

## A- THE BASIS FOR BREEDING AND JUDGING FJORD HORSES

### The Description of the Fjord Horse

**Height:** There is no upper or lower limit, but the desired height at the withers is between 135 cm and 150 cm (13.1 – 14.3 Hands).

**Colours and markings:** The five accepted colours are brown dun, uls dun, grey (blue dun), red dun and yellow dun. It is important that the so-called primitive markings are appreciated and preserved.

A star is only accepted on a mare. Other visible markings are not accepted. \*)

**Hair:** The forelock on mature horses covers from one half to two thirds of the head. Excessive feathering on the legs is not desirable. Tradition rules that the Fjord should have an upright mane. The horse ought to be presented with a clipped mane in a convex shape to complement the neck's top line.

**The head** is important when assessing breed type and character. It should be proportional, small and well defined, with a wide and flat forehead. The length from the eye to the muzzle should be short; the profile should be straight or preferably slightly dished (concave). The eyes should be large, dark and bright with a calm expression. The nostrils ought to be wide and in proportion so that the muzzle gives a "square" appearance. The jaws should be well defined. The lower jaws must not be so heavy as to make the head appear coarse. There should be sufficient width between the jaws to ensure free movement of the head or flexion of the poll. The ears should be relatively short, with a refined point at the tips and wide set. The ears should be parallel, with an outward curvature from the tip to the middle of the ear. Long pointed ears that are close together and in constant movement are not typical of the Fjord Horse.

#### **Conformation/ structure and muscular development:**

It is important that the body parts are in harmony. Variations in the breed may be accepted, but the Fjord Horse should have good depth through the heart girth and width through the barrel and a proportional amount of muscling reflecting gender and age.

**The neck** ought to be set high and have a convex top line. Stallions especially often have a strong neck. The Fjord for a period of time was used for heavy work, so a short, strong neck and straight shoulder was seen as an asset and favoured. Today a longer and suppler neck is desired, being more suitable for riding, driving and as a packhorse. Length at the poll and a smooth transition from the head to the neck is desired. It must be recognised that a long, thin neck is not desirable

**Shoulder and withers:** The shoulder region influences significantly the movement of the horse; hence today it is desirable to have a gently sloping shoulder angle, which allows forward extension of the forelimbs. (A straight shoulder was wanted when the Fjord was used for heavy work). The withers of the Fjord Horse are not typically prominent but blend smoothly into the back.

\*) Further information may be found in Chap. A-The Colours of the Fjord Horse and the Primitive Markings and Chap. E- Genetics of Colour

The withers should be sufficiently well defined so as to be a good anchor point for the shoulder- and back muscles. The forehand should have the same length as the back and hindquarters.

**Body and top line:** The ribs should be well sprung, yet not round. The back and the loin area should be smooth and well muscled. The loins are extremely important and should be carefully assessed, as they are the bridge between the mid-section and the hindquarters. The transition between the loin and croup should be flexible and blend smoothly together. The length of the coupling/ loin should be short, yet strong and proportional to the back and the croup.

**The Hindquarters:** The croup should be long, broad, well muscled and sloping. Too sloping or too flat are not desirable. The tail should not be set on too high or too low and it should be carried freely and naturally. The thighs should be sufficiently long, well muscled seen both from the side and from behind, and should be set as wide as the quarters.

**Legs:** The forearm should be broad and well muscled. In the hind legs the thigh and gaskin muscling should be long and well developed seen both from the side and from behind. Too long a gaskin is considered a drawback for a draught horse. The legs should be correctly aligned and with adequate bone. The joints and tendons must be clearly defined and dry. A short and firm cannon bone is desired. The cannon bones ought to be clean and dry, and should not be tied below the knee.

The knee (carpal joint) should be large, and well defined.

The hock joint should be large, well developed and dry. Small ill-defined hocks are not suitable for the breed. The point of the hock must be prominent when viewed from the side. Too straight or bowed hocks are objectionable.

The fetlock joints should be strong and well defined.

The pasterns should be strong, and sufficiently long and sloping to give adequate support and elasticity. The hooves of the Fjord Horse should be well balanced and proportionately round and large, with good horn quality, the inside of the hoof wall may be slightly steeper than the outside. Good sound hooves are extremely important for the horse.

**The movements** are particularly important for the horse, and must reflect the conformation in sufficient elasticity and impulsion to perform an effortless walk, trot and canter. The movements should be energetic, with good balance and cadence. The Fjord Horse must move freely in all three gaits. The canter should be balanced, and free with supple and elastic forward movement. The trot shall be energetic, however excessive action is considered not typical for the breed.

**Gender characteristics:** The Fjord Horse should have distinct gender characteristics; the stallion should be masculine and the mare feminine.