

Fjord Horse Show Comes to Iowa

By Patti Jo Walter,
Midwest Fjord Horse Club president

The MWFHC Show

For the first time ever, the Midwest Fjord Horse Club (www.mwfhc.org) will be hosting their annual MWFHC Breed Show in the Hawkeye state. The Iowa Equestrian Center (Cedar Rapids, Iowa) will be alive with many wonderful and talented Fjord horses from July 16-18. The MWFHC is the largest Fjord club and has the largest breed show, so folks love to come to show off their stock, and spectators are in for a real treat.

Over the last two decades, the show has been held in Minnesota, so it's a BIG change for our club. We are more than excited to be moving to this premier equestrian show facility in the Midwest. We have had members come to our breed show from MI, CO, NC, SD, ND, NY, CA, WI, IL, MN, IA, IN, and even UTAH!

Just as our breed of horse is quite unique, this show is anything but ordinary. Our show consists of three jammed-packed days of riding, driving, draft, and in-hand classes. We have your typical Halter, Showmanship, Trail, English and Western Pleasure and Equitation classes, but perhaps what sets us apart from the typical horse show is our driving and draft. We have just about every kind of driving class there is, including the interesting multiple hitches such as the unicorn hitch, which consists of three horses, one out in front and two behind; and the tandem hitch, with one horse in front of the other (as pictured below). Singles, teams, and 4-up hitches round out the driving classes.



Decked out in their Sunday best and better, the elaborate and impressive entries in the Turn-Out Class are a sight to behold.

But we can't forget the Games! Gambler's Choice, Double Jeopardy, and Pick your Route are just three of the fun classes in this category. Watching these GREAT drivers maneuver through



Log Skidding is one of the working horse classes



obstacles at high speeds with a cart behind can leave one breathless!

Log Skidding, Farm Hitch, and the Farmer's Race make up the working horse classes, while Combined Pleasure and Draft classes round out the equation.

Some of the Fjords at our breed show are trail horses, while some are therapy mounts, and others are truly field work horses. But what stands out is that these horses can work at home, and then transform into a show horse in the ring. They really **can** do it all!

Competition is great, but camaraderie and fun amongst us is even greater.

As you can see, our show is really one of a kind.



History and Characteristics of the Breed

There is a rich history behind the Fjord Horse. This rare breed was first discovered 2000+ years ago in the "fjords" of Norway, aptly earning its name. Soon to become a favored mount for the Vikings, the Norwegian Fjord Horse was next used for hundreds of years on the farms of western Norway. Even as late as WWII, the hardy horses were useful for work in mountainous terrain.

Even in the earliest days, the Fjord Horse was considered to be quite versatile. They were not only used for their pulling power, but also for their riding ability, truly becoming a horse for the entire family.

The Fjord Horse also has a long recorded history of pure breeding, without crossbreeding. There was a small period after WWII when the government of Norway experimented with crossing the Fjords, but

soon found the purebred Fjord was of better quality and so banned all crossing with other breeds. This standard is still upheld in Europe and in America. It is very important to keep this breed as it was from the beginning; a versatility horse that has an outstanding disposition, wonderful smooth gaits and a horse that will work for you all day as a very willing and intelligent partner. A truly remarkable horse!

In Europe the breed is overseen by the government, where evaluations are mandatory and lesser quality animals are culled out of breeding. Here in America, the Norwegian Fjord Horse Registry [www.nfhr.com] holds evaluations throughout America to keep the standard of this breed high, educating its members about the importance of quality breeding and training. Owners of this talented breed want to keep the breed pure and of high quality as they know how special this breed truly is!

Today in Norway, the breed, a national symbol, is regarded in high esteem. The Fjord Horse is also featured as a "charge" on the coat of arms of the Nordfjord municipalities of Gloppen in Eid. Here in America, we value the Fjord Horse for its beauty, its intelligence and its versatility, performing in any and all disciplines.

There are five colors in the breed: Brown Dun, Yellow Dun, White dun, Gray Dun and Red Dun, with Brown Dun making up the majority (90%). The most noticeable feature is the mane. Trimmed in an upright crest with black down the center and white on the sides, it is a God-given natural trait that makes the Fjord Horse unique. If the mane is allowed to grow out and fall over, these Fjords are called "hippie Fjords," all in good jest. Most aficionados prefer to keep the mane trimmed, partly for tradition, but also to show off the two-tone mane and the gorgeous necks.



Fjord Owners are Special, Too!

Fjord owners are as special as the breed itself. They are down to earth, caring, humble and LOVE to have fun! The MWFHC (Midwest Fjord Horse Club) has a little over 220 members from 13 states and Canada. We have members, at all levels of competition, who come to our breed shows, from all over the US.

I'm very excited to have an opportunity to show others in the Midwest our SPECIAL Breed and our SPECIAL SHOW! I hope all those horse lovers out in the Cedar Rapids area will come and see the Norwegian Fjord Breed Show at the Iowa Equestrian Center. We truly love to show off our Fjords and I think you will ENJOY the SHOW! You can see a copy of the show schedule on our club's website, at www.mwfhc.org