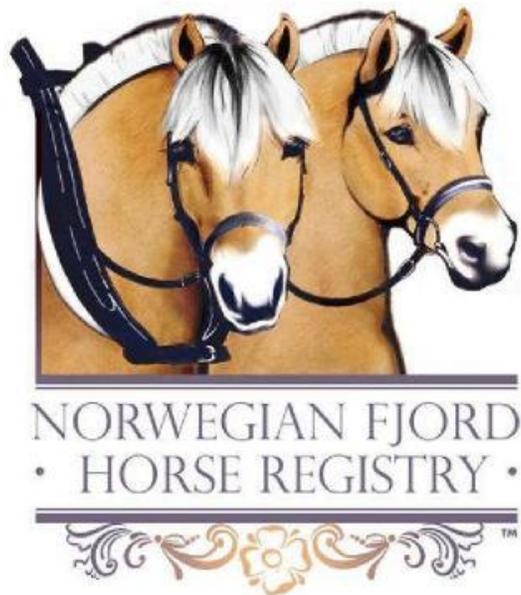


# NORWEGIAN FJORD HORSE REGISTRY EVALUATION HANDBOOK

## SECTION 3



# 2019

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# SECTION 3

## BREED STANDARD

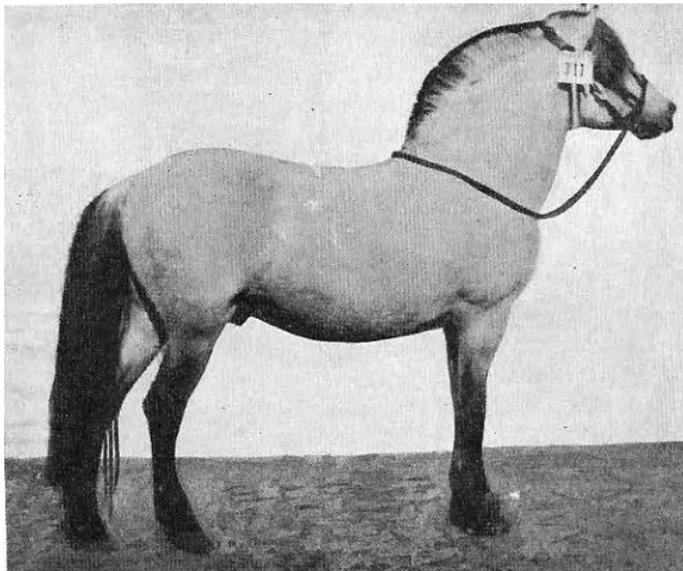
### BREED HISTORY AND TYPE<sup>1</sup>

The Norwegian Fjord Horse is one of the world's oldest breeds. Fjord breeding took place mainly in the western part of Norway. Because of this, the breed was also known as “Vestlandshesten,” meaning “the west land horse.” This region is also known as the Fjord region of Norway, thus “Fjord Horse.”

Little is known about the origin of the breed. There are many similarities such as color and primitive markings between the feral Przewalski horse and the Fjord. It is thought that most primitive and/or feral horses were dun and had similar striped markings. The Fjord Horse was selectively bred for the dun color and primitive markings. The Fjord is rather like the European wild horse, the Tarpan, now extinct in its natural state.

Most likely the horse came to Norway from the east. There may have been wild horses in the south of Sweden and in Denmark since the last ice age. Archaeological excavations reveal that the horse was domesticated in the Bronze Age, circa 1200 CE. Viking burial grounds show that man had bred the horse for about 2000 years, and it appears that the Fjord Horse is a descendant of the earliest horses in Norway. Through the ages, there has been a great deal of contact between Norway, Iceland and the British Isles. Horses from these lands have influenced the development of the Fjord breed.

The Fjord seems to have varied in size and type from the north to the south of the Fjord region. The Fjord Horse from Nordfjord and Sunnmore was known to be larger with more bone and with more profuse mane, tail and feathering than the smaller, lighter, more refined Fjord in Sunnhordland. Perhaps there were different types of Fjord Horses with slightly dissimilar origins. An example of the lighter type is Rosendalsborken I 8, foaled 1863 in Kvinnherad. As a 20-year-old, he was quite a sensation at a show in Germany. The Fjord breed types from Sunnmore and Fjordane are predominant in today's breeding. The most important sire in the history of the breed is Njål 166, foaled 1891 in Stryn. Njål, who was a county stallion in Sogn og Fjordane, was stationed at Sunde in Stryn from 1896 until he died in 1910. He is in the pedigree of every living Fjord Horse around the world today.



Rosendalsborken I 8

<sup>1</sup> “FjHI The Official Handbook for Horse Fjord Judges,” May 2003  
Revised March 2019



Njål 166

The Fjord is easy to feed, strong, tough but docile and has a capacity for working long hours, day after day under difficult conditions. This, together with its versatility, made the Fjord Horse very suitable for work on the small farms in the Fjord region of Norway long before mechanization began.

The Fjord was also used for transport between hamlets and ferries. Affection for the Fjord Horse in Norway has remained very strong, especially amongst the farmers of the Fjord region who have appreciated and maintained these attributes up to the present day.

The charm, kind nature and versatility of the Fjord Horse are highly appreciated today. For this reason (amongst many others), the Fjord Horse is considered a national symbol of Norway.

## **GENERAL IMPRESSIONS<sup>2</sup>**

Through pure breeding the Fjord character has been maintained. Accepted variations of the Fjord Horse produce a versatile, healthy and functional horse. We must continue to further maintain all the original accepted colors of the breed and the primitive markings which may vary according to the shade of the overall body color. Markings and colors atypical of the breed must be avoided and discriminated against.

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<sup>2</sup> "FjHI The Official Handbook for Horse Fjord Judges," May 2003  
Revised March 2019

The general appearance of the Fjord Horse shall be strongly built, hardy, well-proportioned and athletic. It is a horse with great presence and charm. The horse shall be cooperative, dependable, willing and calm in most situations and have natural, well-balanced movements. The Fjord shall be a versatile riding, driving and draft horse. The conformation of the Fjord should assure that he moves equally well in difficult terrain as on the flat. With these qualities, the Fjord Horse should be easy to handle and suitable for family use in different activities as in riding schools, competitions and for leisure.<sup>3</sup>



## DESCRIPTION OF THE FJORD HORSE<sup>4</sup>

### 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.)

### Colors and Markings

The five accepted colors are brown dun, white dun, grey, red dun and yellow dun. It is important that the so-called primitive markings are appreciated and preserved. A small star on the forehead approximately the size of a US quarter is only acceptable on a mare or gelding. Other visible white markings are not acceptable.

### Hair

The forelock on mature horses can cover one half to two thirds of the head. Light feathering on the legs is common; excessive feathering on the legs is not desirable. Tradition rules that the Fjord should have an upright mane. The horse should be presented with a clipped mane in a traditional shape to complement the neck's top line.

### Head

The head is important when assessing breed character in a Fjord Horse. The ideal stallion head will differ significantly from the ideal mare head. Both the mare and stallion head should be proportional, not long and with a slight dish to the profile of the nose. A convex profile is not desirable in mares or stallions. The stallion should have a masculine head with robust and well defined, rounded jowls tapering dramatically along the nose to a more angular muzzle with larger rather than smaller nostrils. A Fjord mare should have a feminine head

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<sup>3</sup> "FjHI The Official Handbook for Horse Fjord Judges," May 2003

<sup>4</sup> "FjHI The Official Handbook for Horse Fjord Judges," May 2003  
Revised March 2019

with noticeable yet softer definition to jowls tapering less dramatically along the nose to a softer more rounded profile to the muzzle. Both stallion and mare will have a proportionately wide flat forehead.

The eyes should be large, dark and bright with a calm expression and should be set well out on the corner of the forehead so that the horse can see well in front and behind. There should be enough width between the jaws to ensure free movement of the head. The throat latch should be open enough so as not to restrict air intake with flexion of the poll.

The ears of a stallion are proportionately smaller than those of the mare. 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.

With maturity the head of a stallion will tend to “dry out” and become more angular. A gelding cannot be expected to have the same gender expression in its head as does a stallion, especially if the horse was gelded at a young age. Yet the head of a gelding should not be feminine in nature.

### **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, width through the barrel and a proportional amount of muscling reflecting gender and age.

### **Neck**

The neck should be set high and have a convex top line. Stallions especially often have a strong neck. For a period, the Fjord was used for heavy work, so a short, strong neck and straight shoulder was an asset and favored. Today, a longer suppler neck is desired, being more suitable for riding, driving, pleasure and packing. Length at the poll and a smooth transition from the head to the neck is desired. It must be recognized that a long, thin neck is not desirable, nor is a bulging, heavily muscled under-neck.

### **Shoulder and Withers**

The shoulder region significantly influences the movement of the horse; hence today, it is desirable to have a gently sloping shoulder angle, which allows forward extension of the forelimbs. Previously, 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. The withers should be sufficiently well defined 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.

### **Hindquarters**

The croup should be long, broad, well-muscled and sloping; however, too sloping or too flat is not desirable. The tail should not be set too high or too low and it should be carried freely and naturally. The thighs should be sufficiently long and well-muscled when 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 when seen from both the side and from behind. A gaskin too long is considered a drawback for a draft horse. The legs should be correctly aligned with adequate bone. The joints and tendons must be clearly defined and dry. A short and firm cannon bone is desired. The cannon bones should 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 Fjord Horse.

## Movement

This is particularly important in the Fjord Horse and must reflect the conformation in enough 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 knee action like a hackney horse is considered not typical for the breed.

## Gender Characteristics

The Fjord Horse should have distinct gender expression; the stallion should be masculine and the mare feminine.<sup>5</sup> Stallions follow the conformation and phenotype of their breed, but within that standard, the presence of hormones such as testosterone may give stallions a thicker neck, as well as a somewhat more muscular physique as compared to mares and geldings. A stallion's temperament varies widely based on genetics and training but has been selectively bred over time to display abundant presence and self-confidence. Mares and some geldings generally have less muscular physique and jowl than stallions.



*Male displaying gender expression  
Photo: Paula Chmura*



*Female displaying gender expression  
Photo: Paula Chmura*



*Male lacking gender expression  
Photo: Doyle Gates*



*Female lacking gender expression  
Photo: Jeff Silker*

<sup>5</sup> "FjHI The Official Handbook for Horse Fjord Judges," May 2003  
Revised March 2019

## Use Types

One of the advantages of the Fjord Horse is its versatility, therefore it is not a specialized breed. Each individual Fjord Horse should be athletic and have the ability to be versatile. However due to muscling, bone and body size, it may be better suited for a modern sport horse at one extreme or a heavier light-draft horse on the other extreme. Most Fjord Horses tend to fall in between the light-draft and sport type, making it a “universal type.” For example, a draft type Fjord Horse must have the body and mind to do long hours of heavy work day after day in the field or in the forest pulling heavy logs. A sport type Fjord needs a body, mind and conformation to do well in dressage both ridden and driven. The Fjord Horse should be well suited and comfortable as a trail horse or pack horse. It should be suitable for dressage or jumping. It should be suitable for driving and agricultural-related activities (i.e. plowing or logging). In addition, the Fjord should be comfortable as an equine-facilitated therapy horse. The Fjord should be an all-around family horse.

It is the NFHR’s goal to maintain the Fjord as a versatile breed with all individuals being willing, cooperative, calm and manageable in most situations. All individuals should display natural, well-balanced movements especially at the trot since the trot is a Fjord Horse’s strongest gait. During an evaluation the intended use types will be taken into consideration when commenting and scoring each horse. The intent of the NFHR Evaluation Program is to help identify the use type of individual Fjord Horses for its members. It is unfair to ask a draft horse to perform as a sport horse and a sport horse to perform as a draft horse. While a Fjord of universal type can be proficient at both extremes, it may not be a specialist on either end of the spectrum. Body condition can affect the impression of use type. For instance, an overweight horse may appear to be on the draft spectrum though its bone structure is light. An underweight horse may appear to be on the lighter end of the spectrum, though it has a heavier bone structure.



*Lighter Use Type  
Photo: Carien Schippers*



*Draft Use Type  
Photo: Curtis Pierce*

### **Coat Color and Markings**

The Fjord Horse has varied dun coloring. They are similar in color to the wild horse of Central Asia, the Przewalski, and the Tarpan (the European wild horse). This kind of color is also called primitive. The basic primitive colors are brown dun, red dun and grey. In addition, white dun and yellow dun are also genuine colors of the breed. At the annual General Meeting of Norges Fjordhestlag (the Norwegian Fjord Horse Society) in 1980, it was agreed upon and decided that these five colors shall be acknowledged as the genuine and typical colors of the Fjord Horse.<sup>6</sup> Mating Fjords with the dilution factor can result in 25% white foals with blue eyes. A Fjord Horse typically has large dark brown eyes. White dun Fjord Horses may have amber eyes. Fjords should not have blue tinted or “glass eyes.” Some new born foals may have light or blue colored eyes when born but darken in a few weeks after birth. As white dun Fjords with blue eyes are not an acceptable color, it is recommended not to mate white duns, yellow duns and greys with the dilution factor to each other.<sup>7</sup>



*White Dun  
Photo: Beth Beymer*



*Grey  
Photo: Beth Beymer*

<sup>6</sup> “FjHI The Official Handbook for Horse Fjord Judges,” May 2003

<sup>7</sup> “FjHI The Official Handbook for Horse Fjord Judges,” May 2003

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*Brown Dun*  
*Photo: Beth Beymer*



*Red Dun*  
*Photo: Beth Beymer*



*Yellow Dun*  
*Photo: Michael Bowman*

### **Variations of Color**

The brown dun ("brunblakk" in Norwegian) is the most common color. It can be found in lighter or darker shades. The color of the body is pale yellow-brownish and can vary from cream yellow to nearly brown. The darker stripe of hair in the middle of the mane, forelock and tail is black or dark brown. The mane is covered with white hairs on both sides of the midsection as is the forelock and tail. The dorsal stripe is dark brown or distinctly darker than the coat color. The light-colored horses have whiter forelocks and whiter hairs on the outside of the mane called guard hairs. On darker individuals, the guard hairs may also be darker, almost brown. The darker guard hairs are not preferred but the overall quality of the horse must be considered and weighed against that trait if observed.

The red dun's ("rødblakk" in Norwegian) body-color is pale red-yellowish and can also be seen in lighter or darker shades. In some cases, it can be difficult to tell the difference between a brown and a red dun. On the red duns the darker stripe of hair in the middle of the mane, dorsal stripe and the darker hair in the middle of the tail are red or red-brownish, always darker than the color of the body, but never black. Mane and tail are mostly very light or yellowish. On the lighter shades of red duns, the forelock, mane and tail can be completely white. When they are foaled, the red duns can have light hooves, but the hooves may darken as they grow older.

The grey ("grå" in Norwegian) has a body-color which can vary from light silver grey to dark slate grey. The darker stripe of hair in the middle of the mane, dorsal stripe and the darker hair in the middle of the tail are black or darker than the main color. The forelock and muzzle area are darker in contrast to the brown and red duns which mostly have a light forelock and muzzle area. On the darkest individuals, the mane and tail can be very dark. If one had used the same pattern in naming this color as in the naming of the others, grey would be called black dun, but this term has never been used.

The white dun ("ulsblakk" in Norwegian) has the color of the body that is almost white or yellowish-white. The darker stripe of hair in the middle of the mane, dorsal stripe and the darker hair in the middle of the tail are black. Mane and tail have a lighter shade than the body. White duns may have amber eyes.

The yellow dun ("gulblakk" in Norwegian) is the rarest of the Fjord Horse colors. The body color is yellowish-white. The darker stripe of hair in the middle of the mane, dorsal stripe and the darker hair in the middle of the tail are darker yellowish than the color of the body. The forelock and middle of the tail can be completely white. On such individuals, the dorsal stripe may also be indistinct.<sup>8</sup>

### Primitive Markings

Of great importance in the description and identification of a Fjord Horse are the so-called primitive markings. These are the dark mid-section in the forelock, mane and tail, dorsal stripe and zebra stripes (the dark horizontal stripes on the legs, especially on the forelegs.) Some individuals can also have one or more dark stripes across the withers ("grep" = shoulder cross.) This last marking is very seldom seen. Some individuals can have small brown spots on their body, for instance on their thigh (gaskin) or cheek. This is called "Njåls-merke" (Mark of Njål) after the founding father of the modern Fjord Horse. The stallion Njål 166, was foaled 1891 and had such spots on his cheeks.

As mentioned in the section on variations of color, the color of these markings differs according to the main body color. On red and yellow dun horses with monochrome forelock, mane and tail, the dorsal stripe can be indistinct, and they may not have the zebra stripes at all. On very light shades of brown dun, the zebra stripes can be very weak or lacking.<sup>9</sup> The zebra stripes have a similar coloring as the other primitive markings. They are most prominent in the horse's summer coat. Foals lack zebra stripes when they are foaled, but the stripes may appear by the first shedding of the foal coat. The stripes are most prominent and in greatest numbers on the forelegs. In some cases, the zebra stripes are lacking on the grey and white duns. On these, the legs can be of the same color as the body, or they can be dark up to and including the knee and the hock.<sup>10</sup>



*Njal Mark  
Photo: Beth Beymer*



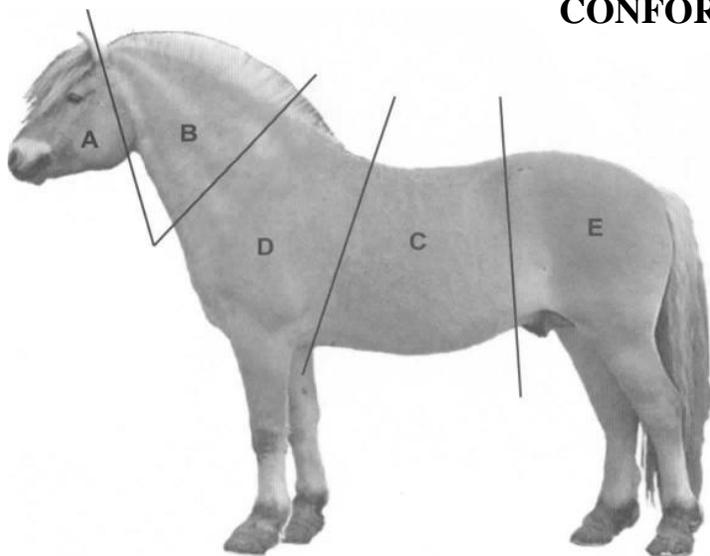
*Zebra Stripes  
Photo: Beth Beymer*

<sup>8</sup> "FjHI The Official Handbook for Horse Fjord Judges," May 2003  
<sup>9</sup> "FjHI The Official Handbook for Horse Fjord Judges," May 2003  
<sup>10</sup> "FjHI The Official Handbook for Horse Fjord Judges," May 2003  
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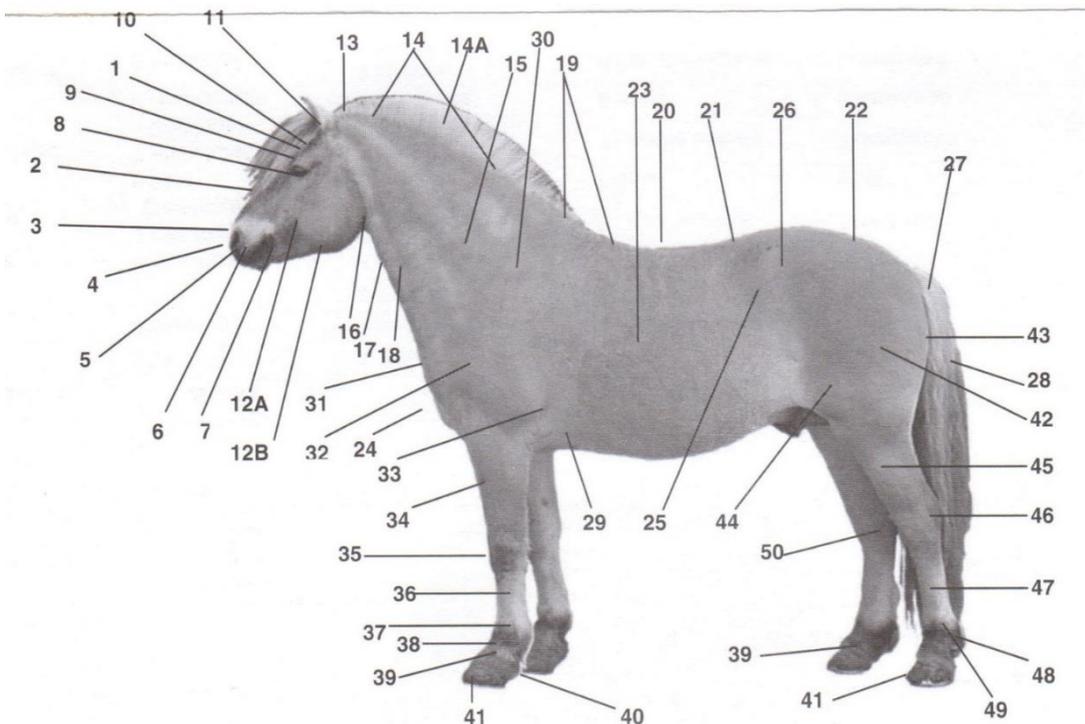
## Other Markings

White, or flesh-colored markings are very seldom seen on the Fjord Horse, but a white star on the forehead has existed as far back as we have written records. The white markings are inherited as a recessive gene, meaning that the genes can be carried hidden and that both parents must have these genes if the offspring shall exhibit visible markings. A small white star is only acceptable on mares<sup>11</sup> and geldings. The size of a white star on the forehead greater than the size of a US quarter shall be discouraged, but the overall quality of the horse must be considered and weighed if a star is observed. The trait should be noted when seen and reported on the horse's registration. Flesh-colored marks are accepted on the penis of stallions. Both light and dark soles are accepted but light hooves are only accepted on red duns and yellow duns. Faint white stripes may appear on the hooves of older Fjords and are not to be confused with true white markings.

## CONFORMATION<sup>12</sup>



- A-Head
- B-Neck
- C-Body
- D-Forehand
- E-Hindquarters



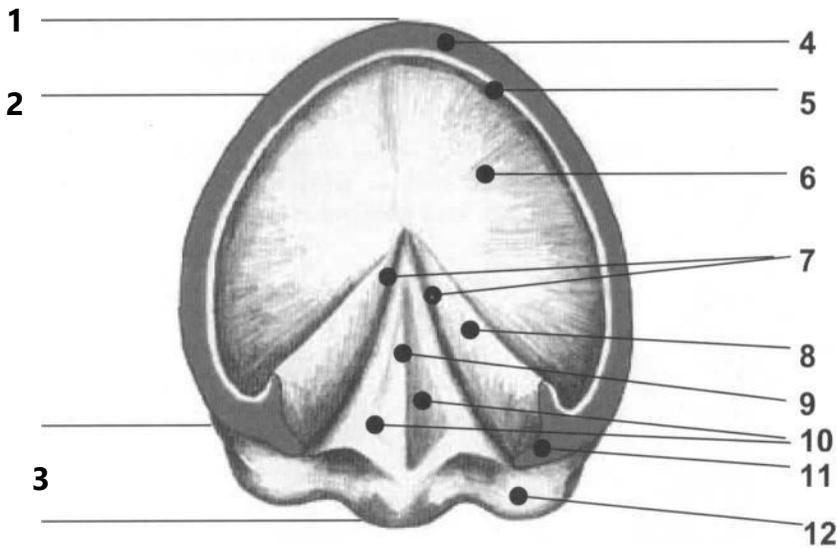
<sup>11</sup> "FjHI The Official Handbook for Horse Fjord Judges," May 2003

<sup>12</sup> "FjHI The Official Handbook for Horse Fjord Judges," May 2003

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A Head	B Neck	C Body	D Forehand	E Hindquarters
1 Forehead	13 Poll	19 Withers	30 Shoulder	42 Hip
2 Face	14 Crest	20 Back	31 Point of the Shoulder	43 Point of Buttock
3 Nostril	14A Mane	21 Loins or Coupling	32 Arm	44 Stifle
4 Muzzle	15 Neck	22 Croup	33 Elbow	45 Gaskin
5 Upper Lip	16 Throatlatch	23 Ribs or Barrel	34 Forearm	46 Hock
6 Lower Lip	17 Windpipe	24 Breast or Chest	35 Knee	47 Hind Cannon
7 Chin Groove	18 Jugular Groove	25 Flank	36 Cannon Bone	48 Ergot
8 Eye		26 Hip	37 Fetlock Joint	49 Fetlock
9 Eye Orbit		27 Dock of Tail	38 Pastern	50 Chestnut
10 Supraorbital Fossa		28 Tail	39 Coronary Band	
11 Ear		29 Heart Girth	40 Bulb of Heel	
12A Check or Upper Jaw			41 Hoof	
12B Lower Jaw				



Hoof	
1	Toe
2	Quarter
3	Heel
4	Hoof Wall
5	White Line
6	Sole
7	Collateral Sulci of Frog
8	Bar
9	Central Sulcus of Frog
10	Frog
11	Seat of Corn
12	Heel bulb

## Head and Neck

The head and neck are used together to balance and lead the rest of the body. By flexing or extending at the poll, the horse can round or hollow its back and adjust the relative engagement of its rear or fore legs. Fjords are recognized for their muscular and arched necks which are accentuated by the traditional mane style.

### Head

#### Dental Malocclusions

- Parrot Mouth (mandibular brachygnathism) overbite. An overbite of ¼ tooth width is acceptable.
- Monkey Mouth or Sow Mouth (maxillary brachygnathism) underbite. An underbite of ¼ tooth width is acceptable.

#### Facial Structure

- Elk Nosed or Camel Headed. The profile is dished across the nasal bones (below the eyes and above the muzzle) and slopes downward over the muzzle with a protruding lower lip.
- Roman Nosed. The face is convex from poll to muzzle. It may interfere with vision directly in front of the animal.
- Narrow Forehead/Long Face. This deviation from the desired balance (width of forehead at the eye level approximately half the length from poll to muzzle when viewed from the front) may interfere with good head carriage and movement.
- Very Large Jaw or Platter Jaw. This may impede the ability to flex at the poll. This should be differentiated from the more muscular jaw typical of stallions, which is not a fault.

#### Eyes

- Small/Deeply Set Eyes or Pig Eyed. This results in a reduced visual field.
- Lack of pigment in the membrane (conjunctiva) which covers the sclera (“white of the eye,” often erroneously termed “white sclera”) is a characteristic of some breeds of horses but is uncharacteristic for a Fjord.

#### Ears

- Too large. If the ears are not proportional to the head, the overall balance and appearance of the head will be impacted.
- Floppy or Laterally-Directed, Low-Set.

#### Muzzle/Nostrils

- Fjord Horses should have large nostrils and large muzzles but should not give an impression of coarseness.
- Excessively small nostrils will limit the volume of air which can be moved with each inhalation and exhalation and can reduce performance efficiency.

### Neck

#### Throat Latch

- Too narrow (horizontal dimension). The connection between the head and neck should be smooth, with adequate width to ensure free flow of air through the trachea when the poll is flexed.
- Too thick (vertical dimension.) A coarse or thick throat latch may impair flexion.

#### Balance and Arch

- The length should be proportional to the back. A neck which is too short may decrease lateral and vertical flexibility.
- Arch. The muscles of the neck should be balanced such that the dorsal (upper, above the spine) part of the neck and the crest are convex. A neck that is concave dorsally (“upside down” or “ewe-necked”) will limit the animal’s ability to lift its back and engage the hind end. The upper neck length (poll to withers) should be approximately twice the lower neck length (throat latch to chest.)
- Fallen Crest. The loss of vertical symmetry due to damage to the connective tissue of the dorsal neck (nuchal ligament). This is acquired and is more common in stallions and in older horses that have been obese.

- Swan-Necked. The neck is tied into the withers too low, resulting in an “S” curve. The cranial (towards the head) part of the neck will be convex dorsally, and the caudal (towards the tail) part of the neck will be convex ventrally.

### **Body**

The midsection of the horse contains the vital organs (heart, lungs, intestines, etc.) and must be balanced in proportion to the head, neck and legs to carry both the considerable weight of the animal itself and the additional load of tack, equipment and rider. The center of gravity and the connection to all the other parts determines much of the overall movement and capability of the horse. The topline should be short in relation to the underline for a desirable long stride.

### **Balance**

- Long Body/Short Legs. This may cause difficulty synchronizing and coordinating movement, and the stride may be choppy. The length from the point of the shoulder to the point of the buttock should be approximately equal to the height (distance from the withers to the ground.)
- Short Body/Long Legs. This may predispose the horse to forging, overreaching or having other gait problems. The length from the point of the shoulder to the point of the buttock should be approximately equal to the height (distance from the withers to the ground.)

### **Trunk**

A dip in front of or behind the withers will interfere with the optimal use of the neck and connection to the back. The withers should be above or behind the heart girth and blend gradually from the base of the neck into the back, leaving a natural place for a saddle.

- Low or Mutton Withers. This will limit a horse’s ability to raise his back and can make saddle fitting challenging.
- Very High or Shark Fin Withers (very unusual in Fjords.) This will present saddle fitting challenges but have no specific gait abnormalities associated with them.
- Lateral Curvature of the Spine (Scoliosis.) This is evidenced by a permanent deviation of the spine resulting in a loss of symmetry from side to side.
- Curvature of the Spine (Kyphosis.) This is evidenced by a permanent dip or bulge along the center of the back.
- A “sway back” dips down between the withers and the croup and limits lifting of the back, rear leg engagement and easy saddle fitting. A “roached back” deviates upward, usually in the area of the loin.
- Spring of Rib. This refers to the curvature of the ribs which rounds the body and allows room for the heart, lungs and digestive organs. Very wide ribs can result in saddle position and rider comfort challenges.
- Slab-Sided or Narrow. A horse will be less able to “take up” a rider’s leg and has less space for vital organs.
- Poorly Muscled or Weak Back (characterized by an identifiable ridge down the dorsal midline.) The longissimus muscles that run along the spine should be well-developed, wide, and relatively flat to support the considerable weight of the horse’s abdominal organs as well as the additional weight of saddle and rider.
- Long/Weak Loin (the area from the last thoracic or ribbed vertebra to the lumbosacral joint.) The area between the last rib and the point of the hip is also called the “coupling.” A long loin is often accompanied by a short hip (distance from the point of the hip to the point of the buttock.)
- Short Loin and Coupling (usually associated with a long hip.) This conveys power and strength but may reduce flexibility in comparison to a more moderate build.
- Croup Higher than Withers (“runs downhill”.) This horse will move disproportionately on the forehand.
- High Tail Set (with short, level croup.) This conformation may add length to the stride but reduces the ability to reach up underneath with the hindlimbs.

- Low Tail Set (goose-rumped.) This is a long, sloping croup.

### **Legs (Including Shoulders, Hips and Feet):**

The front legs support as much as two thirds of the horse's weight, so strength and soundness are critical. The rear quarters are the source of propulsion and power as well as stopping and turning, so correctness here is also vitally important. The lower limb length (chest floor to ground) should be approximately equal to the depth of the body. The front limbs do not have a bony attachment to the trunk; the thorax (chest) is suspended in a muscular sling between the shoulders (scapula and humerus).

### **Balance**

- The forehand proportionately larger than hindquarters, especially in conjunction with low withers and high croup, shifts the center of gravity forward and predisposes the horse to travel on the forehand adding stress, concussion and injury to front feet.
- Hindquarters proportionately larger than the forequarters is commonly seen only in quarter horses, where it is associated with great power for rapid acceleration, rollbacks over the hocks, and spins. This is not normal conformation for a Fjord.

### **Front**

- In ideal front legs both forelimbs should be of equal length and size and should bear equal weight when standing.
- From the front, a line dropped from the point of the shoulder should bisect the limb (including the foot) and be parallel to the same imaginary line on the other side, indicating that the natural stance of the animal places the feet at the same distance apart as the width of the chest.
- Viewed laterally, a line from the widest part of the spine of the shoulder blade (the tuber spinae of the scapula) should bisect the limb down through the fetlock and reach the ground just behind the heel. The shoulder should be muscular but not so heavy as to appear coarse or restrict free swinging movement. The bony prominences of the scapula should not be easily visible but can be felt just beneath the surface, separating upper and lower shoulder muscles. At the dorsal limit of the shoulder, the cartilage that completes the flat part of the scapula should rest smoothly at the base of the withers. The muscles of the forearm should extend all the way to the knee and the chest (pectoral) muscles should form an inverted "V" and blend smoothly into the inner forearm. This should facilitate a graceful, sweeping stride and support the lateral and medial movements of the legs.
- Viewed from the side, a series of angles should combine to create efficient shock absorption to maintain soundness and provide a smooth ride. A short straight shoulder creates greater concussion on the limb and a shorter stride. The slope of the pastern should be the same as that of the shoulder, and the angle between the scapula and the humerus should be a little greater than 90 degrees. Front pastern angles should be in the range of 53-58 degrees. Generally, the proportional length of forelimb segments should be: long shoulder, short arm, long forearm (radius and ulna -which are fused), short cannon (metacarpus), long pastern. Knees should be larger in diameter than the limb above and below them, with no puffiness or fleshiness ("clean or dry"). They should be part of a straight bony column with no deviation from the imaginary lines described above. Fetlock joints should be large enough to allow free movement with no puffiness.

### **Front Leg Faults**

- **Base Narrow** means the distance between the center lines of the feet is less than the distance between the center lines of the limbs at the chest, as viewed from the front. This will place greater force on the lateral sides of the feet (regardless of whether feet are straight, toed in, or toed out.) Base narrow horses are predisposed to windpuffs (excess fluid in the palmar recesses of the fetlock joint capsule), lateral ringbone (bone spurs/arthritis changes on the joint surfaces of the pastern joints) and sidebone (calcification of the lateral cartilages of the foot.)

- **Base Wide** means the distance between the center lines of the feet at the ground is greater than the distance between the center lines of the limbs at the chest, as viewed from the front. Is often (but not always) associated with toed-out conformation of the feet and winging to the inside (see gait abnormalities for description.) Base wide conformation results in increased weight bearing on the medial sides of the feet and predisposes the horse to fetlock windpuffs (excess fluid in palmar recesses of the fetlock joint capsule), medial ringbone (bone spurs/arthritis changes on pastern joint surfaces) and medial sidebone (calcification of the medial cartilages of the feet.)
- **Pigeon Toed (Toe In)** means the toes point towards each other when viewed from the front. This can originate anywhere from the chest to the fetlock. Toe in conformation usually results in paddling (see gait abnormalities for description) and when combined with inward deviation of the fetlocks, can lead to interference at the fetlock level and damage to the medial sesamoid bones.
- **Splay Footed (Toe Out)** means the toes point away from each other when viewed from the front, most often originating at the chest, but sometimes due to twisting at the fetlock.
- **Base Narrow-Toe In** places abnormal stress on the lateral collateral ligaments of the fetlock and pastern joints which contributes to paddling, windpuffs, lateral ringbone and lateral sidebone.
- **Base Narrow-Toe Out** contributes to a tendency to wing inwardly. This combined with closely-placed feet leads to interference with the possibility of damage to the medial cannon bone, fractures of the medial splint bone and damage to the medial sesamoid bone. The hoof breaks over the inside of the toe and adds strain to outside wall and the fetlock joint.
- **Base Wide-Toe In** is an unusual combination which will result in paddling to the outside while breaking over the inside toe and landing on the inside hoof wall.
- **Base Wide-Toe Out** increases stress on the medial side of the limb and may damage the medial collateral ligaments of the fetlock and pastern joints. Medial sidebone and ringbone may result, and the foot breaking over the inside toe and winging to the inside may lead to blemishes on the medial cannon bone or splint bone or even splint fractures from interference.
- **Calf Knees or Sheep Knees** means backward (palmar) deviation of the carpal joints. The carpal joint sits back, bowing the leg towards the rear when viewed from the side. This deviation places the force of weight bearing to behind the hoof, and places undue strain on the carpal and radial check ligaments, the proximal, middle and distal accessory carpal ligaments, the palmar carpal ligament and the palmar reflection of the antebrachial carpal joint capsule. Carpal injuries, including chip fractures are incurred in heavy work.
- **Bucked Knees or Sprung Knees** (over in the knees) is a forward (dorsal) deviation of the carpal joints. Abnormal strain will be placed on the sesamoid bones, superficial flexor tendon, extensor carpi radialis and suspensory ligament. This conformation is common in foals, with relative shortness of the carpal flexors usually self-correcting by three months.
- **Knock Knees or Knee Narrow** (medial deviation of the carpal joints-carpus valgus) is an angular deviation of the carpus inward which can result from an uneven radial growth plate or from abnormal development or alignment of the carpal bones themselves. In foals, this may self-correct and places tension or strain on the medial ligaments and compression on the lateral aspect of the carpus. The cannon, fetlock, and foot may rotate outward and interference as well as arthritic changes are expected over time.
- **Bow Legs or Bandy-Legged** (lateral deviation of the carpal joints) may accompany base-narrow, toe-in conformation and causes increased tension on the lateral surface of the limb, especially the lateral collateral ligament of the carpus, with compressive forces increased on the medial carpus. Carpal and other arthritic changes are likely with age and work.
- **Open Knees** refers to an irregular profile of the carpal joints when viewed from the side and has traditionally been associated with immaturity. It may be due to inflammation associated with rapid growth or nutritional imbalances (epiphysitis) and generally resolves between one and three years of age. The appearance of flared joint spaces or growth plates in mature horses may represent arthritic changes secondary to epiphysitis or injury and should be considered a potential source of unsoundness.

- **Offset Knees or Bench Knees** (lateral deviation of the metacarpal bones) means the cannon bone is offset to the lateral side when viewed from the front, placing abnormal strain on the medial splint bone as may be evidenced by “splints” (inflammation and eventually calcification of the medial interosseous ligament) or medial splint stress fractures.
- **Tied-In Knees** means the flexor tendons appear to be too close to the cannon bone when viewed from the side, inhibiting free movement.
- **Cut Under the Knees** means the cannon bone is slightly behind the carpus, giving the appearance of a dip or “cut out” dorsal surface just below the carpus. This deviation from a straight column of bone is a weakness that may result in arthritis with age and work.
- **Standing Under in Front** means the entire forelimb, from elbow to ground, is placed behind the perpendicular and too far under the body when viewed from the side. This abnormal leg position causes strain on bones, muscles, ligaments and tendons. The animal’s base of support is shortened, the arc of hoof flight is shortened and there is increased risk of stumbling or even falling.
- **Camped Out in Front** means the opposite condition/stance of standing under in front. The entire forelimb from elbow to ground extends forward when viewed from the side. This may be an indication of painful conditions of the feet, such as navicular syndrome or laminitis.
- **Short Upright Pastern** is often associated with a steep shoulder, short legs and a heavy, powerful body, it may be seen with base narrow, toe-in conformation. This pastern conformation predisposes to traumatic arthritis of the fetlock (osselets), ringbone and navicular syndrome.
- **Long Sloping Pastern** is usually seen with a hoof angle of 45 degrees or less and predisposes the horse to injuries of the flexor tendons, sesamoid bones and suspensory ligament.
- **Long Upright Pastern** increases risk for injury to fetlock joint (osselets) and navicular bone but to a lesser degree than the short upright pastern.

## Rear Legs

- In ideal hindlimbs the degree of muscle mass should be in balance with the forehand and the stated breed standard; generally, it should be appropriate for the animal’s intended use.
- When viewed from the side, the slope of the pelvis (point of hip to point of buttock) should be neither be too level or too steep.
- The angles of the thigh/femur, stifle (femorotibial joint) and hock should be moderate and provide efficient shock absorption to accommodate fluid, elastic, sound motion. A vertical line from the point of the buttock to the ground should touch the hock and fetlock (parallel to the cannon) and end behind the bulbs of the heels.
- The connections between the loin, gluteals, and hamstrings should be smooth and provide strong support for the hip, stifle and hock.
- Viewed from the rear, both hindlimbs should be symmetric, bearing equal weight, with the widest point the width between the stifles.
- An imaginary line dropped from the point of the hip to the ground (viewed from the side) should bisect the hoof halfway between the toe and the heel.
- An imaginary line from the point of the buttock (tuber ischii) to the ground will approximately bisect the leg when viewed from the rear but in contrast to the forelegs, the rear legs should not point precisely forward, but angle outward slightly for the stifles to clear the width of the barrel. This will result in the points of the hocks turning slightly inward towards each other and the toes pointing slightly outwards. This rotation outward will be greater in a rounder horse and less prominent in a narrower one.

## Rear Leg Faults

- **Standing Under Behind** (“sickle hocked”) Means when viewed from the side, the entire leg is angled too far forward, or the hock is abnormally angled.

- **Sickle Hocked** is excessive angulation of the hock (tarsal) joint. The angle of the hock is decreased (more deviation from a straight line) so that the horse stands under from the hock down. This places extra strain on the plantar (back) ligaments of the joint and may lead to swelling/joint effusion on the plantar surface and compression trauma on the front (dorsal) surface. This is sometimes called “curvy conformation”.
- **Straight Behind or Post-Legged** (excessively straight) is, when viewed from the side, there is a larger angle (closer to 180 degrees) than normal at the hock, placing increased tension on the dorsal structures of the joint and reducing the shock absorption of the limb. The angle of the stifle and fetlock is often straighter as well and intermittent upward fixation of the patella is associated with this conformation.
- **Camped Out Behind** is when the entire limb is placed too far caudally (towards the back of the horse) when viewed from the side. An imaginary line dropped from the hip joint to the ground would hit the ground at or in front of the toe. This is often associated with an upright pastern.
- **Base Wide** means when viewed from behind, the distance between the center lines of the feet is greater than the distance between the center lines of the thighs. This is generally seen in association with cow hocks.
- **Base Narrow** means when viewed from behind, the distance between the center lines to the feet is less than the distance between the center lines of the limbs in the thigh region, placing added strain on the lateral aspects of the bones, joints and ligaments. Most of the weight lands on the outside of the feet and the legs may bow outwards. If the forehand is normal, interference may result in addition to the damage from abnormal weight bearing.
- **Cow Hocks** means that the limbs are base-narrow to the hocks and base-wide from the hock to the feet. The hocks are too close together and the feet may be widely splayed. This puts excessive stress on the medial side of the hock joint and may lead to arthritis commonly known as bone spavin.
- **Base Narrow from the Fetlocks Down** places stress on the lateral collateral ligaments of the fetlock, pasterns and coffin joints, as well as the bones and joints of the pastern and foot.

## Feet

The ideal forefoot should be round and wide at the heels, with the size and shape of the heels corresponding to the size and shape of the toe.

- The bars should be well developed, and the thickness of the wall should be greatest at the toe and thin gradually toward the heels, without defects such as cracks or evidence of abnormal wear.
- The inside wall should be slightly straighter (more vertical) than the outside wall.
- The sole should be slightly concave and should not be a weight bearing surface.
- The frog should be large, elastic and well-developed, with the apex pointed towards the center of the toe. It should be bilaterally symmetrical.
- The angle of the forefoot should match the angle of the pastern (usually between 53 and 58 degrees) and the angle of the heel should be the same as the angle of toe.

The ideal hind foot should be more pointed/elongated than the front and appear to break over at the center.

- The frog should be large, elastic and symmetrical, pointing towards the center of the toe.
- The angle of the foot (like the pastern) should be 55-60 degrees, and the angle should be the same at the toe as the heel.
- The wall should be free of defects and may be slightly steeper (more vertical) on the medial side.
- The sole of the back foot is generally more concave than that of the front.

## Foot Faults

- **Flat Foot** is a flat foot that lacks the desired concavity of the sole and is prone to bruising and lameness.
- **Contracted Foot** means the foot is narrower than normal. More common in front than rear feet, it can be unilateral or bilateral.

- **Bull-Nosed Foot** means the toe has been shortened or “dubbed off”. This can be from wear when a horse drags its toes (which can be due to neurologic or musculoskeletal abnormalities) or be intentional as part of the management of laminitis.
- **Buttress Foot** is swelling or firm enlargement on the dorsal surface of the hoof wall at the coronary band, indicating low ringbone (arthritis of the coffin/distal interphalangeal joint) or fracture of the extensor process of the coffin bone. The hoof wall may be deformed all the way to the ground surface because of chronic inflammation at the site of the injury.
- **Thin Wall and Sole** is characterized by a foot that wears abnormally quickly and may be too low at the heel due to sole pressure. This condition is heritable and undesirable but may be managed by diligent hoof care and selective management of surfaces to which the bearing structures of the horse’s foot is exposed.
- **Club Foot** is defined as a foot with a hoof axis of 60 or greater and associated with an excessively short deep digital flexor tendon due to inheritance, nutritional imbalance, or injury. This results in undue concussion on the toe and the coffin bone may be damaged.
- **Coon Footed** means the pastern slopes more than the dorsal surface of the hoof wall, placing extra strain on the flexor tendons, sesamoid bones, and distal sesamoid ligaments as well as sometimes the common digital extensor tendon.

### **Movement**

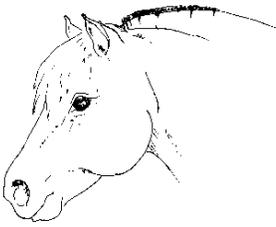
Movement is the combination of travel (the flight of the hoof in relation to the other limbs as viewed from the front or rear) and action (joint flexion, stride length, suspension and other qualities usually assessed from a side view) and involves the horse’s entire body.

Movement is affected by natural conformation, but also by training and conditioning. The condition of the feet as well as injuries, fit and weight of tack and rider or burden in draft, acquired abnormalities and the ground surface on which it is traveling may also affect movement.

### **Common Disorders of Movement**

- **Interfering** is the striking of a limb with the opposite limb. It is associated with toed-out, base narrow conformation with resulting increased risk for stumbling, tripping and self-injury.
- **Rope-Walking** is when one foot is placed directly in front of the contralateral other. It is dangerous due to the tendency to stumble or trip and is associated with narrow, toed-out conformation.
- **Winging** means the foot swings inward in flight but often then lands outside the normal track. It is often associated with narrow or toed-out conformation and can result in interfering.
- **Paddling** means the foot is thrown outward in flight, but the foot often lands inside the normal track. It is associated with wide and toe-in conformation.
- **Forging** means hitting the sole, wall, or shoe of the forefoot with the toe of the ipsilateral (same side) hind foot. It is associated with sickle hocks, short back/long limbed conformation, but also with a horse that is tired, young, poorly-conditioned, or has overly-long toes due to poor hoof care management.
- **Over-Reaching** means hitting the heel of the forefoot with the ipsilateral (same side) hind foot before the forefoot has left the ground. Also called “grabbing”, it may result in a damaged or lost shoe or in an injured heel.
- **Lateral Gaits** may be desirable or natural in some breeds, but Fjords should not pace, rack, tolt, single-foot or exhibit any gait other than a four-beat walk, two-beat trot and three-beat canter.
- **“False” Gaits** are more common in the stock horse pleasure industry. These include walking in back while jogging (very slow trot) in front, cantering in front while jogging in back, a four-beat canter at a very slow pace with a shortened stride (not a gallop) or any other variation of the listed natural Fjord gaits.

## CONFORMATION DRAWINGS



*Medium size head, broad flat forehead.  
Straight profile, good definition.  
Eyes large and expressive.  
Ears small, truncated, wide set - Correct*

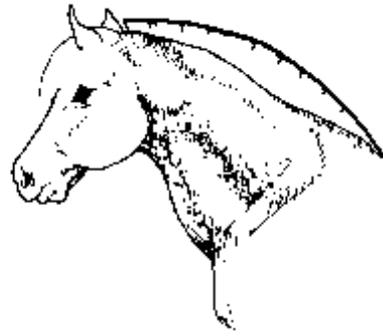
*Normal eye, convex profile, short ears,  
small jowl, narrow head (front) - Fault*



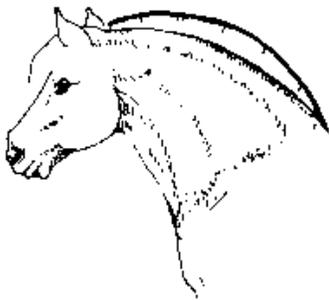
*Small "pig" and high set eye  
Small nostrils, long ears - Fault*



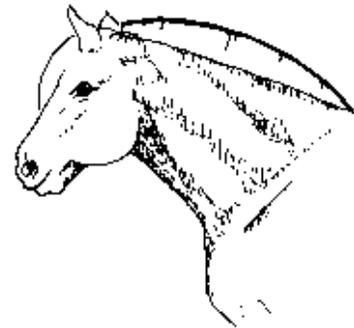
*Normal neck - Correct*



*Ewe neck - Fault*



*Neck, slightly heavier - Correct*



*Straight, stick neck  
Insignificant length of poll - Fault*



*Heavy neck, thick throat latch - Fault*



*Pastern medium length and slope - Correct*



*Matching angle pastern and hoof - Correct*



*Pastern too long and sloping - Fault*



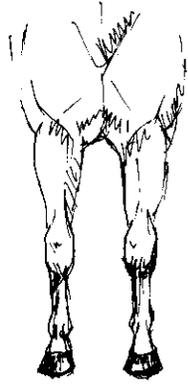
*Broken axis pastern - Fault*



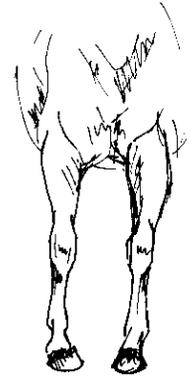
*Pastern short and upright - Fault*



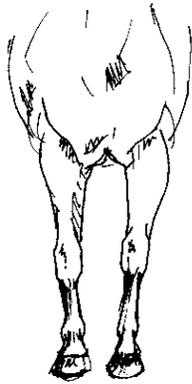
*Broken axis pastern - Fault*



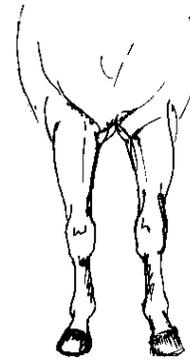
*Straight legs - Correct*



*Toeing in - Fault*



*Base narrow - Fault*



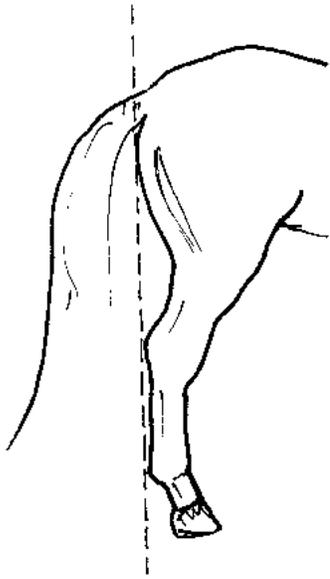
*Toeing out - Fault*



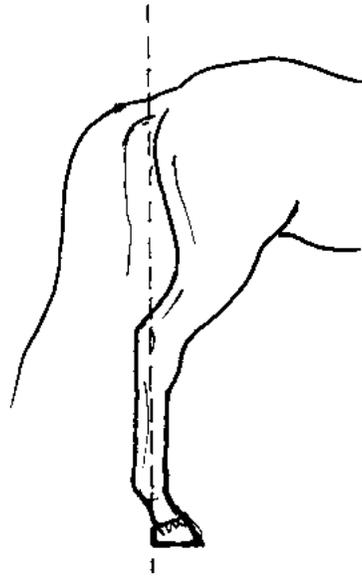
*Base wide - Fault*



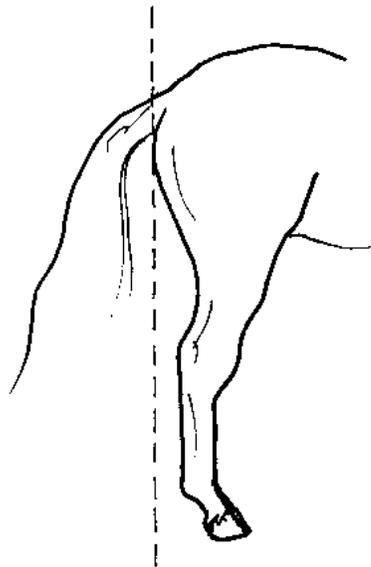
*Straight, but narrow chested - Fault*



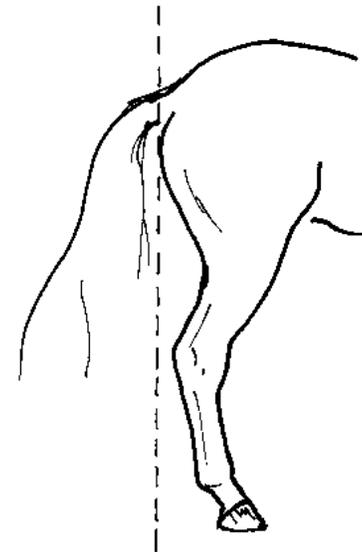
*Normal hind leg angle - Correct*



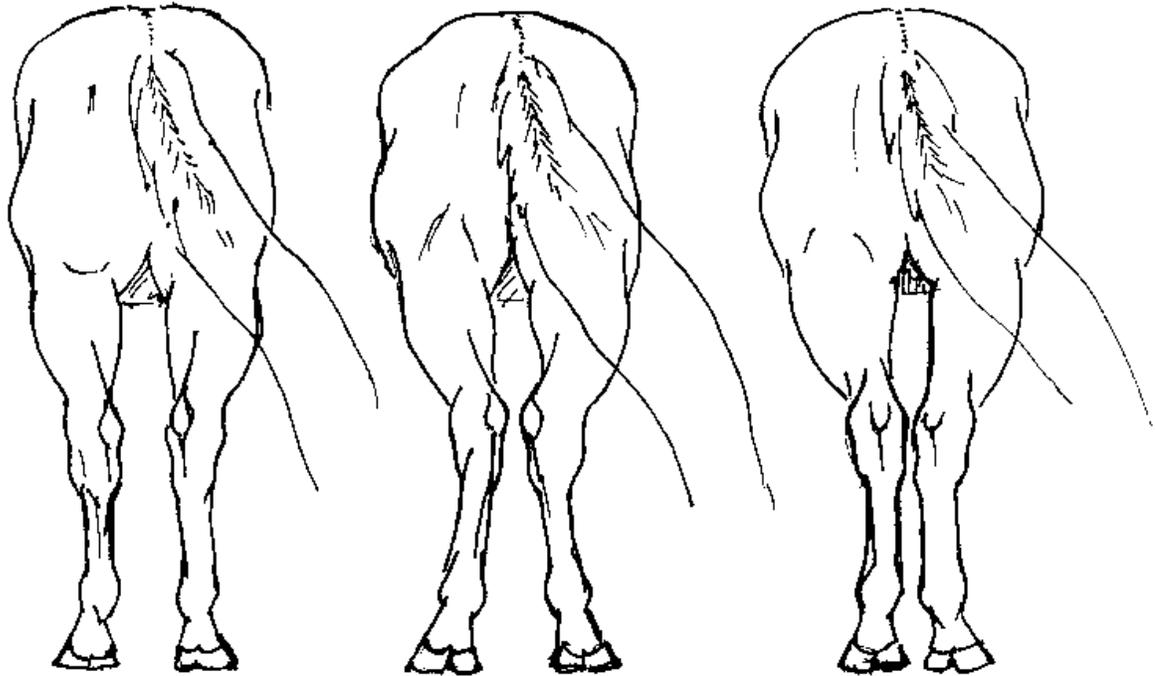
*"Camped out" behind plumb line - Fault*



*"Post leg" straight hind leg - Fault*



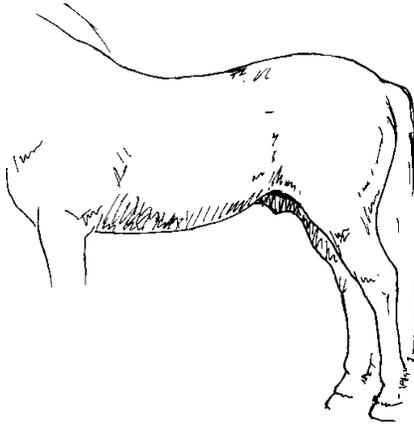
*"Sickle hocked" - Fault*



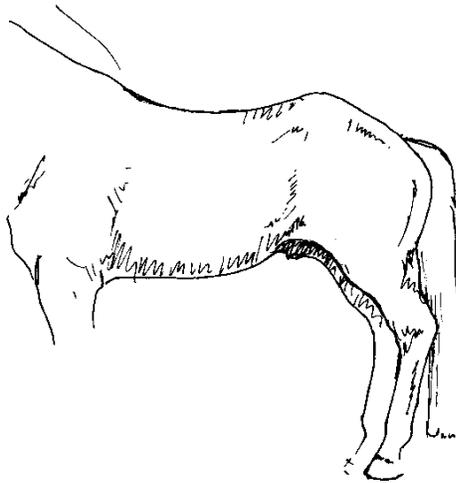
*Cannons parallel,  
stifles and toes point out slightly - Correct*

*"Cow hocked" hocks point inward  
cannons angle outward, toes out - Fault*

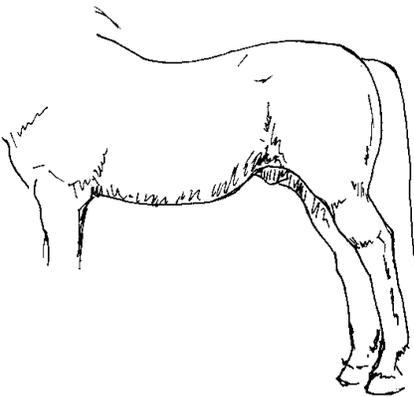
*Narrow, may cause interfering - Fault*



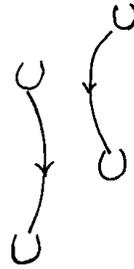
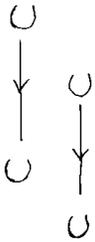
*Strong back and coupling flowing into a correctly rounded croup - Correct*



*Weak back and long weak coupling, high hip and croup, "sickle hocked" - Fault*



*Low weak back with flat, nearly level croup, "camped out" hind legs - Fault*



*Straight legs, straight movement - Correct*

*Base wide, straddle - Fault*

*Toeing out, "winging", may interfere - Fault*



*Base narrow, "rope walking", plaiting - Fault*

*1Toeing in, padding - Fault*