

**THE NORWEGIAN FJORD HORSE BREED STANDARD**

**NORWEGIAN FJORD HORSE REGISTRY**

**CONFORMATION AND PERFORMANCE**

**EVALUATION PROGRAM**

**III. Breed Standard**

# THE NORWEGIAN FJORD HORSE BREED STANDARD

## BREED HISTORY AND TYPE

The Norwegian Fjord Horse is one of the world's oldest and purest breeds. It is believed that the original Fjord Horse migrated to Norway and was domesticated over 4,000 years ago. Archeological excavations at Viking burial sites indicate the Fjord Horse has been selectively bred for 2,000 years. The breed still exhibits strong survival instincts and remains healthy, fertile, and useful well into its long life. Fjords are extremely efficient foragers, and thrive equally well in the pasture or stable, adapting easily to the weather conditions of their environment, be it hot and dry, or cold and wet.

The Norwegian people hold the Fjord in such high regard that they have chosen this breed of horse as one of their national symbols. According to the European Convention on domestic animals, as the breed's motherland, Norway has the responsibility to preserve and develop the Fjord Horses' breed type. The "*Supreme aim for the breeding of Fjordhorses,*" according to the current Norwegian breed registry breeding plan, is that the "*Norges Fjordhestlag aims through its pure breeding program to preserve the characteristics and versatility of the breed.*" One of the main breeding goals is "*the Fjordhorse shall possess the character (i.e. Breed type) which is typical for the breed.*"

For the Norwegian Fjord Horse, the breed standard is difficult to express in precise terminology. The Norwegians describe their impression as "*got mote*" which means a horse should have a nice and pleasant appearance. At the 1996 International Conference conducted by the Norges Fjordhestlag, the following poetic description was offered to convey the "feeling" the Norwegians have for a typical Fjord Horse. The written description is made with reference to the breed's place of origin, the mountainous district of Vestlandet (Western Norway). Members of the Norges Fjordhestlag chose to express their sentiment artistically, and by sharing with the conference attendants a beautiful Norwegian description effectively painted a vivid image of the real Fjord Horse.

*"The eyes should be like the mountain lakes on a midsummer evening, big and bright. A bold bearing of the neck like a lad from the mountains on his way to his beloved. Well-defined withers like the contours of the mountains set against an evening sky. The temperament as lively as a waterfall in spring, and still good-*

Norwegian Fjord Horses have a calm presence and a curious, active character with an obvious display of either masculine or feminine traits. Body structure within the breed ranges the entire spectrum, from flatter, lighter muscling to a more round, heavier muscling. Historically, Fjords have appeared in different shapes, models or body types, according to the different needs of the times. From this wide genetic pool comes the versatile Fjord of today, which is not a specialized breed, but a breed with horses of different types and sizes which can be used for a wide variety of activities. Horses that meet the set conditions and demands of quality are equally acceptable, although they can be of different sizes and body types. Conformation should be harmoniously balanced and must always be complemented by substance of body and ample bone. A combination of correct conformation, movement, and breed type is more important than extremes of beauty, elegance and extravagant movement. What counts and is most important is the ability of the horse to use and develop his inborn qualities.

## GENERAL IMPRESSIONS

The Norwegian Fjord Horse possesses a charming, gentle disposition and a strong body structure that enables the breed to be used for all types of riding, driving and draft work.

Fjord Horses are willing to work and want to please, thus making them very trainable. Their versatility is enhanced by the extraordinary power for their smaller size and their ability to be sure-footed. The Fjords generally range in size at maturity from 13.2 to 14.2 hands (54 to 58 inches) and weigh about 900 to 1200 pounds with a few individuals ranging outside these measurements.

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## COAT COLOR AND MARKING

The majority of Fjord Horses are brown dun, while a small percentage are either grey, red dun, or white dun. The rarest color, yellow dun, is seldom seen, even in Norway. One of the breed's 'trademarks' is the upright mane, which compliments the horse's frame and structure well.

Traditionally, the most common and desirable markings found on Fjords are:

1. Primitive markings:
  - Small brown marks over the eyes and on the checks and thighs.
  - Dark horizontal stripes on the legs, especially the forelegs.
  - Can have one or more dark stripes over withers, very seldom seen.
2. Dark ear outlines and tips.
3. Darker mid-section in the forelock, mane and tail.
4. A full-length, darker dorsal stripe.
5. Some "feathering" on the legs, but not profuse.
6. Dark hoof color; may range to amber in red and yellow dun horses. Some striping may occur.
7. All of the accepted Fjord horse colors and their variations must be kept. Avoid markings that are not typical for the breed. A small star is acceptable.

The coat colors are described as:

- **Brown dun:** coat color is pale yellow-brown, and can vary from creamy yellow to nearly brown. The dorsal stripe (forelock through tail) is black or dark brown.
- **Grey:** coat color from light silver grey to dark slate grey; stripe in mane, dorsal stripe and tail stripe are dark grey to black; muzzle is generally a darker shade of grey than body color.
- **Red dun:** pale red-yellow in lighter or darker shades; the dorsal stripe is red or red-brown, always darker than the coat color but never black. On the lighter shades of red duns, the forelock, mane and tail can be completely white.
- **White dun:** coat color is white or yellow-white; dorsal stripe is black or grey.
- **Yellow dun:** coat color is yellow-white; dorsal stripe a darker shade of yellow, but may be indistinct. Forelock, mane and tail may be completely white.

## CONFORMATION

1. **Head:** Medium-sized, with a broad, flat forehead, a straight or slightly dished profile and good definition.
2. **Ears:** Small and truncated, wide-set.
3. **Eyes:** Large, round, expressive, dark in color, well set on head.
4. **Jowls:** Well rounded and muscular.
5. **Jaws:** Quite large with a definitive ridge and good distance between them.
6. **Muzzle:** Wide and fleshy with large, softly elastic, outlined nostrils.
7. **Bite:** On a mature Fjord Horse, incisors must be properly occluded. A mal-occlusion of less than or equal to ¼ of a tooth width should be considered a minor fault and more than ¼ tooth width should be considered a major fault, regardless of sex.
8. **Throatlatch:** Slightly deeper than most other breeds, must be refined sufficiently to allow proper flexing at the poll while still providing for normal respiration.
9. **Poll:** Should have sufficient length to allow proper flexion. The neck bones approach the skull from behind the ears rather than insert from below.
10. **Neck:** Should be supple, forming a natural arch, and appear rather heavy but well raised and in proportion to the entire horse. The topline should be longer than the bottom line. Placement of the neck on the shoulder should be smoothly into the withers and chest creating an upward and outward-flexing image, giving the balance and carriage necessary to maintain the look of the Fjord Horse.
11. **Shoulder:** Well muscled with good length and angulation. The shoulder and neck should be viewed as a balanced, functional unit.
12. **Withers:** Moderately defined and long, extending into the back.
13. **Chest:** Wide, demonstrating muscling proportional to gender and body size.
14. **Girth:** Deep, with an ample spring of rib to provide circulatory and respiratory capacity.
15. **Back:** Well muscled and broad, short to moderately long. (Considered moderately long when the back has the same length as the shoulder.)
16. **Loins:** Well muscled, with an even transition to the croup.

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17. **Croup:** The shape of the hindquarter may vary and it is important that the back, loins, croup and quarters are in harmony.
18. **Hip:** Long, deep and well-developed, substantial and in proportion to the shoulder.
19. **Tail:** Set moderately high and carried naturally while at rest and in action.
20. **Stifle:** Located deep in the hindquarter with strength and full range of motion.
21. **Thigh and Gaskin:** Strong and well muscled, carrying plenty of flesh; should appear well muscled when viewed from behind.
22. **Hocks:** Well developed and positioned with a well-marked point; large in proportion to the horse.
23. **Legs:** Should be correct and sound with a slightly longer forearm than cannon, well-defined joints, clean cannons, flat bone, and an appearance of overall substance and strength. When the legs are viewed from the side, front, and rear, they should be parallel and nearly vertical from the ground except for the angulation of the pasterns.
24. **Pasterns:** Should have moderately proportional length and angulation to provide reasonable flexion and support.
25. **Hooves:** Dense, round and large. Their attachment at the coronary band should be a continued angle of the pastern with proportional heel length.

### MOVEMENT

The **way of going** for the Fjord Horse is straight and true with good forward movement. The gaits are well balanced, with a regular cadence and a length of stride where the hind hoof print oversteps the front hoof print at the walk and trot.

- **Walk:** The Fjord Horse will be eager and efficient, moving in a four-beat cadence.
- **Trot:** A true two-beat diagonal gait. Being a powerful gait, the trot demonstrates the characteristic traits of speed, comfort and athletic ability. The trot comes naturally, and is the most favored gait of the horse.
- **Canter:** Should be balanced and free with good forward movement.

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## UNDESIRABLE ASPECTS OF CONFORMATION (FAULTS)

### 1. Head:

(Figs. 1A, 1B, 1C)

- long or narrow-shaped head
- high-set eye
- small eyes (pig eye)
- white sclera around the eye
- discoloration of eye (walleye)
- extreme convex profile
- small, underdeveloped jaws
- long ears
- narrow placement of ears
- poor angulation of ears (lop ears)
- small, pinched nostrils
- improper occlusion (bite)
- lack of appropriate gender characteristic

### 2. Neck:

(Figs. 2A, 2B, 2C, 2D, 2E)

- depression in front of withers (ewe neck)
- tied in too low on shoulder
- thick throatlatch
- heavy underside of the neck
- insufficient muscling, lack of gender-related crest
- length longer/shorter than body proportions
- insufficient length of poll

### 3. Legs and hooves:

(Figs. 3A, 3B, 3C, 4A, 4B, 4C, 5A, 5B, 5C, 5D, 5E, 5F, 6A, 6B, 6C, 6D, 7A, 7B, 7C.)

- short, straight pasterns
- broken-axis pastern
- long, weak pasterns
- over at the knees (buck knees)
- back at the knees (calf knees)
- offset knees
- tied in at the knees
- base wide
- base narrow
- narrow heels
- flat, low heels
- platter hooves
- ringbone
- laminitis (founder)
- spavins
- curbs
- stringhalt
- straight hocks
- sickle hocks
- cow hocks

### 4. Withers:

- excessively round (mutton withers)

### 5. Shoulder/forequarters:

- too straight (lack of angulation)
- upright shoulder
- short arm (humerus)
- short forearm
- too wide
- too muscled
- too narrow (lacking capacity and muscling)

### 6. Body/hindquarters:

(Figs. 8A, 8B, 8C)

- long back
- low back
- roach back
- long, weak coupling
- high hip/croup
- too narrow (lacking in capacity and muscling)
- steep croup
- rafter hips
- wry tail
- low-set tail

### 7. Way of going:

(Figs. 9A, 9B, 9C, 9D, 9E)

- irregular stride and/or cadence
- extravagant action
- short stride behind
- overreaching
- forging
- winging
- paddling

### 8. Gender:

- retained testicles (one or both)
- malformed vulva

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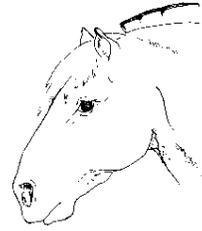
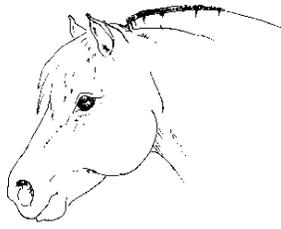


Fig. 1A – Medium size, broad flat forehead. Straight profile, good definition  
Eyes – Large, Expressive  
Ears – Small, truncated, wide set

Fig. 1C – Normal Eye. Convex Profile, short ears, small jaw  
Narrow Head (Front) - Fault



Fig. 1B – Small ("Pig"), high set eye, small nostrils, long ears - Fault

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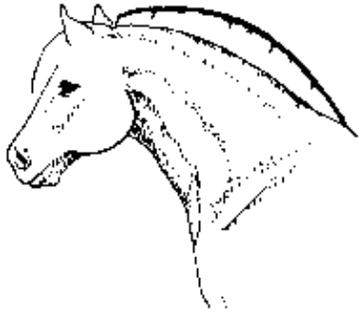


Fig. 2A – Normal Neck

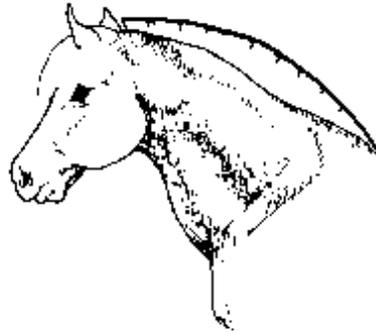


Fig. 2D – Ewe Neck - Fault



Fig. 2B – Normal Neck, slightly heavier

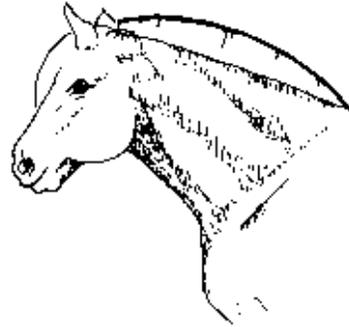


Fig. 2E – Straight, stick neck. Insignificant length of poll - Fault



Fig. 2C – Heavy Neck, thick throat latch - Fault

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Fig. 3A – Pastern – Medium length & slope – Normal



Fig. 4A – Matching Angle – Pastern & hoof - Normal



Fig. 3B – Pastern – Too long & sloping – Fault



Fig. 4B – Broken Axis Pastern – Fault



Fig. 3C – Pastern – Short, upright – Fault



Fig. 4C - Broken Axis Pastern – Fault

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Fig. 5A. - Straight Legs



Fig. 5D. - Toeing In - Fault

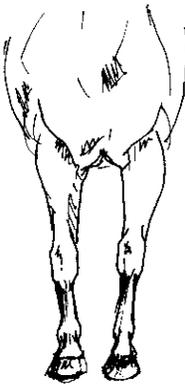


Fig. 5B. - Base Narrow

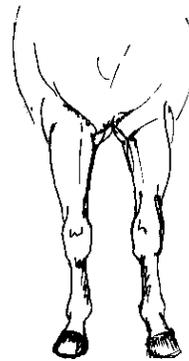


Fig. 5E. - Toeing Out - Fault

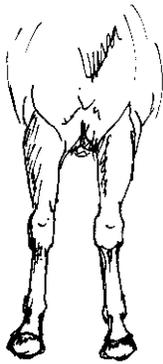


Fig. 5C. - Base Wide - Fault



Fig. 5F. - Straight but Narrow Chested

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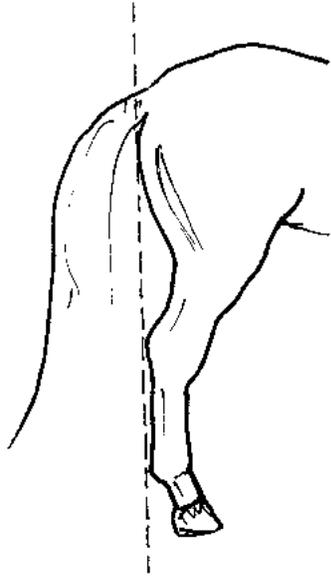


Fig. 6A. – Normal hind leg angle

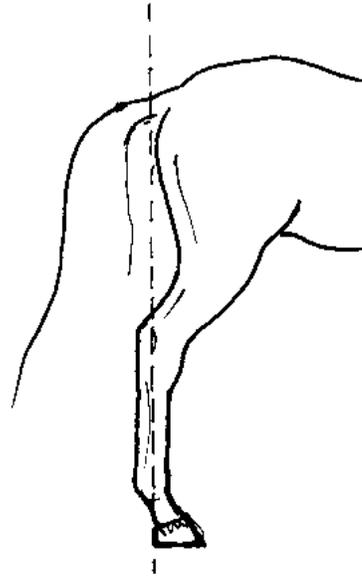


Fig. 6C. – “Camped Out”  
Behind plumb line. - Fault

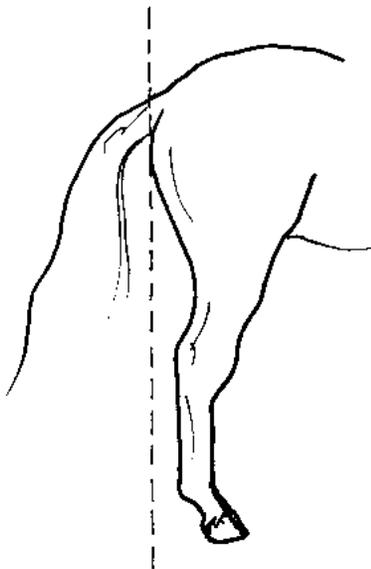


Fig. 6B. – Straight hind leg.  
(Post Leg) - Fault

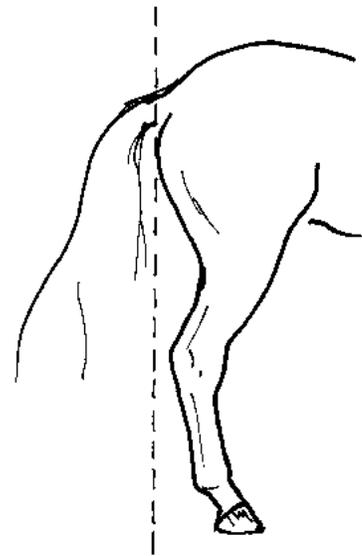


Fig. 6D. – “Sickle Hock”. – Fault

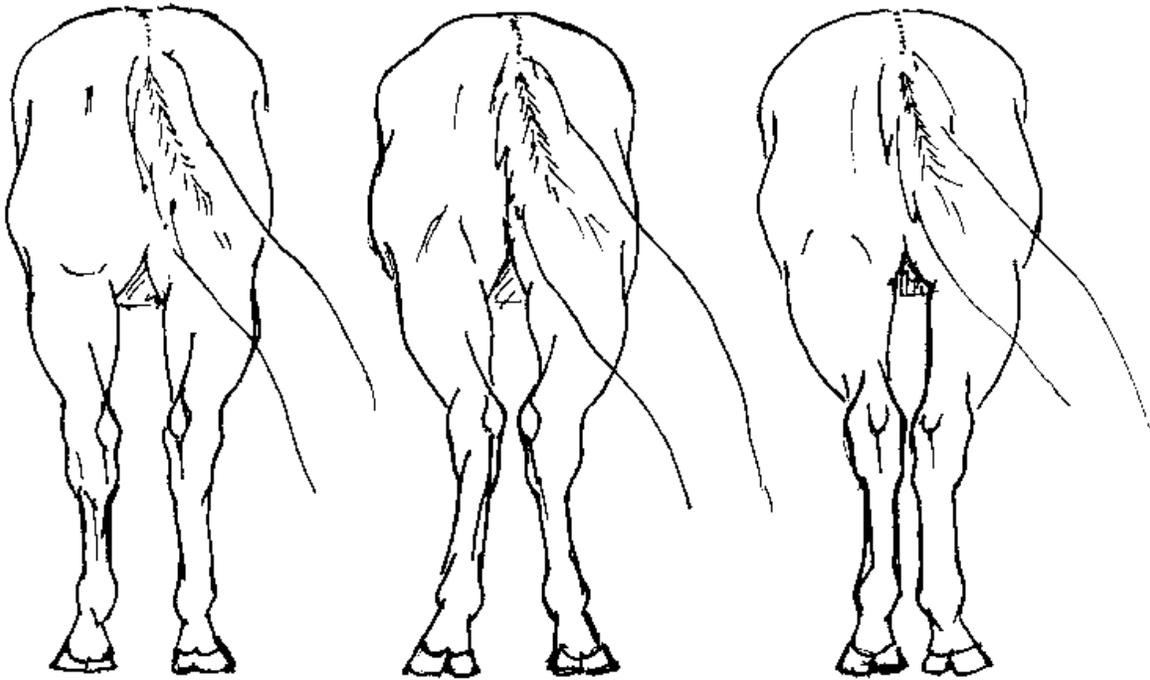


Fig. 7A. Cannons parallel, stifles & toes point out slightly - Correct

Fig. 7B. - Cow Hocks - hocks point inward, cannons angle outward - toes out - Fault

Fig. 7C. - Narrow - may cause interfering - Fault

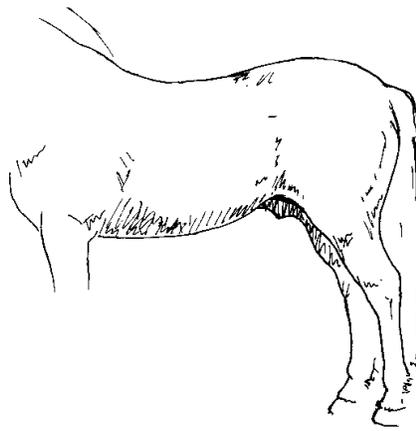


Fig. 8A. – Strong back and coupling flowing into a correctly rounded croup - Correct

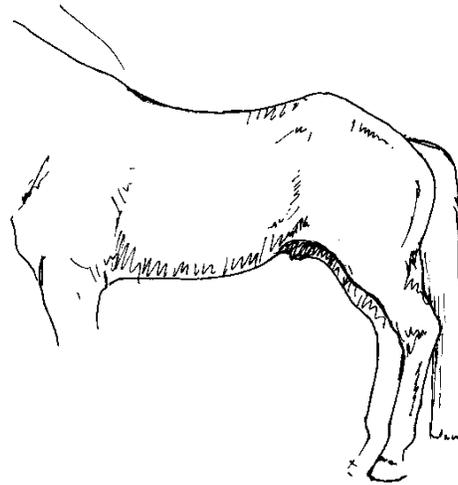


Fig. 8B. – Weak back and long weak coupling, high hip and croup, “Sickle Hocks” - Fault

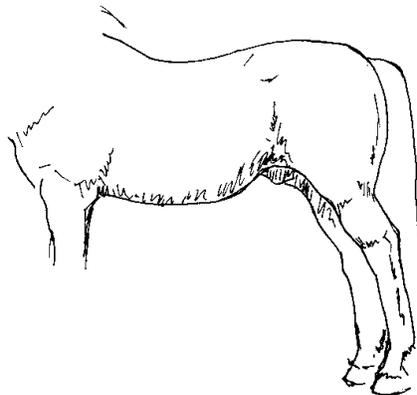


Fig. 8C. – Low weak back with flat, nearly level couple. Camped out hind legs - Fault

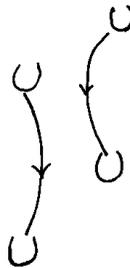
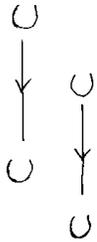


Fig. 9A. – Straight Legs  
Straight Movement

Fig. 9C. – Base Wide - Straddle - Fault

Fig. 9E. – Toeing Out – Winging, may interfere -  
Fault

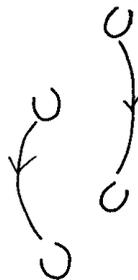


Fig. 9B. – Base Narrow  
"Rope Walking",  
Plaiting - Fault

Fig. 9D. Toeing In – Paddling - Fault