



photo by Chantal Jonkergouw

CONTENTS

- Origin
- Size
- Colors
- Conformation
- Performance
- Longevity
- Health
- Breeding Goals - The ideal Horse
- Specific Breeding Goals
- Conformation
- Riding abilities
- Measurements

Description of the Icelandic Horse Breed

Origin

The Icelandic horse breed originates from Iceland where it has been bred, without any known introduction of foreign genetic material, since the island was settled around the year 900 AD. Its closest relatives today are assumed to be the native horse breeds of Scandinavia and horse breeds of the British Isles. The Icelandic horse is pure-bred with all ancestors traceable to Iceland.

Size

The height of the Icelandic horse generally ranges from 125 to 145cm when measured with a stick at the highest point of the withers. The average for mares is 136cm and for stallions 138cm. The grown Icelandic horse weighs around 300 to 400kg.

Colors

Most known horse colors and markings can be seen. The most dominant colors are chestnut, black and bay but grey and tobiano are also quite commonly found. More than one hundred color varieties may be found in the Icelandic horse breed.

Conformation

Conformation may vary considerably but a typical Icelandic horse is rectangular and compact in shape. Typical of the breed is a sloping croup, a long, thick mane and tail, and a thick, protective coat in winter.

Performance

The Icelandic horse is a riding horse. The horse is unique in its gaits and virtually all Icelandic horses have tölt in addition to walk, trot, and canter/gallop. Many horses have the additional gait of very fast (flying) pace. As a riding horse it is extraordinarily versatile - a capable, willing horse for pleasure riding, and for sport competitions, suitable for adults and children. The horse is tough, independent, yet sociable and easy to get on with, is self-assured and has good staying power.

Longevity

The horse matures slowly and is generally not completely grown until the age of six or seven. It has a long active life span (25-30 years is not unusual).

Health

The overall health of the Icelandic horse is very good. Fertility is high and both sexes can be fit for reproduction up to the age of 25 to 27 years.

Breeding Goals - The Ideal Horse

- **Health, Fertility, Longevity.**

The official breeding goal is to breed a healthy, fertile and durable horse - a robust Icelandic horse.

- **Colors**

The official breeding goal is to preserve all possible varieties of coat colors within the breed.

- **Size**

The official breeding goal gives room for substantial variation in size. A preferred range in height is 135cm to 145cm when measured with a stick.

Specific breeding goals

Conformation

Generally, the breeding goal is the more lightly built, athletic, Icelandic horse with a strong and supple body. The conformation should give an optimal base for gaits and self-carriage and at the same time aim for generally accepted aesthetic aspects described in detail below.

- **Head**

Well-defined, proud and alert.

- **Neck, withers & shoulders**

Neck: Well-carried, high set, supple, flexible at the poll, long and fine, clearly separate from the main body.

Withers: Prominent and long.

Shoulders: Long and sloping.

- **Back and hindquarters**

Back/Top line: Strong and supple, broad and well-muscled all the way back to the croup. Average length.

Hindquarters: Long, adequately sloping croup, quarters equally muscled on each side and only slightly narrowing towards the tail. Long, well-muscled thighs.

- **Proportions**

The horse should be full of presence. Front, middle and hind sections are approximately equal. The legs

are long and well spaced. The body is cylindrical in shape and should be higher at the withers than at the highest point of the croup.

- **Legs (quality)**

Clean dry legs, strong tendons, and clear separation between tendon and bone, strong and flexible pasterns.

- **Legs (joints)**

Viewed from in front of and behind the horse: legs are straight when moving. Hind legs may turn out slightly. There is adequate space between the front legs, and between the hind legs.

- **Hooves**

Strong, thick and smooth horn. Concave, thick soles with large frog and strong heels.

- **Mane and tail**

Long and thick.

Riding abilities

- **Tölt**

Even 4 beat, supple, high action and long strides. The horse should be able to tölt at all speeds, from slow to very fast.

- **Trot**

Confident 2 beat with high action, long strides and suspension. The horse should be able to trot up to a fast speed.

- **Walk**

Even 4 beat with long, energetic strides.

- **Pace**

Impressive 2 beat lateral gait with clear suspension, fast, confident and suitable for racing.

- **Canter & gallop**

Canter: 3 beat with clear suspension, easily increasing speed into a fast 4 beat gallop.

- **Willingness**

The horse should be very willing, offering its best with very little encouragement.

- **Temperament**

The horse tries to please the rider, is sensible, easy to ride and handle, and is happy, cheerful, confident and brave.

- **General impression**

The horse is very impressive. Movements are supple, high and ground covering. The horse has good head carriage, great presence and moves energetically in all gaits.

Guidelines for the Ideal Measurements of a Fully-grown Icelandic Horse

Height at the withers	Stallions 132-136 cm (13-13.2 hands)
	Mares 128-135 cm (12.2 – 13.1 hands)
Saddle-dip	7 to max. 10 cm (3-4") lower than withers
Croup	The same height as the withers
Length	About 3-10 cm (1-4") longer than the height at the withers
Depth of Chest	60-65 cm (23 1/2 - 25 1/2 ")

Width of Chest

35-40 cm (13-3/4 - 15 3/4")

Width of Hips

45-50 cm (17-3/4- 19-3/4")

Width between the hip
joints

40-50 cm (15-3/4 - 19-3/4") at the most 4-5 cm (1-1/2 – 2") less than the
hip width.