

Riding Native Breeds: native breed horse tourism in West Norway, Iceland and the Faroes Islands

A NORA funded project to develop equine tourism with local native breeds in native landscapes.

Dr Rhys Evans

Høgskulen for landbruk og bygdeutvikling
Jæren



HLB
HØGSKULEN FOR
LANDBRUK OG
BYGDEUTVIKLING

Riding Native Nordic Breeds is about Developing Equine Tourism Businesses in Nordic Landscapes.



Background: Equine enterprises and rural development for the 21st century

- Equine activities add profitability to otherwise marginal farming enterprises
- Equine activities offer a reason for the younger generation to remain on the family farm
- Equine activities provide activities in existing cultural landscapes which keep them vital and which retain traditional cultural landscape values

Native breeds

- Rich history of local use and breeding in Nordic lands
 - Fjordhest, Nordlandhest, Lynghest,
 - Island hest
 - Faeroysk hest
 - These were *working* horses, not originally bred for racing, jumping and leisure like, for example, Thoroughbreds or Swedish warmbloods.

Native breeds

A dark-colored horse, possibly a native breed, is shown in profile, facing left. The horse is standing in a grassy field. In the background, there are rolling hills or mountains under a bright, hazy sky. The overall scene is peaceful and natural.

- Now being put to new uses, as leisure horses, therapy horses, companion animals, as well as increasingly competing in sport.
- Original decline in breed numbers came about because a declining to own them *economic imperative*
- Need to find *new economic imperatives* to keep breed numbers high

Native breeds



- Native breeds are *socio-natural* constructs, the intersection between culture and nature.
- They are the product of centuries of careful breeding to produce the most efficient and useful animal to help wrest a living from difficult Nordic environments

Native breeds



- Native breed horses are special, in the sense that they are sentient partners, with humans, in the creation of a landscape, a lifestyle, a place.
- The stories of native breed horses are inseparable from the stories of the People themselves
- These stories and the places of origin are assets which can be used to market native breed equine tourism.

Riding Nordic Native Breed project



- Aims to support and strengthen the native breed equine tourism sector in Western Norway, Iceland and the Faroe Islands.
- This refers to businesses providing a tourism experience using native horse breeds within local landscapes



Project objectives:

- 1) To gather best practice information from existing native breed equine tourism enterprises and programmes in Norway, Iceland and the Faroe Islands and to generate knowledge to directly share across practitioners and policy circles in the regions.
- 2) To understand the complex and compelling human-horse-land relationship inherent in the native breed equine tourism concept in order to provide more effective marketing.

rationale



Native horse breeds can operate as authentic elements of the rural landscape experience.

The role of native breeds has changed dramatically over the last century, resulting in the extinction or near extinction of equine breeds that have not found a role in a new economy.

Their preservation and promotion offers new opportunities which parallel the growth of interest in authentic heritage genetic material, and the preservation of cultural heritage. Both factors are of increasing global interest which can be further promoted.



Three Nordic horse breeds will be the focus of this project:

1) the **Faroese horse** which is near extinction, with efforts now under way to restore the breed,

2) the **Fjord horse** in Norway which forms the basis of a small but growing equine tourism sector in coastal Norway.

3) the **Icelandic horse** which is very important to tourism in Iceland as well as being exported to and bred in many countries across three continents.

Who is involved?

- In each case, *actual businesses* in each country are involved, sharing their practices with a view to identifying how enterprises in each area can maximize the market reach, profitability and sustainability of their businesses.
- Development experts and local government officers involved in tourism, local economic development, landscape-based development

Who is involved?

- *Researchers:*

Dr Rhys Evans – Hogskulen for Landbruk og Bygdenæringar, Jæren.

Dr Gudrun Helgadóttir & Dr Ingibjörg Sigurðardóttir
Holar University College, Iceland

- *Equine Tourism enterprises and organisations:*

-*Norway:* AS Norsk fjordhestsenter, Nordfjordeid;

-*Iceland:* Lýtingsstaðir Horse tourism, Skagafjörður; The Icelandic Horse History Center, Skagafjörður

-*Faroes Islands:* Felagnum Føroysk Ross

Project plan

A dark horse's head is shown in profile on the right side of the slide, facing left. The background is a bright, hazy landscape with rolling hills and a field, suggesting a rural or natural setting. The overall tone is soft and natural.

- Two workshop/meetings will be held in each of the three regions.
 - The first set will generate knowledge
 - The second will share the compiled and analysed results
- Participants learn from each other and Researchers learn from them
- Researchers build models and work to inspire others

Outputs



- 1: The creation and publication of potential business models based on best practices across the fields
- 2: A formal Report with Executive Summary
- 3: The creation of accessible-language material for web dissemination (in multiple languages)
- 4: Publication of the results on partner websites.

Outputs



- 5: Key workshops/seminars held in each region, with a final event in Iceland where the results will be presented to stakeholders and discussions facilitated on how to best take the ideas generated by the research forward.
- 6: The creation of conference presentations, Best Practice Guide for horse tourism, and academic papers by the project staff.

Outcomes

A dark-colored horse is shown in profile, facing left, with a saddle on its back. The horse is standing on a grassy hillside. The background is a bright, hazy landscape with rolling hills under a clear sky. The overall image has a soft, slightly faded appearance, serving as a background for the text.

Help support the creation of new networks of businesses across the three nations to encourage better access to customers, more sustainable profit, better business practices, *and:*

Provide an *economic imperative* to promote the flourishing of native breed horses in their native landscapes!!

Tusen takk!

- For more information: rhys@hlb.no

www.hlb.no

