

DID YOU KNOW?

Fun facts about science...

Icelandic horses are one of the oldest horse breeds in the world, and along with a few other rare breeds, they represent our closest remaining link to the first domesticated horses. These animals were first brought to Iceland by the Vikings between 874 and 930. Since approximately 1100, importing new horses to Iceland has been forbidden – so the breed has remained true to its original genetics.

Over time, Icelandic horses have developed traits that make them particularly suited to Iceland's terrain and climate. Some adaptations include:

- **Thick coats:** These are often paired with a double-sided mane to combat the cold temperatures.
- **A naturally calm demeanor:** It takes an especially cool head to survive in a place with frequent volcanic activity, harsh terrain, and the occasional rock slide!
- **A strong, stocky build:** This allows the horses to carry heavy loads over long distances and still have the strength for farm work. This was crucial to human and horse survival as there are no other load-bearing animals, and no other form of land transportation existed until the 1900s.
- **Rare speed capabilities:** Most horses have three gaits, or speeds – walk, trot, and canter. Icelandic horses are capable of up to five, the two additional being tölt (a fast walk for covering lots of ground) and flugskeið (an exceptionally fast speed that translates to “flying pace”)

