

## = Eriskay Pony =

The Eriskay Pony is a breed of pony from Scotland . It is generally grey in colour , and has a dense , waterproof coat that protects it in harsh weather . The breed developed in ancient times in the Hebrides islands in Scotland , and a small population remained pure and protected from crossbreeding by the remoteness of the islands . It is used for light draught work , as a mount for children , in many equestrian disciplines , and for driving . The breed is rare today , with the Rare Breeds Survival Trust considering their status critical . There are two breed registries for the Eriskay , the first formed in 1971 and the second in 1986 .

## = = Characteristics = =

The Eriskay Pony generally stands between 12 and 13 @. @ 2 hands ( 48 and 54 inches , 122 and 137 cm ) . It is usually grey in colour , although a few are bay or black . Dark coloured animals generally have the pangaré characteristics of a light @-@ coloured muzzle and ring around their eye . However , according to breed standards , they should not have an eel stripe . Chestnut , piebald , skewbald and excess white markings are discouraged by breed registries . The winter coat is dense and waterproof to protect from the harsh climate , with a thick mane and tail . The head is large , with a wide forehead . The neck and shoulders are well muscled , and the chest deep but generally not broad . The rib @-@ cage is long and the loins short , which increases the strength of the back . The croup is slightly sloping . It is quite similar to the Exmoor pony in body type . The Eriskay has an easy @-@ going temperament and is suitable as a mount for children . It is used for light draught work , as well as dressage , show jumping , three @-@ day eventing , western riding and driving . Eriskays have successfully competed in combined driving at highly competitive international level competitions sanctioned by the Fédération Équestre Internationale . They have also been used in therapeutic horse @-@ riding .

## = = History = =

The Eriskay Pony developed in the Hebrides , a group of western isles in Scotland . The origins of the breed are ancient , with roots in Celtic and Norse breeding . It is physically similar to drawings of ponies on ancient Pictish stones found in north and west Scotland . It is related to other northern breeds , including the Icelandic horse and the Faroe pony . The Eriskay takes its name from the island of Eriskay in the Outer Hebrides . Originally , the breed had a fairly large population , and until the mid @-@ 19th century the Eriskay and similar ponies were found throughout the western islands of Scotland . They were used as crofters ' ponies , as pack animals , for light draught and as mounts for children .

During the 19th century numbers were much reduced through increased crossbreeding . The crossbreeding was used to produce larger ponies for draught work , and Eriskays and other island ponies were crossed with horse breeds from mainland Europe , including Arabs and Clydesdales . Other horses , including the Norwegian Fjord , were crossed with island ponies , including the Eriskay , to produce the Highland pony . A few specimens of the Eriskay were preserved on the remotest islands of Scotland , mainly due to the difficulties of accessing the islands . This stock of ponies remained pure , but through the advent of mechanisation , declined in population to around 20 animals in the early 1970s . In 1941 the SS Politician foundered off the Eriskay coast , and the islanders , using the Eriskay ponies , carried away the cargo of 250 @, @ 000 bottles of whisky .

Today the Eriskay is rare . Its population is considered to be at critical status by the UK @-@ based Rare Breeds Survival Trust , meaning that there are 300 or fewer breeding females registered in the world today . In 2006 , there were believed to have been around 300 mares and 4 purebred stallions , and by 2009 this number had risen to around 420 ponies worldwide . It is possible that the Eriskay is the last surviving Hebrides pony breed . There are two breed registries that represent the breed . The first ( the Eriskay Pony ( Purebred ) Studbook Society or Comann Each nan Eilean , formed in 1971 has the goal of maintaining the purity of the Eriskay breed , and disallows all crossbreeding .

The second ( the Eriskay Pony Society , formed in 1986 aims to produce ponies with desirable traits , which the registry feels will help promote their survival ? this registry has considered the possibility of cross @-@ breeding . The Eriskay Pony Society achieved legal recognition as a breed society and passport issuing organisation for the UK in 1995 ; Comann Each nan Eilean did not receive legal recognition until 2002 .

In addition to the domesticated ponies there is a small herd of Eriskay ponies living in a feral state on the Holy Isle . These ponies are descended from a group of five ponies brought to the Holy Isle to when it was owned by the Universities Federation for Animal Welfare in the 1970s to form a nature reserve . Today the island is owned by the Samye Buddhist Centre for World Peace and Health . They operate a policy of non @-@ intervention , allowing the ponies to live without human interference .