



## FIROUZ-CASPIAN BREEDERS GUILD - INTERNATIONAL

# FIROUZ-CASPIAN BREED DESCRIPTION © 2023

### GENERAL APPEARANCE:

The Firouz-Caspian is unique. It is the only small-sized, "hot-blooded" horse in existence, possibly its ancestors were similarly unique. The overall impression of a Firouz-Caspian should be of a well-bred, elegant, and highly athletic small horse possessing extreme intelligence that requires mutual partnership and respect.

**GENERAL PROPORTIONS:** Firouz-Caspian are viewed in the same manner as when judging a full-size horse - the limbs in proportion to the body forming a "rectangle" like full size horses, rather than the square-box leg-to-body proportion seen in ponies. Foreshortened limbs, heads, or parts out of proportion are faults.

**THREE TYPES:** Three distinct Firouz-Caspian Types were acknowledged by Louise Firouz in 2006 and all combinations.

**Type I / Desert Type** - mildly dished face, mildly vaulted/domed forehead but never extreme, sometimes a slightly higher tail placement but although Firouz-Caspian can *hold* the tail higher in excitement, they do not have a high tail set. This type is usually more close-coupled than the other two types, and often is the most petite and smallest of our breed types, averaging between 10.2 - 11 hands.

**Type II / Hunter Type** - flat forehead, with a longer, narrower face in proportion to longer overall neck, body and limbs; generally, the tallest of our breed types, averaging 11.3-12.2 hands. Though adequate keepers, they exhibit a slimmer, sleeker build for their height and are not usually our easiest keepers.

**Type III / Steppe Type** - a type unique to the Firouz-Caspian breed - a flat profile, extra wide forehead in proportion to muzzle (like viewing a kite), thicker but well shaped neck, neither short nor long body, usually medium size in height, averaging 11.2-11.3 hands; often less flashy but well-built and just as athletic, usually with more substance in the form of "padding" or flesh, and sometimes more bone; often the easiest of keepers of the 3 types.

### HEAD, NECK, WITHERS & SHOULDERS

**GENERAL HEAD PROFILE:** Wide forehead (in most cases the parietal bones do not form a crest, a unique trait, but remain open to the occipital crest). The forehead can be vaulted/domed as seen in Type I, or flat as seen in Type II & III.

Forehead is wide and head tapers to a fine, firm muzzle. Frontal bone, whether straight or mildly dished, should blend into nasal bone smoothly tapering to the muzzle. Jawbones are very prominent and deep, with great width between them where they join at the throat, tapering to the chin.

Profile maybe slightly dished (concave) as seen in Type I or may be straight as seen in Types II & III. Occasional an "arched" nose (elevated nasal area on the lower face just above the muzzle) is present & is thought to aid in warming colder air.

**EYES:** Almond shaped, large, dark, often prominent. Lighter shades of brown are not desirable. Blue or small eyes are a fault.

**NOSTRILS:** Large ovals even at rest, yet finely chiseled, capable of considerable dilation during action.

**EARS:** Short but in proportion to head type, set wide apart, alert, expressive, finely drawn, often noticeably in-pricked at the tips, particularly as foals. Long/tall ears or round Panda ears are a fault.

**TEETH:** Deep seated, often missing wolf teeth which sometimes present as an extra set of molars. Firouz-Caspian were originally grazers/browsers and in the absence of browsing may require additional floating. Young Firouz-Caspian (ages 2-7) can develop a lower jaw ridgeline that appears "lumpy"; these are deep seated teeth that will eventually recede and align in time as the jaw & teeth mature.

**NECK:** Long supple neck with a clean, refined throatlatch, and good flexion at the poll, all in balance with the body type.

**SHOULDERS AND WITHERS:** Long and sloping, with good withers, neither sharp nor mutton/low. Firouz-Caspian have a wider scapula than most breeds, a trait that is thought to aid in agility, particularly jumping like a deer, *“... the neck of the scapula being narrower and the head much wider. Altogether it was noticed that the scapula of the Caspian more closely resembled that of a ruminant than that of a horse.”* Louise 1972 The Caspian Horse of Iran.

## **BODY**

**CHEST & BODY / BARREL:** Chest width in proportion to width of body, not overly wide or narrow. It is a fault to have “both legs out of the same hole”, however as an Oriental (hot-blooded) breed, chests are functionally narrow compared to warmbloods or ponies, helping to dissipate heat more quickly like their Turkmen brethren. Viewed from the front, the chest forms an upside-down V shape. The barrel/ribcage is characteristically slim (not round like a pony) with a deep girth. The body is well coupled, length in proportion to Type, either close coupled as in Type I, or mid-length in Type III, or longer coupled as in Type II with well defined, but not fleshy hindquarters.

**BACK:** Firouz-Caspian backs/spines should be straight and some are slightly roached over the loin (for strength) with enough room for good “saddle space”. Concave backs (slightly dipped as seen in pony breeds) are a severe fault. The spine of this breed is very close to the surface, not hidden under layers of flesh.

**QUARTERS & HIPS:** Croup is long and sloping from hip to point of buttocks. Never flat. Good length from stifle to hock. Firouz-Caspian are one of the breeds known to have wide A-frame (sometimes incorrectly referred to as the fault Rafter-hips), i.e., when viewed from the rear, one should see the spine at the top (like the peak of a roofline) with a visual near-flat line from the spine to either hip forming a mild A-frame shape like a roof line, approximately 115 to 120-degree range. If this shape is not flat but instead appears round or dimpled like a pony, the Firouz-Caspian is overweight. Overweight long term is a severe health hazard, more so than underweight.

## **LIMBS – Pasterns, Hocks, Hooves**

Characteristically slender compared to ponies the same height, but very strong, with dense, flat bone and flat knees, and joints able to withstand ridden and harness work. The hind legs should have a strong second thigh (but not bulky) and good, clean hocks.

**PASTERNS:** Good slope to pasterns, neither upright nor low or long, and should match the angles of the hooves, ideally near the same angle as shoulder. Front pasterns are typically a few degrees lower than rear pastern angles.

**HOCKS:** Owing to their mountain origin, Firouz-Caspian are “hocked-in” (not cow-hocked), i.e., have more angled hocks than lowland breeds and often are not parallel when viewed from behind. This is a normal, a functional Firouz-Caspian trait, and a trade mark of their mountain heritage; this “hocked-in” trait is believed to aid the Firouz-Caspian in its superb jumping abilities as well as help with sure footedness on uneven ground. Any Firouz-Caspian that is actually cow-hocked (where the angle is severe enough to interfere with movement) is a fault.

**HOOVES:** Both front and back should be oval and neat, with immensely strong walls and soles. Firouz-Caspian will show very little frog when kept on dry rocky ground similar their homeland. Rear hooves may be slightly wider or slightly rounder than fronts. It must be emphasized this can vary with location and terrain. Hooves should be maintained in their natural shape to ensure correct hoof balance and soundness, and never artificially shaped. Oversized hooves, flares or pancake-shaped, or soft heels leading to less wear and long toes are faults.

**COAT, SKIN AND HAIR QUALITY:** Skin is thin, fine and supple, and dark except under white markings. Coat is silky and flat. Many have an iridescent sheen in summer, particularly males. Thick double coat in winter. Mane and tail abundant but fine and silky. Mane usually lies flat on one side, but can be divided in some; manes and tails can grow to great lengths. The tail often carried “gaily” (up) in action or excitement. Limbs are fairly clean with little or no tufts at the fetlock. The presence of minimal tufts does, however, protect a fetlock joint and is not considered a fault.

**COLORS:** Base colors BLACK, RED

**COAT COLOR MODIFIERS, DILUTIONS, PATTERNS:**

**MODIFYERS** - Grey and Agouti (all shades of bay/brown)

**DILUTIONS** - Dun (bay dun, red dun, siyah/black dun)

**PATTERNS** - Sabino, White Ticking, Rabicano, Dapples

**WHITE MARKINGS** – face and legs; bald faces are a fault

**PRIMITIVE MARKINGS** - Dorsals, Countershading, Spider Web/Lacing, Bird Spots, Leg stripes/bars

**BLACK POINTS** (mane & tail, legs)

with black points: Bay/Brown, Black, Duns (except red)

without black points: chestnut, red dun

**SOOTY** - a genetic modification in which dark shading occurs along the back, shoulder and croup, resulting in a horse that's dark on top and light underneath, as though he's been covered in soot.

**PANGARE** - lighter coloration around muzzle, eyes, and flanks

**FLAXEN** - tail and mane are lightened in chestnuts only

**No Appaloosa, Tobiano, Overo, Piebald, Skewbald or other LP patterns. No Cream or Roan genes have been identified in the breed.**

## **HEIGHT**

The average height is 11.2 hands and ideally should not exceed 12.2 hands. Firouz-Caspians have been recorded in modern history as small as 10 hands. Height is genetic, but can be influenced by feeding, care and climate. Growth rate in the young is extremely rapid with the young Firouz-Caspian making most of its height in the first 18 months and finishing out with maturity at four or five years.

**BODY CONDITION:** Normal weight for an adult Firouz-Caspian is typically 400-450 pounds. A conditioned individual will have muscle tone, but not the extra flesh over its frame that a pony would carry, but more like its brethren, the sleek Akhal-Teke. One should be able to see definition in the neck, shoulder, back, barrel (a hint of rib), flank, and hindquarters. If the Firouz-Caspian appears rounded or filled-in in any of these areas, the Firouz-Caspian is overweight and at risk for colic and founder and a host of other maladies. If the Firouz-Caspian appears markedly sunken in any of these areas, the individual is underweight and should slowly be brought back into

proper condition. Condition can be seasonal – leanest in Spring gaining weight over Summer in preparation for Winter.

## **ACTION / PERFORMANCE**

Natural floating action at all gaits. Long low swinging trot with spectacular use of the shoulder. Smooth, rocking canter, rapid flat gallop. Naturally light and agile with exceptional jumping ability.

**TEMPERAMENT:** Firouz-Caspians are highly intelligent. It is in their nature when treated properly to be brave, clever, curious, people-friendly, fast to train, very kind and willing. Many Firouz-Caspians will bond with their owners or a close circle of humans. Firouz-Caspians learn incredibly fast. They prefer variety in training, not mindless drilling, and do not suffer abusive treatment or fools lightly. If pushed or bullied, most will resort to flight, some will fight, and some will shut down like a mule. If respected, and a partnership and trust is developed, Firouz-Caspians are a delightful partner with amazing abilities for their size, willing try anything for you.

## **OTHER INNER TRAITS:**

**-Highly social.** All prefer herds where they can learn and express social skills rather than stall or paddock isolation, bachelor herds are useful, especially to teach colts & younger stallions by elders.

**-Moderate-to-easy keepers** – pasture and grass hay primarily, grain usually only to maintain weight for breeding management or seniors

**-Good fertility in both sexes**, however being a primitive breed, to ensure the health of a foal its first year and mares production longevity, mares conceive every other year.

**-No known breed genetic issues.** Extremely enduring and hearty.

**-Good mothering & fathering instincts.** Typically, easy foaling if mares are kept in a natural freedom-of-movement state.

**-All weather breed.** Firouz-Caspians tolerate deep cold even better than extreme heat, and can live out year-round in almost any climate as long as a wind-break, and enough water and hay is provided to stay warm or enough shade in heat.

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