

Situation of the Fjord Horse in the UK

For a small island nation, the UK has a remarkable diversity of native Equines: 16 in all of which 12 are pony breeds.

We are proud to have our Fjord enthusiasts who love the breed and despite competition from the indigenous breeds, continue to support and enjoy their Fjord Horses.

2020 has been a darkly unusual year due to Covid -19. A number of our owners including our board have lost loved ones to Covid and many have had the disease themselves.

The UK has been on semi or permanent Lockdown since March 2020. This has led to a suspension in shows, gatherings and importantly for breeding coverings.

The majority of people in the UK are hobby breeders rather than stud owners. So the Covid restrictions have hit hard due to the fact that the government decided "breeding was not considered a necessary excuse for leaving home. Taking a mare to the stallion so therefore was illegal.

Earlier in 2020 we had hoped that Covid would be brought under better control than was achieved. So the summer showing season was wiped out.

Fjord activities were restricted to hacking alone in the early months of the virus and in the autumn extending to riding with one other.

The sales of Fjords during the virus copied the situation with dogs. Every available Fjord was sold and foals were sold into 2021, resulting in the only availability being 2022 and beyond.

Good news for the breed. We could have sold more foals than we have produced and as a result, we have given the details of European and Norwegian Stud Book authorities to people enquiring for foals. We are taking bookings for 2022 and beyond. So the future of the Fjord in the UK looks bright. It will never be bred in the 100's, but those that are being bred are subject of rigorous control. So we know that stock in our main studbook are pure and trace back to stock originally imported into the UK in the 60's, and or proven pedigree stock imported into the UK in the intervening years.

During our formation, every mare with proven ancestry was bloodtyped and branded. All foals were branded. As soon as microchipping was available, we adopted it and branding was optional and eventually died out. Every foal was microchipped, decades ahead when it became UK law. No Fjord was allowed into the Stud Book if it was not microchipped.

For 10 years we banned the production of home bred stallions to ensure diversity in the gene pool and as low as possible inbreeding.

We have several proven older home bred stallions and this year, the young UK bred stallion – Ausdan Nordic King – is taking limited mares after successfully passing his preliminary

tests. We are pleased that owner Peter Williams is taking his duties to the breed seriously. He has said he will be importing or purchasing suitable mares for his up and coming stud, once hopefully his stallion passes it's final tests.

We are very proud of stud owner Gilly Banks who had decided to give up breeding one of four indigenous breeds to exclusively breed Fjord Horses. Two years ago our chairman John Goddard-Fenwick, sent her to Nordfjordeid Norway in his place to represent the UK association and to learn more about the breed and the evaluation of future stock. She spent 5 days taking in every aspect of inspection and had in fact chosen a Norwegian stallion to bring back to the UK, only to be outbid by a Danish breeder Leif Grimbühler, who we are proud to say, is a Fjordfriend with whom our chairman has spent many a pleasant hour with and has purchased stock from. Gilly eventually, later in the year chose a proven stallion from Denmark (Mosegardens Hauge) who was the Halsnaes line running through his ancestry.

One of our mares, Ausdan Karin, was destined for our famous Horse Of The Year Show, but Covid curtailed that.

In 2020, it had been decided that we will no longer accept proof of sight of foal running with and suckling from it's dam. Veterinary surgeons who would then microchip the foal after checking the microchip of it's dam. From 2022 onwards, in addition to the above, foals will have to be DNA tested.

This has not been popular with hobby breeders, but we feel we are sufficiently divers in our breeding lines to bring this rule in. If we lose potential hobby breeders foals because of this new rule, then so be it. In years to come, breeders whether hobby or stud will through familiarity, accept the rule and it's attendant costs.

Studs have accepted the new rule.

Our mares have always traced back to the foundation mares and approved mores from other FjHI countries, so the system as outlined has served us well.

We are hoping that shows will re-commence during the summer of 2021 and our Fjords will continue to show their strength against like equines of other breeds.

We do not have enough people who want to show Fjord Horses to have their own classes at horse shows, but we do have agreements in place that, if there are more than 4 pure bred Fjords at an approved show, they will be professionally judged separately and will issue rosettes.

We are proud of our UK Fjords and how they have done so exceptionally well against the UK's indigenous breeds.

March 2021