

= Finnhorse =

The Finnhorse or Finnish Horse ( Finnish : Suomenhevonen , literally " horse of Finland " ; nickname : Suokki , or Swedish : Finskt kallblod , literally " finnish cold @-@ blood " ) is a horse breed with both riding horse and draught horse influences and characteristics , and is the only breed developed fully in Finland . In English it is sometimes called the Finnish Universal , as the Finns consider the breed capable of fulfilling all of Finland 's horse needs , including agricultural and forestry work , harness racing , and riding . In 2007 , the breed was declared the official national horse breed of Finland .

The Finnhorse is claimed to be among the fastest and most versatile " coldblood " breeds in the world . In Finland , the term " universal horse " is used to describe the Finnhorse and breeds such as the Fjord horse that are relatively small with a body type that is heavy for a riding horse but light for a draught . There are four separate sections within the Finnhorse stud book , each with different goals : to develop a heavier working horse , a lighter trotter type , a versatile riding horse , and a proportionally smaller pony @-@ sized animal . The combined breed standard for all four sections defines the breed as a strong , versatile horse with pleasant disposition . The average height of the breed is 15 @.@ 1 hands ( 61 inches , 155 cm ) , and the most typical colour is chestnut , often with white markings and a flaxen mane and tail .

The exact origins of the early Finnish horse are currently not known . Because the Finnhorse breed and its progenitors were the only horses in Finland for centuries , the history of horses in Finland parallels the history of the Finnhorse itself . The documented history of the distinct breed begins at the turn of the 13th century . Outside influences by many light and warmblood breeds were recorded beginning in the 16th century , making the breed larger and more usable . An official Finnhorse studbook was founded in 1907 , producing purebred animals in significant numbers for many years . Due to mechanisation of agriculture and the dismantling of Finnish horse cavalry in the later half of the 20th century , the Finnhorse population plummeted from a high of just over 400 @,@ 000 animals in the 1950s to a low of 14 @,@ 100 in 1987 . However , the breed managed to survive thanks to its popularity for harness racing and its versatility as a mount .

= = Breed characteristics = =

The breed standard defines the Finnhorse as a multi @-@ purpose horse of average height , and sturdy conformation . The ideal Finnhorse is easy @-@ to @-@ handle , versatile , and combines strength , agility , speed and endurance . Finnhorses are lively , with both a reliable and alert temperament . The breed standard encourages a horse that is " honest and sincere " ; eager to cooperate with humans , obedient , and willing to work . They are hardy with good endurance , robust health , and are generally long @-@ lived . The breed standard describes the head of a Finnhorse as dry and the profile straight , not long or convex , with well @-@ spaced , short ears . The neck should be well @-@ shaped and not underslung or ewe @-@ necked ; the body should be on the long side , but rounded and proportionate ; and the croup should neither be level nor with a too @-@ high connection to the tail . Finnhorses are strongly muscled , with good bone , sturdy " dry " legs , and strong hooves .

Finnhorses typically have thick manes and tails , and the legs have light feathering . The average height is 15 @.@ 1 hands ( 61 inches , 155 cm ) . Pony @-@ sized Finnhorses ? under 14 @.@ 2 hands ( 58 inches , 147 cm ) ? exist as well , and are licensed for breeding in a separate section of the official stud book . Finnhorses have good gaits that are regular with elasticity , and relatively low , steady action . They are fast for a coldblooded breed , known as good trotting horses and used for harness racing .

In addition to these general traits , there are four separate breed sections in the Finnhorse studbook , and a Finnhorse 's overall conformation should be typical of the section in which it is recorded , though some horses are registered in multiple sections .

= = = Colours = = =

Over 90 percent of Finnhorses today are chestnut . Flaxen manes and tails as well as white markings on the face and legs are common in the breed . As of 2007 , only a minority of Finnhorses are any color other than chestnut : 6 percent are bay and 1 @. @ 2 percent black . Roans , palominos , buckskins and silver dapples exist in smaller numbers . The genes for other cream dilutions and rabicano are present in the gene pool . A distinctive sabino , non @- @ SB1 pattern is moderately common , but is usually minimally expressed due to the selective colour breeding of the 20th century . A single white horse , registered as pinto and deemed " sabino @- @ white , " has been recorded in the modern history of the breed . The number of non @- @ chestnuts is increasing due to dedicated breeding for other colours , and as of 2009 , a few dozen black and grey Finnhorses exist . SW1 , one of the genes responsible for the splashed white markings , has been found in a number of individuals by genetic testing .

Through the 18th and 19th centuries , chestnut in various shades was the prevailing colour of Finnish horses , making up about 40 @- @ 50 percent of the breed , and bays , blacks and greys existed in much greater numbers than today : 34 percent were bay , 16 percent black , and the remaining 3 percent were grey , palomino or spotted . Wide blazes and high leg markings were rare , unlike today ; bold markings became common only in the 20th century .

The change came about through selective breeding . At the turn of the 20th century , when a nationalistic spirit was high , the Finnhorse began to be considered a symbol of Finland , and purebreeding became very popular . In addition , chestnut colour was officially chosen as an official aim for breeding as the " utmost original " colour of the Finnhorse , and named the " Hippos colour " after Hevoskasvatusyhdistys Hippos , the name of the recently founded Finnish national horse breeding association that is now Suomen Hippos . Any colours other than chestnut were considered evidence of " foreign " blood , and the goal was to make the Finnhorse an all @- @ chestnut breed . The breeding regulation of 1909 stated that no stallion " with coat of white , grey , palomino or spotted " could be accepted into the stud book . The popularity of bay and black Finnhorses dropped as well , and at least one mare was removed from the stud book solely because of her bay colour . Selective breeding combined with the export of horses in colours popular in neighbouring countries , especially bays into Sweden , and made chestnut the prevailing colour . In the earliest section of the first Finnhorse studbook , 105 of the stallions listed were chestnut and only 8 were bay . There were stallions of other colours as well , but they were not included in the first book . At one point , chestnuts made up more than 96 percent of the breed .

Because of the vigorous colour breeding for chestnut in the early 20th century , combined with a genetic bottleneck resulting from the low number of Finnhorses that existed in the 1980s , colours such as grey and cream dilutions were preserved only by a few minor breeders . In the 1980s there were fewer than ten grey and palomino Finnhorses combined . All Finnhorse carriers of the cream gene today descend from a single maternal line , founded by the palomino mare Voikko ( literally , " Palomino " ) who lived in the 1920s . While both cream dilution and black are rare , there are some known smoky blacks in the breed , the first of which was a filly foaled in 2009 , identified as smoky black and confirmed as such by a DNA test in 2010 . The filly is considered " if not the first ever , at least the first in a long long time . " In April 2010 , a filly appearing to be a double cream dilute was born , sired by a buckskin and out of a palomino . She was blue @- @ eyed and had " pink skin and very pale coat " , and was later officially recognised as a double cream dilute .

The roan colour is rare , and today is passed on via a single dam line that descends from the strawberry roan mare Sonja , foaled in 1936 . As of 2010 , only six confirmed roan Finnhorses exist , all descendants of a 1987 mare , Taika @- @ Tyttö , great @- @ great @- @ granddaughter of Sonja . The second @- @ to @- @ last roan line died out with the passing of the 1981 stallion Jesper Jr , who had no offspring . Grey exists in one dam line , descending from mare Pelelaikka , especially through her maternal grandson E.V. Johtotähti 1726 @- @ 93Ta , an award @- @ winning working section stallion . The second last grey line died in 2010 with the 1988 mare Iiris 2275 @- @ 88R , who had no grey offspring .

The silver dapple gene survived for two reasons . First , it only affects black colour and therefore is " masked " in chestnuts . Second , when it does act on black and bay base coat colors , it produces

a chestnut @-@ like phenotype . Silver dapple bays were long registered as " cinnamon chestnuts " , and silver dapple blacks as " flaxen @-@ maned dark chestnuts " .

= = Breed sections = =

The Finnhorse stud book was created in 1907 . Today it has four sections : the Working section ( T ; draught type ) , Trotter section ( J ) , Riding section ( R ) and Pony @-@ sized section ( P ) In 1924 , the first split in the stud book was created , with the working or draught type ( Finnish : työlinja ) horses in one section , and the " all @-@ around " or " universal " lighter trotting horses in another . In 1965 , this all @-@ around section was renamed the trotter section . Then , in 1971 , this lighter horse section was divided into three parts : the trotter ( Finnish : juoksijalinja ) , riding ( Finnish : ratsulinja ) and pony @-@ sized ( Finnish : pienhevoslinja ) types . Today , the majority of Finnhorses are of trotter type .

= = = Draught type = = =

The working or draught type is the oldest of the Finnhorse types , and has had its own separate breeding section since the studbook was first split in 1924 . Though the oldest of the Finnhorse types , it is rare today , with a total of only about 1 @,@ 000 horses registered in the working section as of 2004 . Draught @-@ type Finnhorses are heavier and have a longer body than horses of the trotter and riding types . Though relatively small compared to other draught breeds , Finnhorses have considerable pulling power and can pull very heavy loads because of the breed 's good pulling technique , with powerful take @-@ off and a low , efficient body stature during the actual pulling . The Finnish Draught type is , pound for pound , stronger than many larger draught breeds . An average horse in draught work is capable of pulling about 80 percent of its own weight , while a Finnhorse can pull as much as 110 percent . In work horse competitions , the best Finnhorses can achieve even higher results , pulling more than 200 percent of their own body weight .

A draught @-@ type horse must pass two tests in the studbook evaluation : a walking test and either a pulling or a general drivability test . The points given for the horse 's performance in these tests are added to those given for its temperament and gaits , resulting in the final workability score . The horse is also given a score for its conformation . In addition to achieving the minimum scores for both workability and conformation , stallions accepted for the working @-@ horse section of the stud book are required to trot 1 @,@ 000 metres ( 1 @,@ 100 yd ) in less than 2 minutes and 30 seconds .

= = = Trotter type = = =

The trotter type is the lightest Finnhorse . A trotter section horse should be of light conformation yet muscular , with a relatively long body and long legs . At the studbook evaluation , a trotter @-@ type horse must meet the standards in racing results and / or in breeding value index as decreed by Suomen Hippos . A trotter 's disposition is evaluated during the drivability test . However , type is not part of the studbook evaluation standard for trotters .

The trotter type has existed as a separate breeding section since 1965 , when the " universal horse " section of the Finnhorse studbook was renamed and replaced by the trotter section . While the total number of Finnhorses dropped during the 20th century , the popularity of harness racing turned Finnhorse birthrates around from the historical lows of the 1970s and 1980s . Today , approximately 2 000 Finnhorses are in training and 3 000 compete in harness racing . The official Finnhorse racing championship Kuninkuusravit began in 1924 and has been held annually ever since , attracting tens of thousands of spectators .

The Finnhorse is slower to mature than lighter breeds , and thus usually enters harness racing competition at the age of four . However , its build withstands competition better than light trotters , and the breed 's effective competition career can be very long . The Finnish harness racing bylaws allow Finnhorses to be raced from ages 3 to 16 .

For a " coldblood " breed , the Finnhorse is quite fast . The official Finnish coldblood record from 2010 is 19.9aly , was long held by the quintuple Finnhorse racing champion stallion Viesker . , but was finally broken by Jokivarren Kunkku in 2015 ( 19.5x ) The coldblood horse world record in harness racing was long held by Finnhorses , until in 2005 the record was broken by Järvsöfaks , a Scandinavian coldblood trotter from Sweden . As of 2010 , the official Finnish record for mares , and the world record for coldblood mares , is 20.2aly , held by the double Finnhorse racing female champion I.P. Vipotiina . The absolute Finnhorse speed record is 19.4aly , held by the stallion Sipori . As the result was not achieved from a win , the time is not an official Finnish record . Finnhorses have been so successful against other coldblood trotter breeds of Scandinavia , that by the 21st century , they have been admitted to Swedish and Norwegian races only by invitation .

Some conformation flaws common in the breed that may hinder a trotter 's success include a heavy forehead and overangulated hind legs . Another problem that affects some Finnhorses is a tendency to trot with the front and hind legs directly in line with other , which creates a high probability of forging , where the hind hooves hit the front pasterns , which can cause breaking gait . This can be helped to a degree with careful shoeing . There is also a tendency toward ossification of the hoof cartilages of the front feet , which tends to increase with age , and appears to be heritable . This condition , called sidebone when it affects the lateral and medial cartilages of the foot , is common in draught breeds . However , a study of affected Finnhorses also noted that horses with long toes and low heels were common and ossification correlated with the length of the heels .

= = = Riding horse type = = =

The riding horse section Finnhorse is a capable and reliable mount . It lacks some traits required for competing at the highest levels of international riding sports , but its combination of size and good temperament makes it suitable for both adults and children . To qualify for the riding section , a horse must carry itself well , and have a long neck , small head , sloping shoulder and well @-@ defined withers . The body must not be too long . The universal Finnhorse breeding goals have made the breed of a lighter build , with longer neck , better gaits and fewer faults in conformation , allowing modern riding @-@ type Finnhorses to work more easily on the bit . Even the temperament of the riding section animals appears to have become more lively . To pass the studbook evaluation , a riding type horse must either have placed in a Grade IV dressage or combined driving competition , or pass a dressage test ; must pass a jumping evaluation and a ridability test , and possess clean gaits . Mares may be qualified solely on grounds of a ridability test and a movement evaluation .

Despite the Finnhorse 's image as a working farm horse , the breed was used as a cavalry mount from the 17th century until the end of World War II . After the mechanisation of Finnish agriculture in the 1960s and the 1970s , however , it was not clear if the Finnhorse would make the transition into a riding horse , even though the long use of the breed by the Finnish cavalry had proven it well @-@ suited for the job . The Finnhorse had a strong image as a harnessed working horse , associated with rural life and old times . When riding as a hobby emerged and became more established in Finnish cities during the 1960s , imported horses and ponies were preferred as mounts ; warmblooded horses represented modern times , leisure time and wealth , while the Finnhorse was viewed as rugged and unsophisticated . The riding section studbook , created in 1971 , grew slowly and gained only a few dozen horses during its first decade , as the idea of a Finnhorse used for riding was considered near @-@ ridiculous at the time .

The Suomenratsut ry ( SuoRa , or " Finnmounts " ) organisation was founded in 1974 to promote the use of the Finnhorse under saddle , and with the growing popularity of riding and the support of SuoRa , Finnhorses of riding type gained a foothold , though by the late 1970s , even SuoRa estimated that only about 300 Finnhorses were being used for riding . However , the popularity of harness racing and the breeding of trotter type Finnhorses made the breed lighter and faster overall , which also benefitted the riding section . In addition , the Finnish state horse breeding institute of Ypäjä was founded in the 1970s , and was the first stud farm to breed and train Finnhorses for riding on a larger scale . Well @-@ trained Finnhorse mounts from Ypäjä , seen in growing numbers in

competition , added to the popularity and credibility of the breed for under @-@ saddle use . After the slow beginning , the Finnhorse was increasingly appreciated as a riding horse . Today , over 5 @,@ 000 are used for riding . Riding section horses currently are sought after while the trotting section suffers from oversupply .

= = = Pony @-@ sized type = = =

A pony @-@ sized Finnhorse must measure no more than 148 cm ( 14 @.@ 2 @-@ 1 / 2 hands , 58 @-@ 1 / 2 inches ) at the withers or the croup . Both sexes are also required to pass either a drivability or a ridability test . The horse 's pedigree is also evaluated , and uncharacteristically small individuals descending from larger @-@ sized lines are not accepted . The horse should be proportionately small all over , and express all the qualities of a full @-@ size Finnhorse . Especially thorough attention is paid to the pony @-@ sized horse 's character , obedience and cooperation . The pony @-@ sized Finnhorse is suited to practically any use the larger Finnhorse is , with the exception of heavy draught work because of its smaller size and proportionally reduced strength . However , some individuals have been able to compete with and even win against full @-@ size Finnhorses in work horse competitions . Many pony @-@ sized individuals are cross @-@ registered for trotter section breeding , as small Finnhorses can be equal competitors in harness against larger ones . In combined driving , the pony @-@ sized Finnhorse 's size is an advantage , allowing for greater agility . The section is popular for therapy and riding school use .

Although its breeding section was created at the same time as the trotter and riding types , the pony @-@ sized Finnhorse is technically the newest of the sections , as trotters and riding horses were bred as " universal horses " in a combined section beginning in 1924 . The Finnhorse had been bred for larger size for centuries , and when the pony @-@ sized breeding section was established , few pony @-@ sized lines existed . The section remains the rarest type of Finnhorse , with only about 80 stallions and 420 mares accepted in the studbook as of 2010 .

= = Studbook evaluation = =

To be registered as a Finnhorse , a horse must either have parents registered as Finnhorses , or be verified to be descended from at least three generations of Finnhorses . To qualify for the Finnhorse stud book as a breeding animal , a horse must prove itself by meeting or exceeding the breed standard set for various qualities : performance ability , conformation , disposition , and in some cases , quality of offspring . Any horse offered for the Finnhorse studbook must be at least 4 years old , a stallion or a mare , and registered a Finnhorse . The stud book evaluation board considers the performance of horses in their desired discipline : riding , driving , harness racing , or workhorse events . Horses to be registered in the stud book are tested for performance at the stud book registration inspection . With the exception of the trotter section , they are also evaluated on " type " ; the suitability of the horse 's overall build for the section for which it is offered . Individuals that do not qualify for the studbook on their own merits during the stud book evaluation process may be accepted later , based on the quality and accomplishments of their offspring . For this to occur , a horse 's offspring are evaluated by their competitive history or their stud book evaluation , and if of high enough quality , their parent then is also granted acceptance into the stud book . Conversely , a horse may be removed from the studbook if its offspring are found to have any inherited flaw or condition . A stallion may also be removed if his offspring are clearly below the average level in competitive success or stud book evaluations .

= = = Walking test = = =

The walking test is given only to draught type Finnhorses and measures the horse 's endurance while pulling a load . The horse tested pulls a 500 kilograms ( 79 st ; 1 @,@ 100 lb ) load for 500 metres ( 550 yd ) , walking . The calculated time per kilometre must be no more than ten minutes to qualify as accepted . A horse qualifying with this time will be given four points . Extra points are

given for faster times at the interval of 30 seconds , and the maximum points given is 10 , for a time no longer than eight minutes and 30 seconds .

= = = Pulling test = = =

The pulling , or tensile resistance , test is also a test only for the draught type horses , and it measures pulling capacity in relation to size . The test is performed in several progressive stages , called " steps " , with the load increased each time . The horse tested will pull a weighed sled on semi @-@ rough sand . The friction between the sled and the sand is taken into account and is measured before the test . The sled is loaded according to the horse 's weight ; on the first attempt , the load equals 36 percent of the estimated weight of the horse ; with each subsequent stage of the test , the load is increased by 6 percent of the horse 's weight . The horse must pull the sled for 10 metres ( 33 ft ) at each weight . If the horse stops during a test and does not resume within one minute , or stops four times before reaching the required distance , the test is discontinued . Two points are awarded for every testing stage completed successfully , with a maximum total score of 20 . The pulling style is also evaluated , and given 4 to 10 points . To pass the test , the horse must successfully complete pulls for at least five " steps " . This corresponds to a pulling capacity of 60 percent of the horse 's weight . An award of 20 points corresponds to 90 percent of the horse 's weight being pulled .

= = = Drivability test = = =

The general drivability test is performed by trotter stallions . It is optional for draught type horses in lieu of the pulling test , and for pony @-@ sized horses in lieu of the rideability test . The horse is driven by two different members of the studbook evaluation committee during this test , and asked to perform at a walk and trot . Its cooperation and disposition are evaluated on a scale of 4 to 10 points .

The draught section drivability test , which evaluates disposition : adaptability , reliability , and calmness , consists of four parts , and 0 ? 5 points are given for each . To pass the test , the horse must score at least one point for each part of the test , and its combined score for the test must be at least 10 points . The first part examines the behaviour of the horse while it is being harnessed and loaded , then unloaded and unharnessed , and the remaining three parts evaluate the way the horse behaves when being driven . These parts often include regulation of the speed of the horse 's walk , halts , turns around obstacles , and backing with a load around a corner .

= = = Rideability test = = =

In the rideability test , the horse is evaluated by a member of the studbook evaluation committee by being ridden at a walk , trot and canter . The horse 's movement , balance and disposition are evaluated and given 4 to 10 points . The horse should express cooperation , gentleness , attentiveness , sensitivity to cues , and active effort . This test is required for riding @-@ type horses , and optional for pony @-@ sized horses in lieu of the driveability test .

= = History = =

The ancestors of the modern Finnhorse were important throughout Finnish history , used as work horses and beasts of burden in every aspect of life from antiquity well into the 20th century . The modern breed 's precise line of descent is unclear , but numerous outside influences have been recorded throughout the history of Finland . The earliest hard archaeological evidence of horses existing in what today is Finland dates to the Finnish Middle Iron Age ( 400 @-@ 800 CE ) . The Finnhorse and its progenitors later became an indispensable asset for military forces from the region of Finland during the times of Swedish and Russian rule , and since independence as well . In addition to functionality as military and working horses , the Finnhorse has also been bred for speed

in harness racing , and it can be argued that this sport was the main factor in the survival of the breed after its numbers crashed during the later half of the 20th century , from approximately 400 @, @ 000 animals in the 1950s to 14 @, @ 000 in the 1980s . In the 21st century , the numbers of the breed have stabilised at approximately 20 @, @ 000 animals .

= = = Early history = = =

Although multiple hypotheses exist on the origins of the horse in Finland , an indigenous wild horse origin is thought improbable , as significant numbers of domesticated horses were imported from earliest times . The Finnhorse is most likely descended from a northern European domestic horse . One theory suggests that horses arrived from the west , brought to what today is western Finland by the Vikings during the Viking Age , circa 800 ? 1050 CE . These Viking horses would have been of northern European ancestry . The other main theory suggests that non @-@ Viking peoples , who migrated into Finland from the southeast and south , brought with them horses of Mongolian origin that had been further developed in the Urals and Volga River regions . Both theories have merit , as there were two distinct horse types in the eastern and western regions of Finland that remained distinct from one another until at least the middle of the 19th century .

The eastern origin of the breed was first proposed by archaeologist Johannes Reinhold Aspelin , who published *Suomalaisen hevosen kotoperäisyydestä* ( " On the Nativity of the Finnish horse " ) in 1886 ? 1887 . Aspelin proposed that Finnish horses descended from an animal that had accompanied the Finno @-@ Ugric peoples ' migration from the Volga region and middle Russia to the shores of the Gulf of Finland . A similar idea was suggested over a hundred years earlier by natural historian Pehr Adrian Gadd , and this theory has continued to receive some support into modern times . The veterinarian Ludvig Fabritius considered the proposed prototype a side branch of a " Tartarian " breed , and considered it possible that the same prototype also influenced Estonian , Swedish and Norwegian horse populations .

Later , agronomist Axel Alfthan ( 1862 ? 1934 ) and veterinarian Kaarlo Gummerus ( 1840 ? 1898 ) expanded Aspelin 's hypothesis , proposing that the horse population later diverged into Eastern Finnish and Mid @-@ Finnish types , which had remained distinguishable as late as the turn of the 20th century . Photographs support these claims : the small Karelian horse was blocky and stout , with pronounced withers , a short neck and large head . The small horse from central Finland , on the other hand , was " more noble " , with a longer body , lighter neck and more refined head . The Swedish professor Eric Åkerblom even suggested that the Finnish horse spread along river valleys to Troms , Norway , and was the ancestor of the Nordlandshest / Lyngshest , found around the Lyngenfjord . The Norwegians continue to utilise Finnhorse bloodlines , having purchased the Finnish pony @-@ type stallion Viri 632 @-@ 72P for stud use in 1980 . However , Åkerblom dismissed the possibility that the eastern Finnhorse came from same prototype as the western pony breeds .

In 1927 , veterinarian and professor Veikko Rislakki ( then Svanberg ) proposed a different theory in his doctoral thesis . He argued that three types of wild horses existed in Europe , one of which he believed to be the Przewalski 's Horse . Rislakki believed this unrefined and notably large @-@ headed type was the horse the early Finns encountered about 1000 BCE . He suggested that the Finns later encountered other peoples and horses south of the Gulf of Finland , and that these peoples had better proportioned horses with a shorter muzzle and wider forehead , descended from the Tarpan . In addition , Rislakki suggested that the Finns came across European horses of Spanish and French origin during the first few centuries CE , larger in size and with narrow foreheads . Rislakki believed that his craniometric examinations , carried out in the 1920s , proved the influence of all these three horse types . Almost 20 years later , during the Continuation War , Rislakki also measured Karelian horses , and proposed they also came from an original Northern European animal descended from the Tarpan . Modern studies have discredited theories suggesting modern domesticated horse breeds descending from the Tarpan or the Przewalski 's horse . The modern Konik horse resembles the extinct Tarpan however .

In the early 20th century , English J. C. Edward and Norwegian S. Petersen , proposed that Finland

and the other countries surrounding the Gulf of Finland were the home region for the so @-@ called " yellow pony " . A later ethnologist , Kustaa Viikuna ( 1902 ? 1980 ) supported this view , proposing that an " Estonian @-@ Finno @-@ Karelian pony " descended from a small forest horse previously widespread in the lands surrounding the Gulf of Finland .

Earliest horse equipment ( bits ) found in Finnish graves date from the Finnish Middle Iron Age , beginning from circa 400 CE . Breeds considered to descend from the same early types as the Finnhorse include the Estonian Native horse , the Norwegian Nordlandshest / Lyngshest , the Swedish Gotland Russ , the Mezen horse from the region of Archangelsk , Russia , and the Lithuanian ?emaitukas .

At some point in their history , not clearly documented , horses bred in the western regions crossbred with horses that originated south of the Gulf of Finland . This made the western Finnish horse type larger and better suited to farming and forestry work . The characteristics of the original western Finnish type prevailed , however , even though influenced by outside blood and traces of outside influence could be detected for a long time . Later , this mixed type was further crossbred with larger horses from Central Europe during the Middle Ages . Foreign horses were also brought to Finland during military campaigns , and additional animals were imported to manor houses for driving . The crossbreed offspring of Central European and Finnish horses were larger than their Finnish parents , and even more suited for agricultural work .

The earliest known documentation of Finnish trade in horses , both as imports and exports , dates to 1299 , when Pope Gregory IX sent a letter of reprimand to the merchants of Gotland , who were selling horses to the non @-@ Christianized Finns . Apparently the Finns succeeded in improving their horse population , as the predominant form of Finnish trade in horses eventually shifted from imports to exports . A Russian chronicle from 1338 mentions " Tamma @-@ Karjala " ( " Karelia of the Mares " ) , presumably denoting a place of good horse breeding . As early as in 1347 , King Magnus IV saw it necessary to put limits to the horse exports from Karelia to Russia .

Later , the 16th century writer Olaus Magnus mentioned the high quality of the horses used by the early Finns ; in the 1520s , Gustav Vasa found the Finns exporting horses by the shipload to Lübeck , and strictly prohibited such trading , banning the sale of horses under the age of 7 years .

= = = Organised breeding = = =

The earliest document noting the importation of outside horses to Finland is a papal letter in 1229 . During the Swedish rule of Finland that followed , foreign horses obtained by the Finnish cavalry , whether purchased for replenishment or seized as spoils of war , probably influenced the Finnish horse population . The first significant , planned efforts to improve the quality of horses through selective breeding in Finland occurred in the 16th century , when Gustav Vasa , known for his interest in horse breeding , founded mare manors ( Finnish : tammakartano ) , stud farms , on his properties in Western Finland . He ordered the importation of larger horses from Central Europe , mainly from the region of Friesland . These horse were brought to Sweden and probably into Finland as well . The imports were kept at regional royal farms ( Swedish : kungsgård , literally , " King 's estate " ) to service local mares . In a letter from 1556 , Gustav Vasa mentions that there were 231 breeding horses of this kind in Finland . It is not known whether these horses were imported directly from Central Europe to Finland , or descended from imports brought first to Sweden . Friesian stallions were used in Finland early in the 16th century to increase the size of the Finnish horse , and were employed for breeding in the royal farms up until the 1650s .

Gustav Vasa also carried out major reforms of his cavalry . After the decline of heavy cavalry in the Late Middle Ages , light cavalry was gaining importance , and with it a new approach to horse breeding . In 1550 , he gave orders that " stud manors " ( Finnish : siittolakartano ) be founded on royal farms ( Sw : kungsgård ) , not only in Sweden but also in every municipality of Finland . These studs were to each hold 20 mares and a smaller number of stallions , both Finnish horses and horses imported from Sweden . Gustav Vasa also imported mares from the lands bordering the North Sea ; most likely of a Friesian type . His goal was to increase the size and weight of the Finnish horse population . His successor , Eric XIV prohibited the exporting of Finnish horses , which



demonstrated the success of these efforts as well as the importance of the horses of the region of Finland . The horse breeding farms lasted only for about 100 years under later rulers of the Vasa line before the programs deteriorated . The last of the stud manors , that of Pori , was closed in 1651 , and the crown @-@ owned stallions and mares of the Pori stud were transported to Gotland .

Outside of these breeding efforts , Finnish horses were widely kept in semi @-@ feral conditions through the mid @-@ 19th century . Ethnologist Kustaa Vilkkuna describes how all horses regardless of sex and age were let out on forest pastures for the summer after the spring fieldwork was finished . The pasture was scarce and the terrain challenging , with both rocky ground and wetlands . Vilkkuna considers this practice an important factor in making the Finnhorse an easy @-@ keeping , hardy breed .

= = = Military use = = =

The goal of Gustav Vasa and others had been to increase the height of the Finnish horse . However , the Finnish cavalry survey records ( katselmuspöytäkirjat ) from the 1620s indicate this goal was not achieved . The heights of horses surveyed in 1623 , measured not at the withers but at the highest point of the croup , which provides a height measurement significantly different from standard measures , ranged between 105 to 130 centimetres ( 41 to 51 in ) , the taller animals being the horses of officers . Only the horses owned by Colonel Herman Fleming were taller , with a croup measurement of 135 to 140 centimetres ( 53 to 55 in ) . It is not known if these horses were domestic crossbreeds or imported . The average height of the horses of the troops of Hollola , Pori and Raseborg was only 115 centimetres ( 45 in ) one year , but those in the next year 's survey were 125 centimetres ( 49 in ) . Overall , there were no pony @-@ sized horses below a croup measurement of 110 centimetres ( 43 in ) , and the all @-@ around average height of the horses used by the cavalry was about 120 centimetres ( 47 in ) .

During the Thirty Years ' War in 1618 ? 1648 , the horses used by Finnish cavalry were small and unrepresentative , considered inferior even to the cargo horses used by the Swedish Royal Army . However , these animals had great stamina , a crucial quality during long , exhausting campaigns . The humble @-@ looking Finnish horses were presumably exchanged when possible for other horses obtained as spoils of war . It was probably rare for a cavalryman to return with the same horse with which he left , and it is likely that the horses brought back to Finland were crossbreeds or of purely Central European lines . Reinforcements to replace the considerable horse casualties were obtained from the Baltic States , but during the reign of Charles XI almost all of the cavalry horses were imported from south of the Gulf of Finland , due to their larger size .

Before World War II , the Finnhorse was the breed that made up almost all of the horses that were part of the Finnish army and mounted police forces . While officers mostly rode various foreign light horse breeds , the so @-@ called " light type " of Finnhorse was used for the enlisted members of the cavalry . Many of the most talented Finnhorses had competitive success during their service . After the war , the Finnish cavalry was converted to infantry , and the use of the Finnhorse for riding purposes nearly ended .

= = = Crossbreeding = = =

The Finnish horse had been intentionally crossbred from as early as the 16th century . Friesians and Oldenburgs were among the first known influences in the breed , having been used in the early 17th century to add size . Friesian horses were used systematically until the 1650s . During the 18th century , new warmblood breeds were created throughout Europe by crossing local native horse populations with light , hotblooded riding horses . Finnish military officers developed an interest in similar breeding while on study secondments ( assignments ) in foreign military forces . In 1781 , Colonel Yrjö Maunu Sprengtporten founded a state stud farm in conjunction with the Haapaniemi military school . The stud had a few stallions described as " Arabian " and " Andalusian " . For about 30 years , these stallions influenced the local horse population outside the military school as well ,

and a number of writings from the 19th century mention a " Haapaniemi breed " . Similar if smaller crossbreeding programs developed elsewhere ; at Tavinsalmen kartano , the royal estate ( kungsgård ) of Tavinsalmi , at least one of the mares had been imported from Sweden .

Russian Orlov trotters and Don horses also influenced the Finnhorse population in the first half the 19th century , improving its size , ridability and refinement . The horse type originating in Northern Savonia known as the " Fürstenbergian breed , " bred by the engineer Fürstenberg at the beginning of the 19th century , was a crossbreed between the Finnish horses and Orlov trotters . The influence of Don horses was seen as late as in the 1920s and 1930s among the black and bay horses used by the Finnish cavalry ? the dragoons of Nyland had two full squadrons of these colours .

In addition to the needs of the military , crossbreeding was used to improve the common working horse ; improved roads and advances in agriculture had replaced the previously predominant oxen with the horse , and more horses of better quality were needed for transport and agricultural work . Attempts to create better working horses used many breeds , including Percherons and a heavy Norwegian breed ; Ardennes horses were favoured in Southern Ostrobothnia and Southern Finland . In Southern Savonia a multitude of breeds were used . The amount and diversity of crossbreeding led to difficulties in creating a consistent type up until the beginning of the 20th century and the creation of the Finnhorse studbook ; some of the first stallions accepted in the studbook were criticised for having a " Norwegian " look .

Other intentional crossbreeding experiments included the bloodstock of Sarkkila and Hali in Northern Karelia , descended from crosses with Russian military horses . The breeding programme of Sarkkila stated one of the stallions to be of " Fürstenbergian breed " , and one of the mares of " oriental " descent . The " Hali breed " , descending from the stallions of Sarkkila , was an important influence in the pedigree of a few notable Finnhorse trotter sires such as Eino 680 and his son Eino @-@ Vakaa 25 .

Some estates , especially in southern regions of Finland , were known to have used stallions of several light and hot @-@ blooded breeds ; for example , an officer in Pernaja bred Arabians . These crossbreeds were probably an attempt to create showy driving horses . A notable failing of a crossbreeding attempt happened in 1875 , when a stud was founded in Porvoo to import and export Norfolk Trotters , a breed that has had important influence in several driving horse breeds , including the Standardbred . The crossbred offspring were praised for their looks , but turned out to have poor temperaments and no talent for speed . Due to a combination of the large population of horses in Finland ( over 200 000 animals ) and the later enthusiasm for purebreeding , these estate @-@ based crossbreeding attempts never had significant influence on the modern Finnish horse .

An especially detailed description of the best Finnish horses of the mid @-@ 19th century is available due to the development of the Tori horse in Estonia . Three experts were consulted about the Finnish horse in order to ascertain its value for the project . According to the stud farm inspector of the Russian Empire , Mayendorff , Finnish horses were found in four types : the " Haapaniemi type " , the " Fürstenbergian type " , an " Orlov type " , and a " Karelian type " . A Finnish academic master , A. Elving , considered Finnish horses most purebred in Karelia , and mixed elsewhere , especially in Southwest Finland , where Swedish , North @-@ German and even English horses had been crossed with Finnish ones , while in Karelia and Savonia the outside influence had been mainly Russian . Swedish count Carl Gustav Wrangler , a respected hippologist of the time , mentioned in his report that Finns were then importing Norfolk Trotters for crossbreeding purposes .

Documents created some years after a number of Finnish horses had been imported to the Tori stud describe the Finnish mares obtained . Their average height was 14 hands ( 56 inches , 142 cm ) , and the colour was typically dark with a star . Their heads were large and necks short but well @-@ carried ; their bodies sturdy and proportionate with muscular withers , deep chest and muscular back ; the loins were on the long side , and the haunches muscular if sloping . The leg joints were well @-@ defined , the pasterns short and the feet tough . However , records also noted that the legs had " serious faults of position , " not further defined . The Finnish horses also were considered calm and good workers , and swift walkers and runners .

= = = Decline = = =

In the 18th century , the horse population of Finland vastly diminished in both numbers and quality . At the beginning of the century , during the Great Northern War campaigns of Charles XII , the Finnish cavalry was larger than at any other time in history , and almost every usable horse of Finland was needed . Horses were used by the cavalry , infantry , and for transporting supplies . Horses serving in the Swedish military never returned to Finland ; even the animals provided to the last remaining Swedish reinforcement regiments were taken to Sweden in 1714 , and to Norway in 1718 .

The Russian invasion and occupation caused additional hardships . By the end of Russian occupation in 1721 , a third of the Finnish human populace as well as large numbers of horses were lost to war and epidemic diseases . Furthermore , a great number of horses were exported to Russia during the invasion at the command of Peter I. Horses removed from Finland ended up mainly in the area of Vyatka government , and some Russian researchers such as Simanov and Moerder have suggested that the Vyatka horse was developed mainly from Estonian and Finnish bloodlines . In addition to the hardships of war and occupation , the treaties of Nystad in 1721 and Åbo in 1743 ceded Finnish territory to Russia , which resulted in much of the Finnish horse population being left behind the new borders . The Finnish horses in these now @-@ Russian areas were crossbred with the Russian horses in significant numbers .

With the Russians having taken the best animals , combined with the old custom of pastures shared by municipalities or larger areas , rebuilding the horse population took decades . To increase numbers , horses were often bred too young , and inbreeding also occurred . By 1761 , one of the first researchers in the agricultural chemistry in Finland described the Finnish horse population of the time :

The Savonian @-@ Karelian horse is its own breed , descended from [ the horses of ] Tartary . It is rarely taller than 9 korttelis [ 133 centimetres ( 52 in ) ] , and it is of good conformation , and a good puller , chestnut or bay of coat . [ The same breed is also found in Western Finland , where it is ] mixed and bigger by the influence of Scanian horses .

According to ethnologist Kustaa Vilkuna 's estimations , calculated from measurements of horse collars used in Finland in the early 18th century , the average peasant 's horse was about 12 @.@ 3 hands ( 51 inches , 130 cm ) tall , while some horses employed by manors were larger , sometimes more than 13 @.@ 3 hands ( 55 inches , 140 cm ) tall . Vilkuna also discovered that the horses of the southern and western regions of Finland were larger than those of the northern and eastern regions . This was probably due to the influence of imported horses . By the mid @-@ 18th century , a typical Finnish horse was probably about 13 @.@ 2 hands ( 54 inches , 137 cm ) , about the same size as a small contemporary Finnhorse yearling , and weighed about 300 kilograms ( 660 lb ) , roughly half the weight of a contemporary 15 @.@ 2 hands ( 62 inches , 157 cm ) working section horse . A civilian horse of good quality had good action and was swift . However , leg faults were common .

In response to the decline of the Finnish horse population and especially the great loss of good quality breeding animals experienced during the great famine of 1866 ? 1868 , the Senate of Finland gave orders for three provinces to obtain quality stallions for public use . The scope of the programme was later expanded to include eight provinces , and Finland was divided into breeding districts , which were all to have a state @-@ owned stallion available to service local mares . The horses in this programme became known as " crown stallions " ( Finnish : ruununori , ruununoriit ) . Official guidelines for the selection of stallions were never given , but one common aim throughout Finland was to increase the size and bulk of the horse population to create a type better suited for agricultural work .

= = = Purebreeding and revival = = =

By the end of the 18th century , crossbreeding of Finnish horses began to be described , especially by military leaders , as " detrimental crossbreeding " ? damaging to the quality of the Finnish horse , particularly for military use . In the beginning of the 19th century , German historian Friedrich Rühls

especially blamed the west coast estates for damaging the Finnish horse by crossbreeding . Nonetheless , outside stallions were still imported to Finland . At the end of the century , stallions " of oriental , Arabian blood " still served at state farms . The influence of the Russian @-@ imported " oriental " Turkish and Caucasian horses , as well as " Fürstenbergian " horses was also noted . Orlov Trotters were used in Savonia and Karelia , and Norwegian stallions were brought to northern Ostrobothnia . Light riding horses were imported from Russian and Central Europe . Conversely , heavier horses such as the Norfolk Trotter and Ardennes were imported to southern Finland as late as 1870 .

As Finnish nationalism arose and increased in the late 19th and early 20th centuries , crossbreeding of the Finnish horse essentially ended and a new direction was taken by Finnish horse breeders . The breed was considered a symbol of the nation , and thus it was desired that it be as purebred as possible . On 20 November 1894 , Finland 's first horse breeding association Hevoskasvatusyhdistys Hippos ( now Suomen Hippos ) was founded to breed and improve the Finnish horse by the means of purebreeding , and in 1905 , a governmental decree was issued for horse breeding associations to be founded throughout the country , leading to the establishment of the Finnhorse stud book in 1907 .

At first the only notable objectives of the Finnhorse breeding programme concerned appearance , especially the colour , of the breed . The aim was to remove " foreign " characteristics . Later , in the 1920s , trials of performance were introduced , and since then , the main objectives of the Finnhorse breeding programme have continued to encourage improvements in the capacity , movement , conformation and character of the breed .

Since the establishment of the Finnhorse stud book it has been closed and the breed has been bred pure . While accidental and even intentional Finnhorse crossbreeds exist , they are not accepted for the Finnhorse registry and have not been used to develop new breeds within Finland . The Finnhorse stud book remains in the control of Suomen Hippos .

= = = Impact of World War II = = =

Horses were a central asset to Finnish military forces during the Winter War ( 1939 ? 40 ) and Continuation War ( 1941 ? 1944 ) , when tens of thousands of horses were the main locomotive power of the army due to the shortage of automobiles . Animals were procured from private owners in a systematic procedure , but to ensure the continuity of Finnhorse breeding , neither stallions nor any nursing , pregnant or studbook @-@ approved mares were enrolled to be eligible for military procurement . All procured horses officially remained their private owners ' property , were marked for identification and as necessary , were returned or reported dead . The program was successful in preserving the breed , as the horse population rebounded to its pre @-@ war count of over 380 000 animals as soon as 1945 .

The great number of Russian horses captured as matériel during wartime became a threat to the Finnhorse 's purebreeding : many Russian animals were stallions , and there was no way to ensure new owners would not crossbreed them with Finnhorses . For practical and political reasons , Soviet Russia would not accept these horses back as a part of Finland 's massive war indemnity . Finnhorses however , were accepted as payment , and a total of 18 000 animals were sold to Soviet Russia at low rates in 1947 and 1948 . The best Finnhorses were not offered to the Soviets , however , and according to contemporary witnesses , many showy but otherwise useless horses ended up in Russia .

= = = Post @-@ war decline = = =

Approximately 300 @, @ 000 horses existed in Finland when the Finnhorse studbook was established in the beginning of the 20th century . The horse population , consisting almost entirely of Finnhorses , remained stable for 50 years . The rebuilding of the country after two wars had increased demand for horse power , and by the 1950s , the breed reached its all @-@ time peak , with an estimated 409 @, @ 000 animals , with a great majority of the horses being of the draught

type . However , with the increased mechanisation of agriculture and forestry in the 1960s , the number of Finnhorses dropped precipitously . Horses , having been bred in large numbers only a few years earlier , were taken to slaughter by the thousands ; a change in forestry tax policy made previously state @-@ supported horse @-@ powered forestry unprofitable and further discouraged keeping horses . Many working horse bloodlines ended , while lines more suitable for sports and recreation survived . By the 1970s , the breed 's numbers had declined to 90 @,@ 000 animals , and 10 years later as few as 20 @,@ 000 Finnhorses existed . The breed 's all @-@ time lowest point was 1987 , with only 14 @,@ 100 horses . By this time , however , the overall horse population in Finland had been increasing for almost a decade , with lighter harness racing horse breeds establishing their position , counting 12 @,@ 800 animals the same year .

Although other breeds were being increasingly imported and bred , the numbers of the Finnhorse population also slowly began to recover ; in 1997 , 19 @,@ 000 Finnhorses existed . Harness racing and associated parimutuel betting , and to some degree also the relatively new hobby of riding , became the most important factors ensuring the survival of the breed .

= = = 21st century = = =

Nearly all Finnish horses foaled since 1971 have been registered . During the first decade of the 21st century , the breed 's numbers in Finland stabilised at roughly 20 @,@ 000 animals , and approximately 1 @,@ 000 foals are born annually . The breed makes up roughly one third of Finland 's total horse population . The objective for ensuring the breed 's continuity is to have at least 200 stallions and 2 @,@ 000 mares used for breeding every year , 3 @,@ 000 horses used for harness racing , and 6 @,@ 000 horses for riding and other uses . In the 21st century , most Finnhorses are bred to be trotters , but the breed is also popular at riding schools and for recreational riding .

The Finnhorse is a relatively unknown horse breed outside of Finland , with no organised efforts to promote it internationally . The very word " Finnhorse " was only recently coined , and only became the standard name after 1990 . However , a few Finnhorses exist outside Finland , having been exported in small numbers to nations such as Germany and Sweden . As part of an equestrian exchange project carried out in the 1980s , a number of Finnhorses were sold to Austria and Germany in 1985 and 1987 . In Germany , the horses were used as foundation bloodstock for the Freund stud , which went on to breed dozens of Finnhorses , selling them in Germany and Austria . A number of horses were also exported to the Netherlands . The German Finnhorse population remains the most notable one outside Finland , with 150 animals .

Apart from the exchange project of the late 1980s , activity to export the Finnhorse has been minimal . However , a 2008 study stated that increased international interest and demand for the Finnhorse was advisable to ensure the survival of the breed . To this end , the objectives of the national breeding program , as of 2008 , include increasing international recognition of the Finnhorse and generating demand for the breed for recreational and educational uses such as in Pony Club ; to make it the standard breed used in Finland for equestrian tourism ; and to improve the opportunities for Finnhorse trotters to participate in Swedish and Norwegian heats .

Within Finland , the Finnhorse is considered to have value as the national horse breed with cultural ties and strong support from a variety of Finnhorse organisations . On the other hand , progress in popularizing the breed internationally is complicated by the its low population and lack of international recognition . The strengths of the breed in international disciplines are considered to be its good health and working qualities , its versatility , and its novelty value outside of Finland . The versatility of the breed 's " universal " horse type , a Finnish concept , has plusses and minuses : It creates a challenge in marketing because of its vague status to buyers who currently tend to seek conventional horse types , and as a result it lacks a strong advantage over specialized breeds . Yet , the versatility of the Finnhorse can also be an advantage ; more specialised breeds may be limited to a smaller range of activities .

= = Influence on other horse breeds = =

From the 14th to the 16th century , Finnish horses were exported to Russian and Germany in such quantities that eventually restrictions on the number of exports were set . The Finnish horses exported to Russia in early 19th century influenced the development of the Vyatka horse . In the 19th century and early 20th century , horses of Finnish origin were used in creating many Baltic and Russian agricultural draught breeds , such as the Tori Horse and the Lithuanian Draught . In most cases , these breeds were developed by crossbreeding Finnish horses on small local horses , thus increasing size . In the 1920s and 1930s , the Finnhorse was also used in the breeding of the Estonian horse . The heavy Mezen horse was bred with both the Finnhorse and the Estonian Horse , until its stud book was closed in the 1950s . Traces of Finnhorse influence is found in other Soviet and Russian work horse breeds , in the mid @-@ 20th century , Finland exported 15 @,@ 000 horses to Soviet Russia as part of its war indemnity . In the 1960s and 1970s , pony @-@ sized Finnhorses were also used to improve quality and broaden the gene pool of the Norwegian Nordlandshest , which had become highly inbred by the 1960s .

= = = Tori horse = = =

In the mid @-@ 19th century , manor owners in Estonia found the native Estonian Horse too small for their agricultural needs , and came to the conclusion that the population would benefit from crossbreeding . Finnish horses were among the good quality breeds considered for the job . The state stud farm of Tori was founded as the central base for the new Estonian breed in 1856 , and ten Finnish mares and three stallions were bought for its needs . Though some purebred Finnish horses were produced , they were used mainly for crossbreeding ; the later offspring of part @-@ Finnish crossbreds , however , did not prove as good as expected , and the Tori stud gradually stopped using Finnish horses . One Finnish @-@ Arabian stallion , Orro , has had noteworthy influence on the modern @-@ day Tori horse , through his widely used great @-@ grandson Harun 42 T.

= = Uses = =

In the 21st century , approximately 75 percent of Finnhorses are used at some point in their lives for harness racing , with riding being the second most popular use . Many Finnhorses have multiple uses , such as starting their career in harness racing and later moving on to riding . Finnhorses perform both at their own competitions and in open , all @-@ breed classes in dressage , show jumping , and eventing . They are also used for endurance riding , western riding and combined driving . Approximately 1 @,@ 000 Finnhorses are used in riding schools and in riding therapy . They are also popular as pleasure horses .

= = = Draft work = = =

Agricultural and forestry work were the traditional uses of the Finnhorse . The Finnhorse was never bred to be a particularly large or heavy draught horse , as it was the only horse breed of the country , and versatility was desired as the Finnhorse was also used as the primary steed of the cavalry . The climate and conditions of Finland necessitated that the breed be durable and hardy . As a result , the Finnhorse remained small but tough , and could pull heavy loads in difficult terrain and even in chest @-@ deep snow . Relative to its size , the Finnhorse is among the most powerful workhorses in the world with the best animals able to pull as much as 200 percent of their own weight .

There are few draft @-@ type Finnhorse family lines left , and only an estimated two or three hundred animals are known to be used as actual workhorses in the 21st century . However , interest in traditional uses and methods has been increasing , and workhorse competitions are regularly held which usually include horse pulling or ploughing contests .

= = = Harness = = =

Finnhorses have historically been used for harness racing , with organised harness races having

been held since 1817 . Prior to that , racing from church back home had been a traditional recreation among farmers , and harness racing remained a farmer 's hobby up to the end of the 1950s . By that time , the number of horses kept in Finland was plummeting and racing lost popularity . After 1959 the Finnhorse was no longer the only horse breed that was allowed to race in Finland ; the importing of faster , light trotter breeds and the introduction of Parimutuel betting brought professionalism and new life to the harness racing sport . Increased interest in betting led to growth in racing , which in turn helped establish harness racing as the main use for the Finnhorse during the next decades .

Finnhorses also successfully compete in combined driving , and are the breed most often used for the sport in Finland , especially at regional and national levels ; the Finnhorse Jehun Viima , driven by Heidi Sinda , was a member of the Finnish singles driving team that finished 2nd at the 2002 World Singles Championships in Conty , France . According to Sinda , the Finnhorse is ideally suited for combined driving , being well @-@ mannered , focused , hard working , obedient , and possessing " cool nerves . "

= = = Riding = = =

Finnhorses are popular as recreational riding horses , and well @-@ suited for use at riding schools , trekking , and riding therapy . Of the ten horses currently employed by the mounted police of Helsinki , two are Finnhorses , though they are considered a bit small for the job . They are also competitive in many disciplines , and in the 1970s separate competition classes for Finnhorses were established at horse shows , which also helped to increase the popularity of the breed . While in eventing and horse racing , Finnhorses are too slow to compete directly against Thoroughbreds and the sport horse breeds , they are a highly reliable mount for cross @-@ country riding , particularly over difficult terrain ; during the Continuation War , the breed successfully crossed any wetland with which it was confronted . In endurance riding . Uusi @-@ Helinä , ridden by Ritva Lampinen , successfully finished the endurance riding world championship competition in Stockholm , Sweden in 1990 , finishing 28th .

The Finnhorse is considered a reliable and fairly good jumper , and is regularly seen in 130 centimetres ( 51 in ) show jumping classes . Finnhorses have been quite successful at lower levels because they are clean and efficient jumpers , but their shorter stride at the canter and gallop keeps them from competing at more advanced levels . In his 1952 book Ratsastuskirja , Olympic rider Werner Walldén described the Finnhorse as enduring and resilient , mentally focused , and an easy keeper . He considered jumping to be the breed 's best asset as a riding animal , but noted that its scope does not reach the level required for modern international competition .

In dressage , the Finnhorse is able to compete with warmbloods up to national levels , and in lower levels it has the upper hand because it can easily perform the required movements , and has smoother gaits that allow for ease of riding . In 2010 , a Finnhorse medaled in international paraequestrian dressage competition . In higher level dressage , the breed however it is hindered by its less @-@ flashy movement , restricted by a somewhat upright shoulder . Despite this there are successful dressage horses , and a number of Finnhorses even earn their keep with their dressage winnings , a notable achievement as competing in Finland is expensive and prize money low . Most Finnhorses used in dressage compete at the national 4th level ( US ) or Grade IV ( GB ) , though some individuals have competed at the Prix de St. Georges level .

The Finnhorse is also well @-@ suited to riding therapy , being calm and steady , hard @-@ working , obedient , healthy and enduring . They are small enough to allow the patient to be assisted easily , yet large enough to have gaits that stimulate the muscles , senses , and balance of the rider . Many Finnhorses have also been trained for driving , and therefore are familiar with unusual noises and can be controlled from behind , and ex @-@ trotters are inexpensive . Many Finns also find the appearance of the Finnhorse comforting .