

Icelandic Animals

The Icelandic Horse

The Icelandic horse is a breed of horse that has lived in Iceland since the mid-800s. It was brought here by Viking-settlers. There is only one breed of horses in Iceland. Their tail is called “tagl” and their hair is called “fax”. Some horses have a white stripe on their face, and that is called “blesa”. The Icelandic horse is considered pretty rare and special because since they were moved to Iceland, the breed has stayed pure. They have never been blended with other breeds of horses. Unlike other breeds, the Icelandic horse can live by eating nothing but grass. The Icelandic horse has several ways to walk or run. The slowest horse walk is called “fet”. They have two ‘medium-fast’ ways that we call “tölt” and “brokk”. The Icelandic horse can also sprint, and that is what we call “skeið” og “stökk”.



The Icelandic Cow

The Icelandic cow is an ancient breed, rather small but comes in all sorts of colors, they are



for example brown, white and black and often this colors are mixed together. The first cows came with the settler. Most Farms in Iceland have tie stall, milking-parlors have become much more rare. The summer here in Iceland is very short so the cows have to be in the cow barns from the beginning of October to the beginning of June, so they are housed in about 8 months per year.

The pasture is mostly timothy and other kinds of grass. Often cabbage, ryegrass, turnips, barley or oats are grown to prolong

the growing season. Then the cows can eat it in September when the grass has stopped grown here. The Icelandic cows are very healthy and they are full of milk until they are about age of 9. Most of the cows or about 95% be born without horns. Most of the Icelandic cows have naturally no horns, but some of them or only 3-5% have gene for growing horns.

The Icelandic sheep

Like other Icelandic animals, the Icelandic sheep was brought to Iceland by the Viking settlers, in the ninth and the tenth century. The Icelandic sheep is one of the North European short-tailed types, they have a short tail called “dindill”. They are medium sized and the ewes (female sheep) can weight up to 75 kg. and the rams (male sheep) can weight up to 100 kg so sheep are rather heavy animals. They are fine boned with an open face, legs and udders and many them have horns. Their body is covered with warm and thick wool. The Icelandic sheep eats grass. They also like bread, salt and such. Sheep have sexual intercourse once a year. That’s mating season, or “fengitími”. Its offspring are called lambs. They grow up very fast and 12 months old ewes can easily get pregnant and grow a lamb. Sheep can live for 12 – 14 years.



The Icelandic Sheepdog



The Icelandic Sheepdog is Iceland’s only native dog. It was brought to Iceland with the first Viking settlers from 874 to 930. The Icelandic sheepdog is kind of like other Nordic dogs, its medium sized, *42 – 46 cm high*, it has prick ears and a curled tail. The Icelandic sheepdog is considered a strong and muscular breed of horses. Icelandic sheepdog always have 2 colors on their bodies, the types of color you can see on Icelandic sheep dogs are; *tan, reddish-brown, chocolate, grey, black* and with those colors always comes *white*.

HEIGHT: male: 46 cm female: 42 cm.

COLOR: tan, reddish-brown, chocolate, grey, black, white is a prominent color, and is required.

FROM SIDE: rectangular, length from shoulder to base of tail is greater than height at withers.



Written by Hörður and Ólafur Ingi.