



## **Information for Judging the Friesian Horse**

### **Introduction**

Judging the Friesian is in essence considering the same elements of the breed as for any other horse breed. The main concept to remember is that a Friesian is a purebred horse, not a type. The worldwide studbook is a closed book, ie. a horse can only be registered if both parents are registered purebreds. The Friesian is not a performance breed but part of the classification system uses performance as a measure of quality. It is important for judging the Friesian to understand their history and the breeding goals.

### **The Breeding Goal**

- A functionally and harmoniously built usable horse that has the Friesian breed characteristics, is healthy and vital, and has aptitude to perform in sport.
- The breeding goal consists of various components that can be subdivided into: 1) exterior and movement, 2) use, and 3) vitality and health. The subcomponents of these components are reflected in the breeding program by selection criteria used.

### **History**

The history of the Friesian horse is believed to trace back to the Roman Empire, about 60 A.D. where the horses of the “northern tribes” showed much resemblance with the Friesian horse as we now know it. They were used by Friesian soldiers serving in the Roman Army. A tombstone with a Friesian soldier on horseback was found near the Hadrian Wall in Northern England.

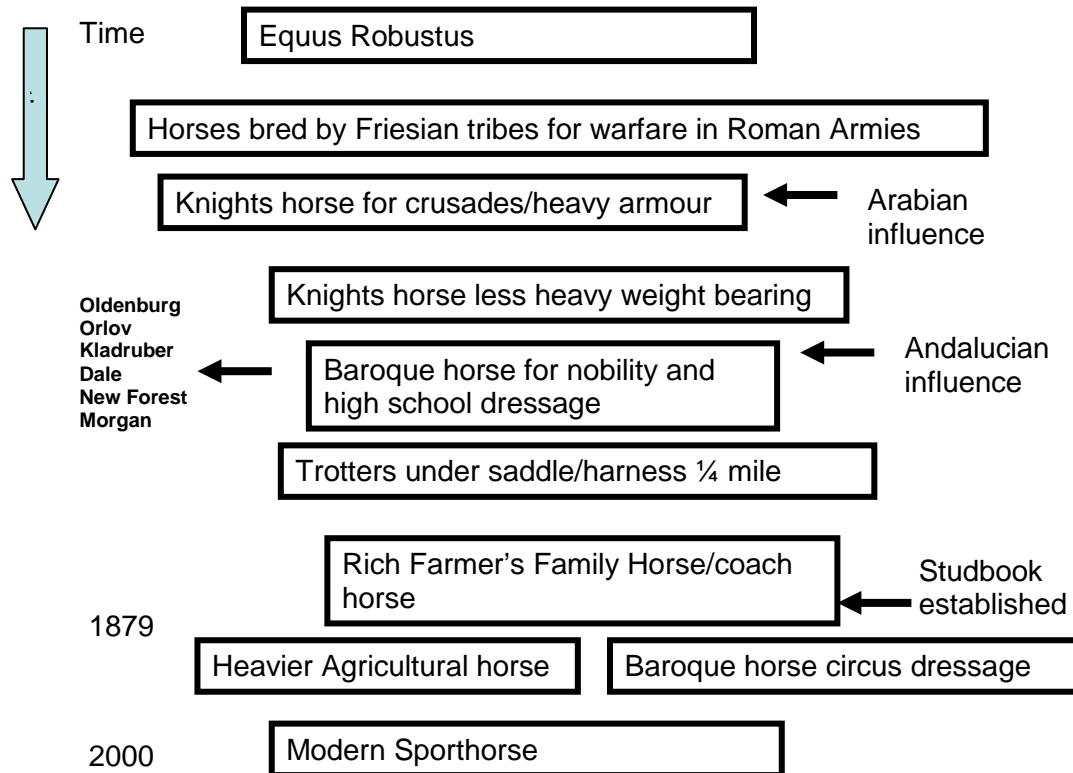
The best visual portrait of a horse of Friesian type existing in the 16<sup>th</sup> century is that in a painting from Don Juan of Austria riding an unmistakable Friesian horse called “Phryso” in the year 1568.

One of the reasons that little changed over 450 years is the passion and stubbornness of a select group of Friesian breeders.

The History of the Friesian breed is quite varied over the 2000 years of its existence. They have been influenced by the Arabian and Andalusian but not by thoroughbreds. The breed in turn has influenced many other breeds. It is a classical breed, not a modern Warmblood and this needs to be considered in judging.

Characteristic is its high headset, vertical neck and extravagant knee and hock action with an excellent extension and suspension in all gaits. It is always black, has a long mane and tail and may show feathering along the lower leg and coronet.

While its movement, which makes up 60% of its classification judging, is flamboyant, the nature of the breed is to be gentle and intelligent.



### The shaping of the breed

The Friesian breed has faced near extinction a couple of times, but has managed to bounce back strong, maintaining the ideals, loved and admired by many and meanwhile developing a sound breed for many horse owners to enjoy.

The tool that the Friesian Studbook has used for the past 130 years is the individual inspection and classification of a horse prior to entry into the Studbook Register. As like any studbook, improvement of the breed is the primary goal.

The inspections and classifications determine what each horse can contribute to the breeding standard that is maintained by the Studbook.

This inspection and classification process is called “The Keuring” and is conducted by approved inspectors of the KPFS, known in English as the Royal Society “The Friesian Horse Studbook” located in Drachten, NL.

To determine whether a horse is eligible for registration in the adult register, a system called linear scoring is used. This process also indicates the quality of the horse by allocating a 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> premium or no premium. If the horse has a conformation fault, it might not be eligible for registration in the adult book.

The strict process of selecting and classifying has cemented a place for the Friesian in modern equestrian pursuits. The breed has bounced back from 600 registered horses worldwide in the sixties to 50000 horses worldwide currently. A significant % of approved stallions now also compete at Grand Prix level in Europe and the US. In Australia, two stallions compete currently at Prix St George Level.

### **The Breed standard.**

Below is given the table that is used to describe the points of a Friesian in judging and linear scoring. The standard is maintained by the KFPS (Royal Society, The Friesian Horse studbook).

More information can be obtained from the ANZFHS which is the representative of the KFPS in Australia and New Zealand. The inspections by the KFPS judging team are held every two years.

There are currently 3 members of the ANZFHS that have undergone official training in judging the Friesian by the KFPS in the Netherlands.

Clinics for judges can be organised on request.

For more information, please contact the President, Hans Maes. Phone +61 267620943, e-mail [fryske@ceinternet.com.au](mailto:fryske@ceinternet.com.au).



### Terminology used in describing the Friesian horse

	Ideal	Fault/less desirable
<b>Head</b>	A small, expressive, noble head in which the eyes are set far apart Nasal bone is preferably somewhat dished Widely spaced nostrils. Jaws not too heavy Large bright eyes Ears small and alert with the tips pointing slightly towards each other Long in the mouth	Head too long Unexpressive eyes Convex nasal bone Roman nose, overly dished nasal bone Overbite or underbite Heavy jaws Head coarse or lacking in expression Short in the mouth
<b>Poll</b>	The poll is long (hands width) with a flowing transition to the neck. The transition from head to neck is not too heavy and provides room for the throat	Short poll Heavy transition from head to neck No room at the throat
<b>Neck</b>	The neck is long, slightly arched and displays good development of the upper muscles, and emerges high from the chest The neck has a flowing connection with the withers	Straight neck, horizontal neck A neck that is excessively or insufficiently muscled. Short, emerges too deeply from the chest Ewe-necked, swan-necked No conspicuous mane Bulging neck
<b>Shoulder</b>	The shoulder is long and sloping (at an angle of 45 to 50 degrees to a horizontal line) The angle at the shoulder joint is at least 90 degrees	Short Steep
<b>Ribs</b>	The ribs are long and bowed	Not barrel-chested Too short or too long
<b>Withers</b>	The high point of the withers flows gradually into the contour of the back	Insufficiently developed and insufficiently flowing Too flat "Hazenleger"
<b>Back</b>	The back is strong and well muscled (not hump-backed, not swaybacked) The back flows gradually into the shoulder and loins. The length of the back is in proportion with the length of the fore quarters and the hind quarters	Swaybacked or humpbacked Insufficient connection, three-part build
<b>Loins</b>	The loins are strong (not raised or sunken), broad and well muscled, with a flowing transition to the croup	Narrow Raised, underdeveloped, sunken No smooth transition to the croup
<b>Croup</b>	The croup is long (as measured between the vertical lines of hip and the hip bones), slightly sloping and muscled	Short Too sloping or too straight Roof-shaped, poorly muscled Tail implanted too high, too high at the croup Round when viewed from the back
<b>Gluteals</b>	Gluteals are long and well developed	Too short Poorly muscled





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## Some examples of Friesians



An example of how to present a Friesian Horse to a Judge



Presenting a Friesian



Showing movement at liberty



Friesians in dressage,  
advanced



Friesians in showdriving,  
dressage test