

A- THE BASIS FOR BREEDING AND JUDGING FJORD HORSES

The Colours of the Fjord Horse and the Primitive Markings

An adaptation of "The Colours of the Fjord Horse" by Tor Nestaas, revised in 2002

The Fjord Horse has different sorts of dun colour. They are the same kind of colour as on the wild horse of Central Asia, the Przewalski, and the Tarpan, the European wild horse. This kind of colour is also called primitive.

The basic primitive colours are **brown dun**, **red dun** and **grey** (blue dun). In addition, **uls dun** and **yellow dun** are also genuine colours 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 colours shall be acknowledged as the genuine and typical colours of the Fjord Horse. This decision is also supported by scientific facts.

Variations of colour

The **brown dun** („brunblakk" in Norwegian) is the most common colour. It can be found in lighter or darker shades. The colour of the body is pale yellow-brownish, and can vary from cream yellow to nearly brown. The darker stripe of hair (in Norwegian, "Midtstol", in English "Mid-section") in the middle of the mane, forelock and tail are black, or dark brown. The mane is covered with white hairs on both sides of the mid-section and so is the forelock and tail. The eel-stripe is dark brown or distinct darker than the coat colour. The light coloured horses have whiter forelocks and whiter hairs on the mane's outside. On darker individuals, these hairs may also be darker, almost brown.

The **red dun's** („rødblakk" in Norwegian) body-colour 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, eel stripe and the darker hair in the middle of the tail are red or red-brownish, always darker than the colour 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 **greys** or **blue duns** („grå" in Norwegian) have a body-colour, which can vary from light silver grey to dark slate grey. The darker stripe of hair in the middle of the mane, eel stripe and the darker hair in the middle of the tail are black or darker than the main colour. Forelock and muzzle area is darker in contrast to the brown and red duns who 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 colour as in the naming of the others, grey should be called black dun, but this term has never been used.

Uls dun ("ulsblakk" in Norwegian) is a variety of the brown dun colour caused by a dilution factor, which reduces the production of hair colour. The colour of the body is almost white or yellowish-white. The darker stripe of hair in the middle of the mane, eel stripe and the darker hair in the middle of the tail are black. Mane and tail have a lighter shade than the body.

Yellow dun ("gulblakk" in Norwegian) is the rarest of the Fjord Horse-colours. It is a variation of red dun caused by the same factor as mentioned under uls dun. The colour of the body is yellowish-white. The darker stripe of hair in the middle of the mane, eel stripe and the darker hair in the middle of the tail are darker yellowish than the colour of the body. Fore- lock, mane and tail can be completely white, and on such individuals the eel stripe can be in- distinct.

Dilution factor

Greys too can have the dilution factor mentioned under 'Uls dun' and 'Yellow dun', but as they have the same appearance as light greys without this factor the 'colour' has no specific name.

Mating horses with the dilution factor results in 25% white and foals with blue eyes. As this colour is not accepted on Fjord Horses it is recommended not to mate uls duns, yellow duns and greys with dilution factor with each other. (If a grey has a yellow dun or uls dun father or mother then there is 50% risk that it has dilution factor. If a grey has yellow dun or uls dun offspring mated with brown dun or red dun it has for sure the dilution factor. If a grey mated with another grey has yellow dun offspring there too is a high risk for dilution factor.)

Extension of the colours

As mentioned before in the chapter of "The Norwegian Breeding History", in early days of the organised and written breeding history 'Uls dun' was very popular and for a time was the dominant variety of colour. So then 'Uls dun' increasingly was bred to 'Uls dun' resulting in white foals.

Therefore the 'Brown dun' colour became more and more popular; especially the lighter shades, and is now the dominating colour. The extension of the colours can of course also be caused by the fact that the colour of the most popular and most used stallions, was brown dun. On the other hand, these stallions could also be more popular because of their colour. Changing opinions of what is thought to be fashionable has also been a strong factor. At the present, there is interest in preserving all the five genuine colours. *) See table at the bottom of the chapter

Determine Colour

Some times it can be difficult to decide what colour a foal has, especially before it has shed its coat for the first time. The best help to decide the colour is to see what colour the darker stripe of hair in the middle of the mane, the eel stripe and the darker hair in the middle of the tail have.

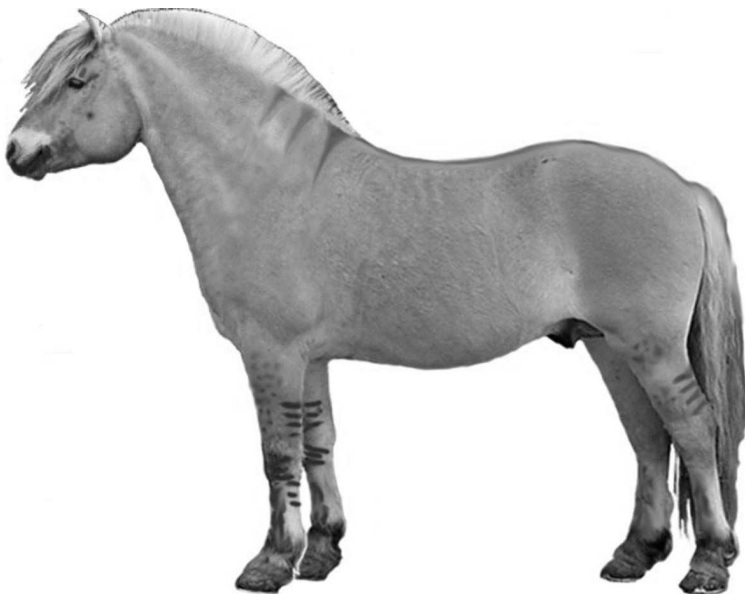
In some instances, grown Fjord Horses too can have an indeterminate colour, as the appearance of the colour can be different in different seasons of the year, or change when they change their coat. Their summer coat appears to be grey or uls dun, but their winter coat seems to be brown dun.

Primitive markings

An important part of 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 or cheek. The last one is called "Njåls-merke" (Mark of Njål) after the founding father of the modern Fjord Horse, the stallion Njål 166, foaled 1891, who had such spots on his cheeks.

As mentioned in the section on *Variations of colour*, the colour of these markings differs according to the main body colour. On red and yellow dun horses with monochrome forelock, mane and tail, the eel 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.

The zebra stripes have the same colour as the darker stripe of hair in the middle of the mane and the other markings, but are often of a lighter shade. They are most prominent in the horse's summer coat. Foals lack zebra stripes when they are foaled, but the stripes will 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 greys and uls duns. On these, the legs can be of the same colour as the body, or they can be dark up to and including the knee and up to the hock.



The picture of this horse is edited for illustration purpose.

Other markings.

White, or flesh-coloured 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. White stars are only accepted on mares, but flesh-coloured marks are accepted on the penis of the 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.

The Division of Colours in % of Licensed Fjord Stallions (Norway) *)

Foal year	Number	Brown d.	Red d.	Grey	Uls d.	Yel. D.	Other/ unknown
1857-79	109	27,4	-	1,0	48,0	-	23,6
1900-09	179	65,9	0,6	3,4	19,6	-	10,05
1930-39	252	89,7	0,4	1,6	8,3	-	-
1960-69	95	95,8	-	4,2	-	-	-
1990-95	83	85,6	2,4	8,4	3,6	-	-

*) Table Tor Nestaas

The Division of Colours in % of Registered Fjord Mares (Norway) *)

Foal year	Number	Brown d.	Red d.	Grey	Uls d.	Yel. D.	Other/ unknown
1860-79	62	30,7	4,8	1,6	46,8	-	16,1
1900-09	512	62,7	2,9	3,7	20,9	0,2	9,6
1930-39	4363	83,6	4,2	1,7	2,6	0,6	-
Registering year							
1965-70	539	90,5	4,6	1,7	2,6	0,6	-
1980-85	714	88,2	5,6	3,7	2,1	0,4	-

*) Table Tor Nestaas