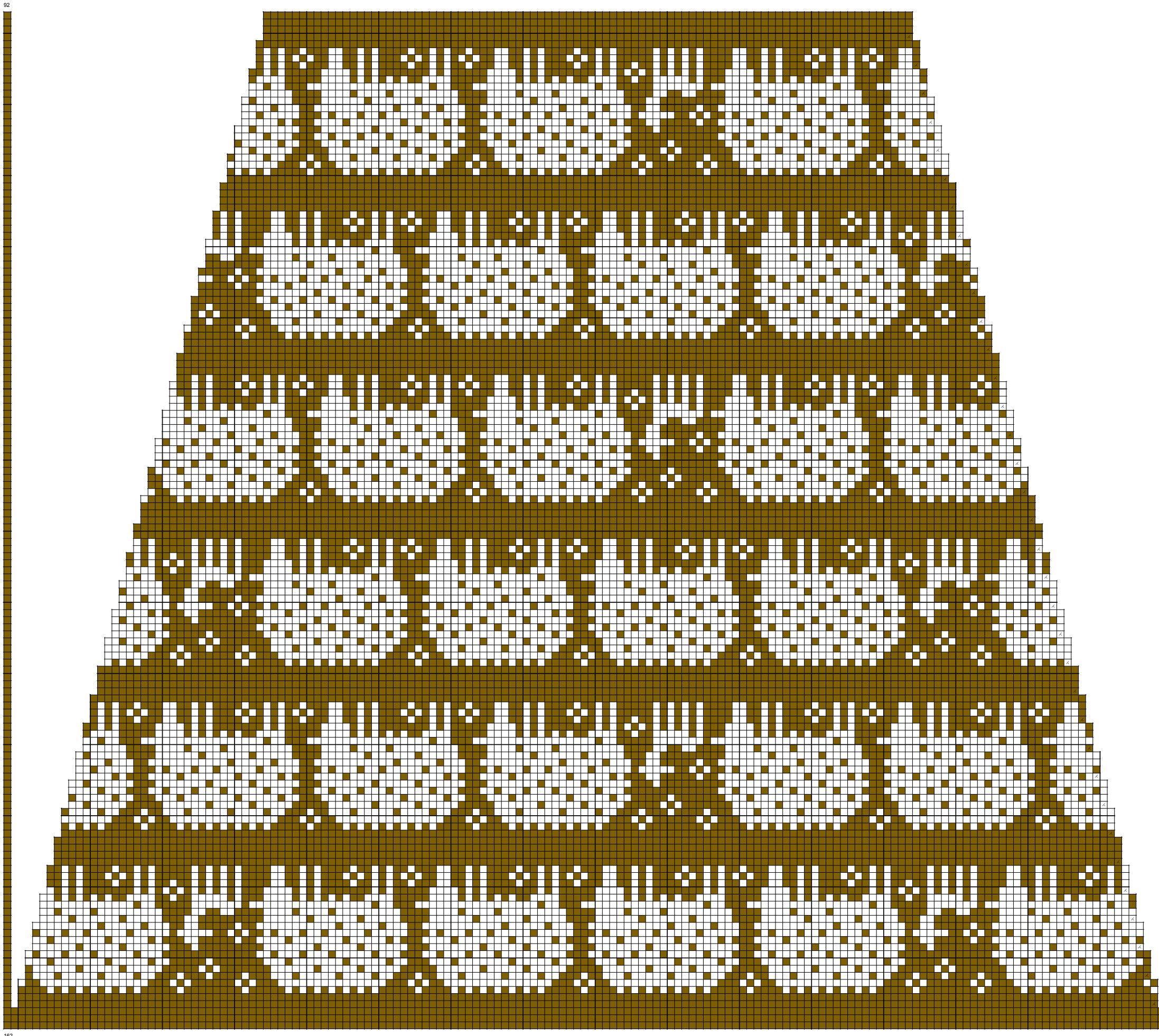
Rosa Pomar

CHARTS
SIZE 8

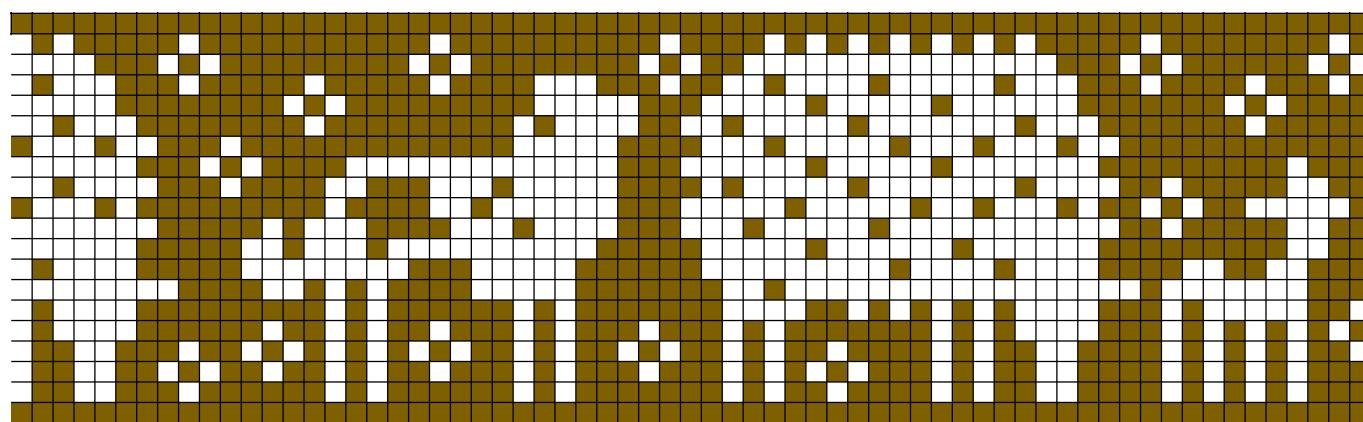




SLEEVE SIZE 8 | MANGA TAMANHO 8

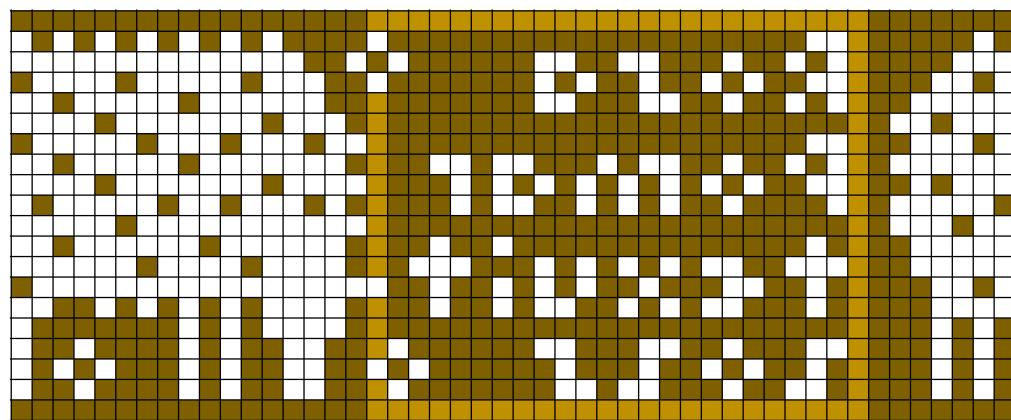


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