

ISSUE FOUR

THE

2008

# ICELANDIC HORSE

Q U A R T E R L Y



## THE VERSATILE ICELANDIC

Official Publication of the United States Icelandic Horse Congress  
Member Association of FEIF (International Federation of Icelandic Horse Associations)

# Shaggy Mountain Icelandic Horses

Featuring: Omur Fra Brun



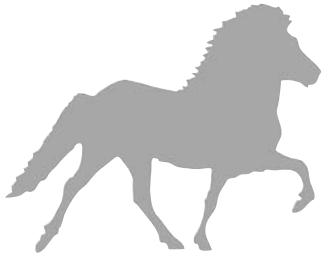
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			<b>Gustar fra Saudarkroki</b>
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	First Prize 8.05, 8.44	First Prize For Offspring	First Prize 8.33, 7.8
			Honor For Offspring
<b>Omur Fra Brun</b>		<b>Osk fra Brun</b>	<b>Ofeigur fra flugumyri</b>
Five Gaited First Prize Stallion 8.34, 7.89	First Prize 8.49, 7.58	Honor For Offspring	First Prize 8.52, 7.86
			Honor For Offspring
			<b>Hekla fra Argerdi</b>
			First Prize 8.57, 7.88



THE  
ICELANDIC  
HORSE  
QUARTERLY  
Issue four 2008

Official Publication of the United States Icelandic Horse Congress (USIHC), a member association of FEIF (International Federation of Icelandic Horse Associations).

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USIHC members are encouraged to submit articles and photos or illustrations for publication. Deadlines are January 1 (for the March issue), April 1, August 1, and October 1. See the instructions online at [www.icelandics.org](http://www.icelandics.org) or email the editorial committee at [quarterly@icelandics.org](mailto:quarterly@icelandics.org). We reserve the right to edit submissions.

Advertising rates and instructions are also online at [www.icelandics.org](http://www.icelandics.org). Deadlines are the same as above.

Back issues of *The Icelandic Horse Quarterly* may be purchased for \$5.00 each as available.

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**5 NEWS**

**5** USIHC News

**9** National and International News

**10** FEIF News

**15 BEYOND THE OVAL TRACK**

**16** Landsmot 2008: A Pilgrim's Notes *by Andrea Hanson*

**21** Things to Do with Your Icelandic Horse *by Ed Hilgaertner*

**23** Trail Obstacle Competitions *by Karen Olson-Fields*

**27 COLUMNS**

**27** Health: What's the Difference? *by Bernie Willis*

**28** Teachers & Trainers: Who Is Jana Meyer? *by Alex Pregitzer*

**30** Youth: The FEIF Youth Cup *by Lucy Nold*

**32** Welfare: Putting the Horse First *by Ed Hilgaertner*

**34** Pleasure: Leave No Trace *by Alys Culhane*

**37 MARKETPLACE**

**On the cover:** "Friends" by Mark R. Johnson. Maïke Liekweg, who submitted the photo for her husband, writes: "Icelandics are known to play and chase each other and to be 'just horses,' and the connection they have with each other in the herd is a very important aspect of their breed and their well-being and, in most cases, their up-bringing. This picture shows to me that we have some very powerful, instinctive, and natural horses that still are allowed to do what they need to do—mainly, to be horses." The friends are Glenur vom Wiesenhof [US2000103437] and Undri from Maple Leaf IHF [CA2000101526].



## FEIF AND THE USIHC

FEIF is the international association dedicated to the protection and promotion of Icelandic horses. Comprised of the National Breed Associations of 17 European countries (including Iceland), Canada, and the United States, it governs competition activities and regulates the breeding and registration of Icelandic horses throughout the world outside of Iceland. See [www.feif.org](http://www.feif.org) for more information.

The United States Icelandic Horse Congress was formed in 1987 by representatives of the U.S. Icelandic Horse Federation and the International Icelandic Horse Association to meet the FEIF rule that only one association from each country is allowed to represent the breed. As a FEIF member organization, the Congress maintains the Registry of Icelandic Horses in the United States, sponsors U.S. participation in international competition, and regulates breeding and competition activities in the United States in accordance with FEIF rules. USIHC also sponsors activities, events, and educational programs in the United States which are beneficial to the overall interests of the breed. Yearly membership is \$45 (\$35 for youth members); family membership, \$65. For more information, see the Congress website at [www.icelandics.org](http://www.icelandics.org) or email: [info@icelandics.com](mailto:info@icelandics.com).

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Laura Benson  
Ásta Covert  
Doug Smith  
Kathryn Love  
Karen Olson-Fields

## REGISTRY

The Congress maintains the Registry of Icelandic Horses in the United States in accordance with FEIF rules. The Registry Rules and all forms needed to register an Icelandic Horse in the United States are available on the Congress website at [www.icelandics.org](http://www.icelandics.org).

For more information, contact Asta Covert  
P.O. Box 1724, Santa Ynez, CA 93460;  
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## WEBSITE

Visit [www.icelandics.org](http://www.icelandics.org) to update or renew your membership, download the electronic Quarterly, subscribe to RSS feeds for the Events Calendar or web updates, register for WorldFengur, find a Regional Club or USIHC registered horse, join a committee, download USIHC guidelines and forms, submit a proposal, and learn more about FEIF and the USIHC.

## COMMITTEES

USIHC programs are organized by the following committees. To join a committee, contact the following:

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## PRESIDENT'S LETTER

*Bernie Willis writes:* How are things beyond your control affecting the way you keep your horses? We've heard of global warming for years. This last summer my town had the coolest temperatures on record. The grass grows, but trying to make it into hay has been almost impossible. Local as well as imported hay has gone up by a third in price. I've done my best to encourage local farmers to check out the low moisture haylage as done in Iceland and Western Europe, but none of my farmer friends have seen the need until this summer. Here on the edge of civilization the equipment needed must be imported. It takes awhile to make the change.

Then one day I stopped by a welding shop to check on a closed business next door. I was pulling the horse trailer and after answering my question the welder asked what kind of horses I had. He ended up giving me a couple of phone numbers for hay. I gladly called them and found a German dairy man who was putting up round bales of low moisture haylage the next day. Would you believe my hay costs are now lower than last year and the quality is better. It's all about adaptation.

Over a year ago I ordered a custom living quarter horse trailer. I had plans to travel the country, check out many of the trail systems and really enjoy my new horses. But then the deadline for its completion was missed. The deadline was extended four times before I realized I had been scammed. Litigation was initiated to get my money back but that takes time. My wife suggested we check out some local gold rush trails in the mean time. With a new pack saddle and some rented forest service cabins we took off. It rained the whole time but what a trip. One

day after eight hours in the saddle we were still thrilled at the sights we had seen. Now since the price of diesel has doubled local is really good.

I don't know what kind of challenges face us around the corner but I have confidence you'll make some good choices. Politics, whether local, national, or international affect our equestrian hobbies. Your recent vote for USIHC board members, as well as national and local government leaders, affects the way we do things. No matter how it has turned out, the way we adapt determines our success and happiness. We've preserved history with the choice of Icelandic horses. Let's demonstrate we can learn from history too.

## NEW USIHC OFFICE

The mailing address for the Congress is now:

USIHC  
4525 Hewitts Point Road  
Oconomowoc, WI 53066

## RENEW ONLINE

Keep your membership active for 2009 using the USIHC web site. The process is very easy, takes only a few minutes to complete, and reduces the workload for our volunteers. For the first time you can renew your membership, farm listing, stallion listings, and Pleasure Rider Program enrollment with a single step and a single payment.



Did you ride today? Here, Maria Monte and Moli enjoy a brisk canter through a hay field in Patterson, New York.

Amy Goddard



Visit [www.icelandics.org/renew](http://www.icelandics.org/renew) to start the renewal process.

You can pay for your renewal using PayPal, which instantly updates your membership, or you can print a form and mail a check. (A copy of the form can also be found in this issue.) Regardless of the payment option you choose, you are helping the office volunteers by using the online renewal process.

## REVISED CONSTITUTION

A General Meeting was held at Winterhorse Park in Eagle, WI, on July 26 to consider a constitutional amendment to delete extraneous language regarding the membership rolls. The meeting lasted one minute and the amendment passed unanimously. The copy of the constitution on the website had been updated to reflect the amendment approved by the membership at the July 26 General Meeting. A PDF copy of the constitution can be downloaded from the Congress website.

## BOARD MEETINGS

USIHC Board members attending the June and September meetings were Bernie Willis, (President) Laura Benson, Asta Covert, Kathryn Love, Karen Olsen-Fields, Katrin Sheehan,

and Kari Pietsch-Wangard (Secretary). Regional Club attendees were Annette Coulon (Kraftur), Alys Culhane (Alaska Icelandic Horse Club), and Dawn Shaw (Cascade Icelandic Horse Club).

Karen Olson-Fields presented a list of goals for the Pleasure Riding Program that she'd like to have in place by January 2009. These are a 2,500 hour prize, a gift "basket" from a sponsor, PRP dues streamlined with member dues, PRP logs available via website/computer, new PRP award sponsors, a new award or points for community service. The Board unanimously supported including the PRP renewal with the general Congress renewal process and instructed Webmaster Doug Smith to make the necessary changes to the web site and mail-in payment systems.

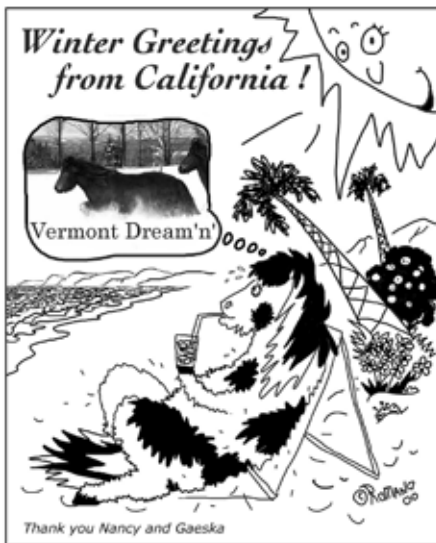
An ad will run in an upcoming issue of *The Equine Journal*. Kathryn Love added that the issue of *Western Ride and Times* with Laura's article and our ad looked nice and they have offered \$200 toward an ad running for a year. Additionally, the September issue on gaited horses of *Horse Illustrated* featured Icelandics. Kathy said that she was hoping to get an article about the Youth Cup 2008 written by Carrie Brandt in a future issue of *Young Rider*. She also mentioned that Breyerfest was a success

with much interest generated in our breed and there were hints of plans to release a new Breyer Icelandic.

USIHC webmaster Doug Smith mentioned that a redesigned *Stallion Book* has been launched on the website and integrated into online membership pages. He's awaiting approval from Pleasure Riding and Competition to implement online presence for hour logs and show applications (sanction and participation). The Board unanimously supported automating show sanctioning and enrollment processes using the web site. Doug will work on a prototype for the Sport Committee and USIHC Board to review with a target of having a working solution before the start of the 2009 competition season. Anne and Kathy will forward samples of the entry forms used for the East Coast and Kentucky shows to be used as examples for developing the online entry form. All voted, via email, to place a half-page Congress ad in *Horse Illustrated* and to approve the *Stallion Book* letter notifying stallion owners of new policy for stallion listings on the web site.

Laura Benson presented the status of the Youth Committee's work and the issue was tabled pending confirmation that the Bitterroot Dude ranch is still a possible option. There was considerable discussion on this matter in a previous meeting. The camp will be held in the second week of July 2009. Each FEIF member country may send two kids plus chaperones, so 30 or so kids can be expected. The USIHC will need to book a location venue soon but will not have a good idea of the participation level until next year. It might be in the position of having to pay a large facility rental fee and have very few kids at the camp. This is a concern when considering locations discussed, such as The Vermont Icelandic Horse





Farm or the Kentucky Horse Park, where we would rent the entire venue for a week. The budget is 600 Euro per kid, which would cover their room, board, and activities once they get to the camp location. Any cost beyond this amount would have to be taken on by USIHC. With 30 kids this could be \$32,000 depending on the Dollar/Euro exchange. It could also be a lot less money to work with if only 10 kids show up.

Doug and Laura were looking into locations in California that would not require the renting of an entire venue. Bernie had contacted Agri-Risk Insurance and spoke with the president of the company regarding a quote for this type of event. A short-term health insurance policy that the campers could purchase was about \$25/camper. Liability coverage to cover the Youth Camp Committee, the USIHC, and the venue would run between \$2,500 and \$3,000. Asta Covert reminded the Board that the camp activities don't have to include Icelandic horses. Laura shared that at the last Youth Camp, the kids' biggest complaint was that there were not enough horse activities for them. Doug thought that if the camp was held in the L.A. area, Steinar and

Stina's place could cover the riding portion. He added that there are a number of theme parks as well as the beach nearby, plus the added bonus of an international airport. Camping at a national park was bought up as another possibility, but it was agreed that the USIHC contact the Bitterroot Ranch in Wyoming. Board members agreed that giving these kids a taste of the American Cowboy experience would be unique, even if it involved riding another breed of horse.

The annual meeting will take place the weekend of January 16-19, 2009. Doug presented two options for hotels in San Jose. The Board unanimously instructed him to negotiate a lower meeting room rental fee and request a contract from the *Plaza Suites*.

Anne Elwell and Sara Lyter are working on language to describe FEIF Level 1, Hólar, and the German training levels as they are represented in the US.

Five USIHC Board members were for, one opposed, and one abstained, when it was asked, *Shall the Board approve the late sanction application of the Tunbridge show with the conditions that the organizers pay a \$5/day fine for the late application and receive no reimburse-*

*ment from the Congress?* The Board unanimously approved the following changes to the way shows appear on the web site calendar: A show cannot be called *sanctioned* until the Sport Committee chair confirms that the sanction has been approved. Shows may be listed as *sanction pending* to indicate the organizer intends to apply for a sanction.

The USIHC Board unanimously supported creating a pilot program to place advertising on the website. The initial program will be to run a single banner ad in place of the World Fegur banner on the home page. The ad will run coincidentally with a print ad in the *Quarterly* and will be charged at a rate of \$20/month. Kathy Love indicated Gudmar Petursson would be willing to be the advertiser for the pilot program.

Solheimar Icelandics and Susan Peters in Tunbridge, VT, hosted a USIHC judging seminar at the end of August. Seminar participants qualified for the sports committee and a list of the participants was emailed to Will Covert for his information. Jason Brickner passed the practical exam and oral test and is a new USIHC intern judge. His name was added to the list of intern judges on the USIHC web site.

The USIHC board was in agreement, in principle, with the idea of allowing a non-US citizen to act as an intern judge. The procedure by which an individual would apply for and maintain intern judge standing is not well-enough defined for the Board to act. Bernie will contact Alex and ask her to develop a procedure to be reviewed by the Sport Committee before coming back to the Board.

There is a group of members that are very interested in educating themselves about breeding evaluations judging. Board members had received some interest in a seminar and





did some research (with the help of Martina Gates) to possibly host such a seminar in conjunction with the New York evaluations. Those plans were cancelled as issues centered around providing enough riders and horses. Board members may do some research for a different time and location in 2009.

Alexandria Pregitzer asked the Board to think about offering reciprocity for intern judges from other foreign countries provided that they fulfill similar prerequisites. She mentioned that the Canadian intern judges undergo a similar seminar and



testing which seems comparable and equal to ours. The only difference is that they ask for different currencies to stay up to date with their certificates. She thinks the Board should consider acknowledging the Canadian Intern Judges if: 1) Canada will do so vice versa, and 2) the currencies to stay up to date are fulfilled by our standards (which should hopefully be manageable). Alexandria said that we also have at least one German aspiring judge living in the U.S. and was asked if we would acknowledge her training so that she can continue her internships while living in the U.S. to stay current. The training and testing she went through in Germany is comparable to our standards, and Alexandria would be in favor of also acknowledging her status as an intern judge if the currencies to stay up to date are fulfilled by our standards. The German IPZV is already acknowledging U.S. interns by being in favor of intern judges interning in Germany. Alexandria would be in favor of supporting more international exchanges and think we should embrace other countries education if it is at a similar level as ours.

Kari Pietsch-Wangard was unanimously elected USIHC Treasurer. She's opened a new checking account in her area and the transition of funds is going smoothly. Once the PayPal service is switched over to the new account, and all of Ed's account's checks have cleared, his account will be closed and the balance of the funds will then be transferred. Up until now, all of the checks and invoices for both membership and Registry accounts went to the same P.O. Box in Santa Ynez. Now that there are two distinct geographical locations, Kari was hoping that we could define each account's responsibilities for both income and expenses. Bernie Willis suggested that it may be time

to have the treasurer handle income and expenses for both the membership and the Registry in one account. Kari has shown that they can be tracked separately on the income/expense sheet. If there would be any questions, it would be easier to have just one person who has the financial data to answer them. The registrar would still receive all registrations, stallion reports, and transfer applications with the fees; however once the checks are recorded, she could send them on to Kari on a weekly basis for deposit.

It was mentioned that if this were done, that the Policy & Procedure document would have to be changed, since it states that there are to be



two separate accounts. The Board decided to make a final decision next month when Anne, who wrote the Policy & Procedures, was available to voice her opinion.

Heidi Kline sent an email to the Board suggesting that Will Covert replace her as the Competition/Sport Committee Chairperson. The Board unanimously agreed. Asta abstained from the vote and will continue as liaison.

The complete minutes can be found on the USIHC website: [www.icelandics.org/bulletin.php](http://www.icelandics.org/bulletin.php).



## ICELANDICS ROCK IN NEW JERSEY HUNTER PACE!

The annual Amwell Valley Trail Association Pace in Amwell, New Jersey took place on a sunny day on October 5. Over 12 miles of fields and woodland trails, Icelandic horses Gna and Freyr, along with owner Anne Owen and rider Carrie Croton, crossed streams, jumped logs, and trotted along corn fields and hay fields. Many riders at the pace were seeing the Icelandic horse in action for the first time, and it was fun to watch other riders' reactions, as the "cute little ponies" showed how athletic and willing the Icelandic horse can be. Anne and Carrie, with their teammate Sue Villani on Cody the Halflinger, took first place for their division for their time closest to the pace setter. Their pace was, as usual, too fast. "Wow—those little guys can move!"



Amy Goddard

Carrie Croton with Freyr and Anne Owen with Gna celebrate their first-place win at the Amwell Valley Trail Association's Hunter Pace.

## ICELANDIC TRAIL BLAZERS

Karen Olson and Omur fra Brun who are featured on page 21 of this issue represented the USIHC at the 2008 Trail Blazer Festival in Santa Barbara, November 14-16. This horse expo was sponsored by Trail Blazer magazine and was geared solely for pleasure riders. According to the festival sponsors, this expo was the first of its kind. Only 15 breeds were invited to compete in the trail obstacle competition, "The battle of the breeds," for which two of the judges were John Lyons and Linda Tellington-Jones.

## LOSING SHOES

*From www.lhhestur.is:* A competitor should be eliminated from a competition if his horse loses a shoe. This is a proposal from the members of the club Logi at the 56th congress of LH, the Horsemen's Association in Iceland. The proposal aims to change the regulations of LH, paragraph 8.1.4.3. The members of Logi want

to put into that paragraph an unconditional and clear sentence: "If a horse loses a horseshoe, the competitor is automatically eliminated from the competition." The competition committee of LH does not support the proposal and says that the change will create more problems than it solves. It is the committee's feeling that more and more horses are losing shoes in competition due to larger hoofs and more heavy filling materials. The committee suggests that limits of hoof size should be taken up again. In the previously mentioned rule, it says that it is up to the rider to decide if he or she wants to finish the competition or not, after the horse loses a shoe. After the past competition season, the voices have become louder that all doubt should be eliminated in this matter.

## RIDING CRITICIZED

*From Eidfaxi.is:* Conversation along with photos can be found on an American website, where riding methods of the Icelandic horse are being harshly criticized. Surely we have experienced similar issues before: there was a discussion posted in the magazine Cavallo about a year ago. Some of us tend to want to ignore this kind of discussion and call it "whining," but that might not be such a good idea. The photos show all different kinds of horse breeds in all possible competitions, whether it might be jumping, Western, or dressage. Often the bridle equipment being used seems outrageous to us, and not to just some "whiners" in America. Is the bridle equipment we are using too rigid? We are all concerned about the well-being of our horses. Here is the link into the discussion: <http://shameinthehorshowring.blogspot.com/2008/09/ponies-on-ice.html>



Maïke Liekweg

According to a study by Swedish veterinarian Torbjörn Lundström, we know less than we think about how a horse's mouth works. Pictured here is Ljúfa frá Drumbodsstöðum [IS1993288580].

## THE HORSE'S MOUTH

*Posted by John Freeman to the FEIF website, Sept. 15, 2008:* The FEIF Welfare and Veterinary Committee (FWVC) was established in 2006. The initial focus of the committee has been to investigate and prevent injuries to the horse's mouth that could be caused by riding and riding equipment.

Mouth inspections have been a part of the veterinary control of competition horses since the WC 2005. They have also been practiced at the larger international competitions since then, as well as at Landsmót and Íslandsmót. The Committee has reviewed the information collected at these competitions and discussed how it can be used to improve the welfare of the horses.

To deepen our understanding of this issue, the committee visited

the Swedish dentist, Torbjörn Lundström, who has specialized in the horse's chewing system since the early 1980s. Torbjörn has built up a unique database about mouth problems in the horse, both from ambulant cases and from research projects that he is working on in collaboration with the Veterinary Faculty in Uppsala. Torbjörn also lectures and gives practical courses in this field for the veterinary students in the Swedish Veterinary Faculty and for the Swedish Veterinary Association.

After following him whilst inspecting and treating some cases, we could see how important it is to carry out the inspection properly and under good conditions. Indeed, proper examination can only be performed on a sedated horse with a speculum and with a very strong light. Palpation and inspection at competitions, with-

out these facilities, will only reveal a small part of the lacerations and can also result in false positive findings. Therefore, current inspections at competitions are unlikely to be a sufficient basis on which to give good advice to the riders. This has to be kept in mind when interpreting the results from the competitions.

We asked Torbjörn if he thinks that lacerations in the mouth are more commonly found in Icelandic horses compared to other breeds. "Analysis of data from my database, which includes almost 8,000 Icelandic horses (from youngsters to long-term competition horses) and over 50,000 horses of other breeds, reveals little difference between breeds of the occurrence of lacerations in the mouth. I can state that the Icelandic horses are not more prone to injuries in the mouth compared to other

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breeds; it is rather the other way. There is evidence of improvement in the mouth health of Icelandic horses in the last few years, most likely as a result of improved riding. However, as with other breeds, horses that are trained by professional trainers show the highest prevalence of lacerations in the mouth.”

What are the reasons for the lacerations in the mouth and why are they so common? “Histological studies have revealed that most of the lacerations are due to repeated compression of the mucosa, for example between the premolars and the bridle/noseband. The pressure causes reduced blood supply to the tissue resulting in damage (necrosis) of the mucosa. This explains why the lacerations are usually not bleeding. These lacerations are often misinterpreted as scars or healing lacerations. Other types of findings can have other reasons, i.e. direct pressure to the bars, which sometimes causes the most serious cases. Superficial cuts of the mucosa (resulting from biting) can occasionally happen and are not regarded as serious lacerations although they sometimes result in blood in the saliva. The majority of the lacerations can be related to working horses. However, lacerations have also been revealed in 30–40 percent of healthy horses that are not used for any work. Lack of understanding of the physiology of the mouth and teeth and how these organs normally work is certainly one of the main reasons for misuse, resulting in lacerations in the mouth.”

What can be done to prevent this? “A thorough oral examination of the mouth is necessary to define the problem and find solutions. It must be emphasized that the teeth are usually not the problem. They are most often healthy and must be regarded as one of the most important

organs of the horse. Floating of the premolars and molars, which unfortunately is the most common treatment, is therefore not the right way to handle this. Some specific corrections of the teeth can in some cases be necessary but extensive floating can damage the teeth and must be avoided. The most important thing is to correct the riding equipment and individually try out the best-fitting bridles and nosebands for each horse. Correct adjustment of the equipment is of course of importance, especially to avoid too-tight nosebands. It is necessary to avoid repeated pressure on the same area in the mouth mucosa. The same combination of bridle and noseband should therefore not be used every day. Improvement of riding skills and changes of the training methods might also be necessary. It must be kept in mind that healing of deep and chronic lacerations cannot be expected unless the horse is rested for at least three weeks and in serious cases healing, from a medical point of view, takes at least one year.”

Are these horses “fit for competition” or how shall we deal with this? “I do not regard the figures about the frequency of lacerations in the mouth from the Icelandic horse competitions as very high. They reflect, of course, the limitations of the examination procedure, but even taking that into account, they cannot be regarded as high compared to findings about other competition horses coming to the University. However, it is very important for the Icelandic horse federation to take this seriously and to work out how lacerations in the mouth can be prevented. Deep wounds reflect a chronic problem which only can be solved by educating the trainers. Veterinarians also need much more education about the mouth and how to help the trainers in improving the health of the

mouth. Many of the cases that have been referred to my clinic after being ‘warned’ at competition have not been serious. Using these horses for competition is not the main welfare issue. Nevertheless, ‘Fit for Competition’ checks are very important as the results reflect how the horses have been trained in the weeks and months before the competition. The checks must be as professionally done as possible to secure the right interpretation and the right advice to the riders.”

We thank Torbjörn Lundström for being our host and for all the valuable information he has given us. We wish him all the best in his research on this important field of science.

## **NEW BLUP**

At the end of the season for breeding assessments, a new BLUP breeding evaluation was calculated, which can be found on WorldFengur. A report by Dr. Thorvaldur Arnason about the calculation of the BLUP for 2008 can be found via the link breeding evaluation in the WorldFengur menu. In all, 248,309 horses from the WorldFengur database were used to calculate the latest BLUP breeding evaluation; 28,987 of these were assessed: 22,200 in Iceland, 2,477 in Sweden, 1,964 in Denmark, 1,034 in Germany, 690 in Norway, 182 in Finland, 143 in the Netherlands, 118 in the USA, 96 in Austria, 33 in Switzerland, and 30 in Great Britain.

## PROHIBITED TACK

Prohibited bits and/or bridles are bits and/or bridles that are clearly designed for another purpose, such as bits for cart horses, or that are part of tack designed for a different riding style/culture, or that are used in another way than what they are designed for. Only reins that go directly from the rider's hands to the correct attachment point on the bit or bitless bridle are allowed.

Prohibited shoes, rings or soles are shoes, rings, or soles that are clearly designed for another purpose other than riding horses.

In addition to this general rule, the FEIF Sport Committee maintains the following list of equipment that is not allowed for specific reasons:

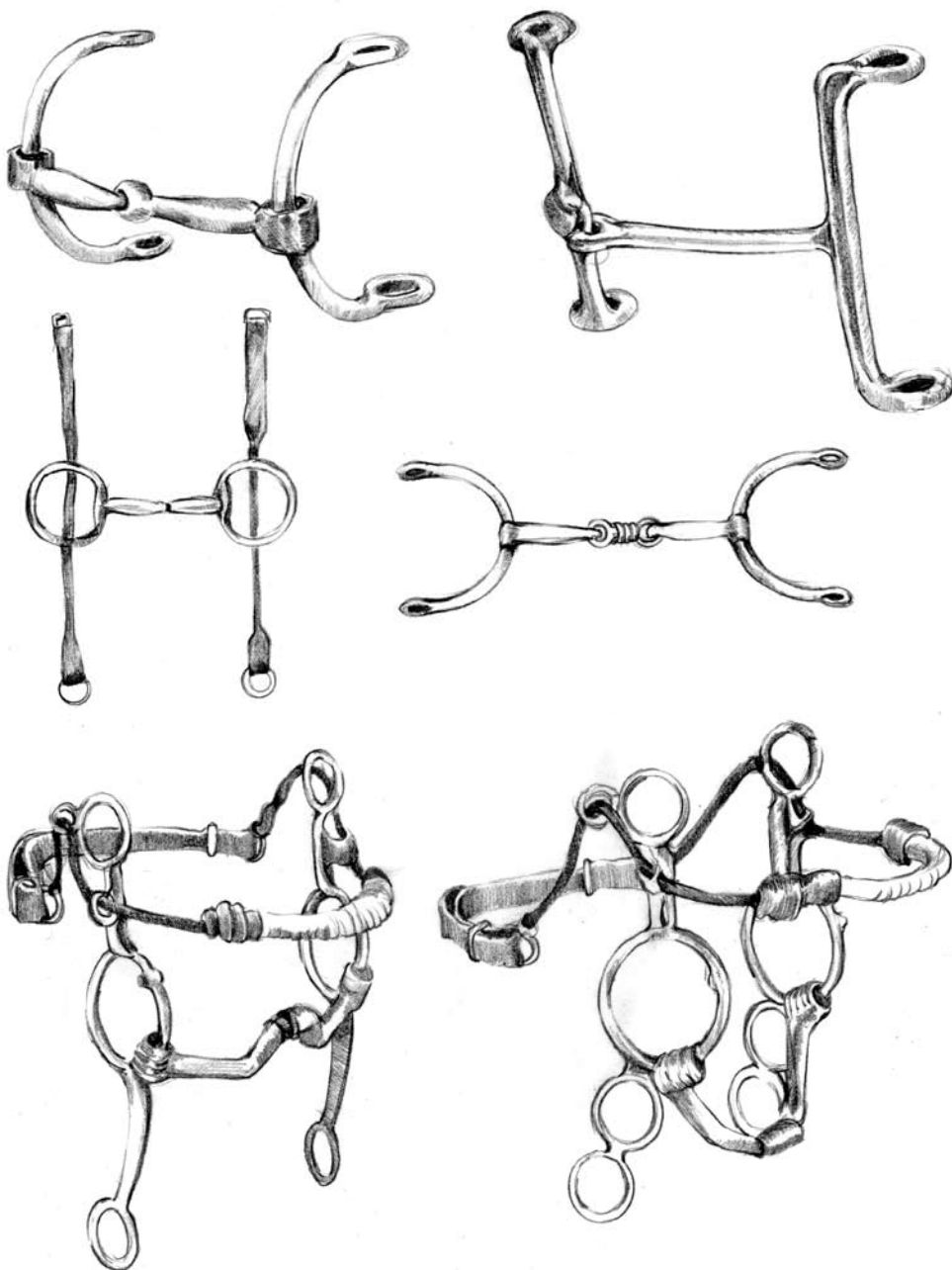
A conventional bitted bridle used together with a bitless bridle. This is against the intention of the bitless bridle.

Myler combination bits with short or long shanks (and similar bits from other producers). This type of bit combines bitless techniques (hackamore) with a bit, and is designed as a training bit. Prohibited as of July 12, 2006.

Peruvian bit (and other bits typically designed for specific other horse cultures). This kind of bit is not fitting to the Icelandic horse riding style and/or culture. Forbidden as of February 1, 2008.

Sliding gag bits (bits that can move up and down along the cheek pieces of a bridle). These bits are mainly correction bits and not suitable for showing horses.

The drop (German/Hanoverian) noseband or leveler noseband in combination with all bits used with a curb chain. This type of bit should be used with another noseband as it does not fit very well together. It leads to an ugly picture. The upper part of the curb could easily get stuck in the drop noseband. The functioning of the chain is affected by the position of the laces in combination with the leveler noseband. N.B. This does not



Nancy Wines-Dewan

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include a flash noseband (combined noseband)!

The drop (German/Hanoverian) noseband or leveler noseband in combination with all bits with upper and/or lower cheeks. This type of bit should be used with another noseband as it does not fit very well together. It leads to an ugly picture. The chain and the lower part of the noseband could come very close to each other, so the skin can easily get squeezed. The functioning of the cheeks is affected by the position of the laces in combination with the leveler noseband. N.B. This does not include a flash noseband (combined noseband)!

## **FEIF CONFERENCE**

Every year in February or March FEIF organizes a conference, including the yearly Delegates' Assembly and the annual department meetings for Breeding, Sport, Education, Youth Work, and national chairmen. Apart from these meetings there are lectures and discussions about general themes. The conference is open for all active members of FEIF member associations, members of FEIF committees and people otherwise connected to the work of FEIF. The FEIF Conference 2009 will take place in the weekend of February 26 to March 1, 2009 in Hamburg, Germany.

## **FEIF FEATHER PRIZE 2008**

The FEIF Feather Prize 2008 has been awarded to Ástríður Magnúsdóttir, one of the participants of the FEIF Youth Cup 2008. Ástríður participated with a borrowed horse: Sögn frá Litla-Bergi [IS1996235925]. The aim of this prize is to encourage good riding and good horsemanship, a tribute to feather-light riding. The awarded rider sets an example to the Icelandic Horse World.

## **EVA-MARIA GERLACH AWARD 2008**

The Eva-Maria Gerlach Award 2008 has been awarded to Kai Anna Braun (D), Hannah Chmelik (A), Larissa Kejwal (D), Anne de Lannoy (NL) and Ástríður Magnúsdóttir (IS). Ástríður Magnúsdóttir was also awarded with the FEIF Feather Prize 2008. The prize is made in honor of former Director of Youth Work Eva-Maria Gerlach and is handed out at the FEIF Youth Cup to the five most promising and versatile young riders.

Mid-European Championships  
The participants and organizers of the Mid-European Championships can look back at a very successful event with splendid finals at high level and exciting pace races. Besides individual titles, the winning national team is also awarded. This year it is Germany. Two prizes for feather-light riding were awarded. The winning Young Rider is Nadine Hahn (D), the winning Adult Rider is Steffi Kleis (D). The Championships took place in Terento, Italy, at the Wiedenhof (Jacqueline and Ewald Schmid), at 1300 m above sea level. The results are available on line at [www.mem2008.it](http://www.mem2008.it)

## **FEIF WORLD RANKING**

The FEIF World Ranking is a system to compare results of riders of purebred Icelandic horses at selected sport events all over the world with each other. FEIF started the World Ranking in this form in 1995. It is a continuous system: every day a new ranking list is computed. The riders' position in the ranking lists may vary per day! Riders can check what events count for the FEIF World Ranking and what marks they got at any World Ranking event.

The position of a rider in any discipline in the FEIF World Ranking

is based upon the arrhythmic mean of the three best results with any horse in the respective disciplines. A rider will need at least three scores of 5.50 or higher in the oval track classes Tölt T1 (incl. T3), Tölt T2, Four Gait V1 (incl. V2), Five Gait F1 (incl. F2), or the equivalent time in Pace Race 250m P1 (25.60"), Speed-Pass P2 (8.70"), and Pace Race 150m P3 (16.50") to be able to enter the ranking list for a specific test. Results are only valid for a period of two years (730 days). Riders have to go on competing to keep their position in the ranking list.

The combination in Four Gait and Five Gait combines the ranking in two or three different tests. The Four Gait combination is based upon the best of Tölt T1 or Tölt T2, plus Four Gait V1 (divided by 2). The Five Gait Combination is based upon the best of Tölt T1 or Tölt T2, plus Five Gait F1 plus the best of Pace Race 250m P1, SpeedPass 100m P2, or Pace Race 150m P3, or Pace Test PP1 (divided by 3).

Apart from the various ranking lists, a historical overview of results of any individual rider and any individual horse is available. Per horse, the complete pedigree and marks received at World Ranking events are available.

As of 2009, at least two judges judging World Ranking tests at World Ranking Events have to be FEIF Licensed International Sport Judges and one of them should be a foreign judge (having residence in another country). To ensure a proper connection between sport data and breeding information, only marks and times of horses properly registered in World-Fengur will be accepted (results of events before 2009 without horse data will still be valid).

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## **WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS 2009**

The World Championships 2009 will take place August 3-9, 2009 in Brunnadern, Switzerland, in an area surrounded by mountains. New tracks have been built recently. They were tested in August during the FEIF Youth Cup 2008 and (a week later) during the Swiss Championships, the official test event.

Reithof Neckertal, the venue of the Icelandic Horse World Championship 2009, has won the Toggenburger Innovation Award in 2008. This prize is awarded every third year to economic businesses in the region of Toggenburg, Switzerland, which come up with new ideas, products, or solutions. Well-known patrons support this event, such as the Economic Agency of St. Gallen, Lions, Rotary, Kiwanis, Junior Chamber, Business & Professional Women. The guiding idea of this year was "Visions Ignite Innovations." The concept of the Icelandic Horse World Championship in Brunnadern impressed the jury so much that it established Reithof Neckertal and the concept of the World Championships 2009 alongside internationally active companies.

More information about the World Championships 2009 at [www.islandpferde-wm.ch](http://www.islandpferde-wm.ch)

## **WC CHIEF JUDGE**

The Board of FEIF has appointed Einar Ragnarsson as Chief Judge and Claudia Glück as Deputy Chief Judge at the World Championships 2009 in Brunnadern (CH). The candidates were proposed by the FEIF Sport Committee. Both judges fulfilled the same position at the World Championships 2007. The other judges will be selected early in 2009.

## **WC TICKETS**

Sales of tickets for the World Championships 2009 has started. Entrance tickets, space at the Camping area, Bed and Breakfast, or a bed in a mass sleeping accommodation can be booked on-line now. The earlier you book, the better the choice of a seat, either in a section designated for specific countries or in an area with covered seats.

## **WC HELPERS WANTED**

It takes a lot of motivated and friendly volunteers to manage a large event like the World Championships. They are the real "ambassadors" and they give personality to the World Championships. With their enthusiasm, authority, and helpfulness they shape the impression which many national and foreign visitors will take home. Their important and valuable employment gives the volunteers the chance to receive the unique possibility to take a look behind the window blinds of such a large event, to become acquainted to other people, to gather experiences, and to be involved in this unique event.

## **WC 2011**

The Board of FEIF has decided to grant the World Championships 2011 to St. Radegund, Austria (Islandpferde Reithof Piber). St. Radegund is located in Upper Austria, close to the German border near Munich. The FEIF Youth Cup 2005 took place at the same location. The application was very well prepared and presented and fit the rules and regulations specified and approved by the Delegates Assembly in 2006 and 2007. This was the first time in the history of FEIF that the location for the World Championships was chosen based upon different proposals. Specific rules and

regulations for organizers of World Championships were defined in 2006 and 2007 to open up this procedure. This procedure replaces the old procedure where World Championships were granted to a country based upon a rotating schedule, without having sufficient knowledge about the location and organization behind it. The Board of FEIF congratulates Karl Piber and his staff in St. Radegund.

## **THE PADDOCK**

WorldFengur now offers a "digital paddock." Horse owners in Iceland taking part in the Icelandic registration program will be able to open a paddock in WorldFengur for the horses that are registered in their name. The paddock is meant to provide its users with the possibility of registering the sale, decease, or export of their horses themselves, and of adding remarks to their horses' data which will be open to all WorldFengur users. "We want to make WorldFengur more personal by building these paddocks," said Jon Baldur Lorange. "This way, horse owners will get an overview of their horses easily and it will enable them to register changes electronically, which was formerly done in writing." It needs to be stressed that the paddock is now only open to horse owners in Iceland; the next step will be to see if they can also be opened elsewhere. The societies in other countries will have to look and see if they can and want to participate.

# BEYOND THE OVAL TRACK

T H E V E R S A T I L E I C E L A N D I C



Photo by Mark R. Johnson of the Horses of Crow River Icelandics in Buffalo, Minn.

*What can you do with an Icelandic horse? Maybe the better question is, What can't you do? The writers of our feature stories this issue attended the biggest breeding show and competition in Iceland, competed in (and won) a Trail Obstacle competition, and started learning how to speak "horse."*

# LANDSMOT 2008: A PILGRIM'S NOTES

by *Andrea Hanson*

When you are a worshipper of the Icelandic horse, Landsmot is Bethlehem, Lourdes, and Mecca. It is all three Triple Crown races, the Academy Awards, and the Super Bowl. It has the feel of an ancient ritual, a medieval gathering of tribes to honor this magnificent breed.

Landsmot 2008 was set in the south of Iceland at Hella. There, amidst verdant fields reaching to the base of the snowcapped volcano, Mount Hekla, an international village of over 12,000 devotees gathered for seven days to witness a breeding show and competition which provided an astounding display of excellence in the gaits, speed, horsemanship, and grace.

The first days are taken up by the preliminary contests of gaedingar A (five gait), B (four gait), the children's, teenage, and young adult classes, and the breeding show. The competitions continued to the last day, with semifinals and finals.



Sonata fra Stóra-Ási [IS2004235936], a four-year-old daughter of Stigandi fra Leysingjastodum [IS1996156333] (owned by Martina Gates in New York).



Sigur fra Holabaki [IS2003156270], a five-year-old son of Parker fra Solheimum [IS1998156539] (owned by Sigrun Brynjarsdottir in Vermont), dazzled the audience.

Martina Gates (all photos)

## The Breeding Show

The breeding show is extensive. The classes are divided into mares and stallions; seven years and older, six years, five years, and four years. The horses have all been previously evaluated and must have scored a minimum overall, conformation and ridden abilities, to participate. Stallions, seven years and older must have scored 8.30, six-year-olds 8.25, five-year-olds 8.15, four-year-olds 8.00. Mares seven years and older needed 8.20, six-year-olds 8.15, five-year-olds 8.05, and four-year-olds 7.90. Despite these high standards, about 250 breeding horses were shown, each a remarkable specimen.

Lukka fra Stora-Vatnsskardi [IS2001257651], a seven-year-old chestnut mare, created great excitement as she became the highest judged mare in the world. She received three 9.5's for a rideability, with a total of 9.10. She is in foal to

Alfur fra Selfossi [IS2002187662], a handsome chestnut pinto. He scored overall 8.46. The owners are anxious to see if they will be passing on their magnificence and talent. The top stallion in the seven-and-older class was Gaumur fra Audsholtshjaleigu [IS2001187053]. He rated 9.5 for tölt and 9.0 for trot, putting him into the rare group of horses receiving over 9.0 for capability.

It was exciting to see offspring of stallions which are now in the United States do well here. Sonata fra Stóra-Ási [IS2004235936] a four-year-old daughter of Stigandi fra Leysingjastodum [IS1996156333], owned by Martina Gates, came in seventh in the final field with scores of 8.31 for conformation and 8.08 for ridden ability, for an over-all score of 8.17—a very strong first prize showing for a four-year-old. Glymur fra Saudarkroki [IS2001157000], a seven-year-old four-gaited stallion out of Logi fra





In the stallion show, Hagangur fra Narfastodum [IS1997158469] brought the audience to their feet, as he was ridden by his eight-year-old owner Ingunn Ingolfsdottir.

Skardi [IS1988186775], also made it into the finals. He came in eighth with a score of 8.40 for conformation and 8.38 for rideability, with an overall score of 8.39. Sigur fra Holabaki [IS2003156270], a five-year-old son of Parker fra Solheimum [IS1998156539], owned by Sigrun Brynjarsdottir, dazzled the audience with his brilliant, dark-red, liver chestnut coloring and his beautiful slow tolt. His over-all score was 8.22.

Two Honor Stallions were named this year. Hrodur fra Refsstodum [IS1995135993] was named in first

place. He was awarded the Sleipnir trophy, the highest award for an Icelandic stallion. He is 13 years old and has a BLUP of 126; 14 of his first-prize offspring were shown. Second place Honor stallion was Saer of Bakakoti [IS1997186183], who is only 11 years old and has a BLUP of 125; 10 of his first-prize offspring paraded. Throughout the breeding classes it was interesting to see how many of the highly ranked horses showed Orri fra Thufu [IS1986186055] or Ofeigur fra Flugumyri [IS1974158602] in their ancestry. Saer has both Orri and Ofeigur in his breeding.

There were six stallions accorded the title of Prize Stallion. Gari fra Audsholtshjaleigu [IS1998187054], Huginn fra Haga I [IS1994166620], Aron fra Strandarhofdi [IS1998184713], Hagangur fra Narfastodum [IS1997158469], Thyrnir fra Thoroddsstodum [IS1995188801], and Dynur fra Hvammi [IS1994184184]. In the showing of these stallions and their offspring, Hagangur brought the audience on the hill and in the stands to their feet, as he was ridden by his eight-year-old owner Ingunn Ingolfsdottir. On their first pass on the track, they were accompanied by Ingunn's teacher/trainer, also a breeder and

competition rider, Mette Manseth. On the return, however, the proud owner and her steed tolted in grand manner with Ingunn smiling and waving to clamorous applause of appreciation.

Of course, the basis of all the breeding is the farms, and they are not forgotten. Farms who wish to show their horses at Landsmot must apply. This year 20 farms applied, ten were chosen to compete by drawing lots, and two more were invited to participate. These farms paraded their best horses and the audience voted, à la American Idol, through a 900 number. This year Blesastadir was voted the winner and most agreed it was well-deserved, but it was not an easy choice. All the farms showed outstanding horses.

### **Gaedingakeppnir**

The end result of all of this careful breeding is displayed repeatedly in the contests of talent, skill, and speed. Around 500 horses participated in the A Class (five gait) and B Class (4 gait) Gaedingar. Thirty horses vied for the title in tolt, and 50 horses were entered in pace. This in addition to the children's class (age 13 and under), teenage (14 to 17), and young adults (18 to 21), each



Over 12,000 people gathered in Hella, southern Iceland, for Landsmot 2008.

of which had over 90 competitors. Everyone has pre-qualified or been chosen by their club for the honor of participation. This Landsmot there were 28 clubs represented.

From the preliminaries to the finals in each division, there are individual stories of rivalries, triumph, and disappointment. The horsemanship and skill demonstrated by the younger competitors was both humbling and exhilarating.

The four-gait preliminaries provided plenty of exhilaration and a transcendent performance when the rider Thorvaldur Arni Thorvaldsson, on the speed tolt, Rokkvi fra Harlaugsstodum [IS1997186541], came around the short side of the track at Mach 10. Horse and rider were leaning at an angle, which seemed impossible to maintain and remain upright. They did ... and kept perfect beat. The judges awarded them 8.5 for their artistry and first place. Second was Vidar Ingolfsson on Tumi fra Stora-Hofi [IS1997186013] with 8.43. Days later, at the finals, Rokkvi, the favorite, again amazed with his fast tolt and was given two 10's for a 9.67 in fast tolt, but it wasn't enough to beat Tumi who garnered a score of 9.17 in speed changes and 8.83 in fast tolt to



Aris fra Akureyri [IS2000165607], with rider Arni Bjorn Palsson, won the A-class Five Gait.



Winners of the Five Gait competition take a victory lap.

win overall with 8.81 to Rokkvi's 8.78 in a thrilling tolt contest.

The gods of chance chose to heighten the drama of the A-class five gait by doubly anointing the renowned rider, Sigurbjorn Bardarson, known as Diddi. He rode two horses in the preliminaries and placed first on Kolskeggur fra Oddholi [IS1997186060] and second on Stakkur fra Halldorsstodum [IS1996157541]. He had to choose which horse he would ride in the finals and he went for Kolskeggur. When he showed for the prize, it was evident in the trot portion that Kolskeggur was off. When it was his turn to pace, Diddi walked him the length of the track. Kolskeggur had lost a shoe. It was the first Landsmot five-gait that Diddi had not won in a very long time. The crowd gave him a standing ovation, and the judges, an award for "extraordinary horsemanship." It is doubtful that either made up for the loss. The horse Diddi had

named as his top competition, Aris fra Akureyri [IS2000165607], with rider Arni Bjorn Palsson, who Diddi said was "riding like a pure genius," won.

The star performances in this tournament were many. During the seven days, Sigurdur Sigurdarson, Siggy Sig, did 7.82 in the hundred meter pace on Drifa fra Hafsteinsstodum [IS1995257349]. Grettir on Gustur fra Laekjarbakka [IS1998184587] won the Young Adult B Finals, thus went on to the A finals—and won that also. This sort of double win is rare. Jakob Svavar Sigurdsson won the Tolt B Finals on Frodi fra Litlalandi [IS2001187141] and was also the winner of the Trainer's Association award.

### Riding Styles

In the newly constructed Icelandic Horse Plaza, Gudmar Petursson gave the U.S. some glory with an impressive demonstration and talk on



Landsmot has many activities going on at once. In the Icelandic Horse Plaza, Gudmar Petursson gave the U.S. some glory with an impressive demonstration and talk. Meanwhile, competitors at the pace races tried to break speed records (without breaking gait) and the tolt competition continued.



information he has gathered in training and riding here. He spoke of the importance of lateral abilities in the gaited horse and ways of achieving the much-needed flexibility. “Ride the horse from the back to the front” was a portion of his message. More seat, less rein to work toward “connection,” which is a big step toward collection.

There were many riding styles in evidence at Landsmot, but there is a progression toward the balanced seat and more centered riding. It was particularly seen, and beautifully so, when Mette Manseth gained a standing ovation from the hillside with her collected slow tolt on two different mares: Happidis fra Stangarholti [IS200023651], an eight-year-old mare, and Fjola fra Kirkjubae [IS2002286102], a six-year-old. Both were given 9’s for this effort.

When a pilgrim takes leave of Landsmot, however, you go blessed with memories and imagery, which outstrip the importance of all the statistics in your notes. You remember



Winner of the Four Gait was Vidar Ingolfsson on Tumi fra Stora-Hofi [IS1997186013]. Tumi garnered a score of 9.17 in speed changes and 8.83 in fast tolt to win overall with 8.81.

that horse in one of the pace races—that chestnut with the mountain of mane flying to expose his white star and his aerodynamic nose. You smile thinking of those “turbo pintos,” like the two-toned sports cars who seemed to have a sixth gear despite his rounder body and shorter legs. Then there was that grey pacer who went so fast you couldn’t see his legs. What was that wild “tarantula” type music playing as that white horse burst forth, nuclear powered? The enthusiasm of the thousands sitting happily for hours on the hillside to watch and be spectator/participants will always be with you. As will the quiet elegance of slow tolt shown by so many beauties: they all blur into the soft sunlight of an Icelandic evening, a herd of unforgettable impressions.

### **WHY ALL THE NUMBERS?**

The members of the USIHC Quarterly Committee want to encourage you to look up these top competition horses in WorldFengur. A free subscription to this Icelandic horse database comes with your USIHC membership. Check out these horses’ bloodlines, owners, and scores—and see how your own horse might be related. We encourage all contributors to the Quarterly to include their horses’ FEIF registration numbers in future submissions.

# THINGS TO DO WITH YOUR ICELANDIC HORSE

by Ed Hilgaertner

Vicki and I have been in the Icelandic horse caretaker business for over 20 years, and for most of that time we have been experimenting with what we can do other than four-or five-gaited show competition events.

Show events are fun for many folks, and a certain portion of that is the camaraderie with fellow riders. A major portion is the opportunity to watch good riders and excellent horses perform—always a pleasure. The big money, of course, is in competition events where the superb horse athletes demonstrate much of what is possible, given adequate preparation and excellent riding.

But there must be hundreds of Icelandic horse owners out there who do not care much for show competition. I think of these folks as mainly trail riders, much like myself, as far as what I enjoy doing most with my horses. For those who want a little competition, but not the show ring kind, there are several national organizations where Icelandic horses can not only participate but excel, given sufficient rider gumption.

## Endurance Riding

One is Endurance Riding with the AERC (American Endurance Ride Conference). The essence of endurance riding is to complete either 50 or 100 miles in one day and pass all vet checks along the way to insure the health and safety of the horse. The official motto is, “To complete is to win.” Some of you have surely heard about or read about John Parke and his Icelandic horses Remington (registered as Spaeri from Mane Ranch #US88100884) and Skjoldur (registered as S C Skjoldur #US90100423). In sanctioned events, John and Remington have completed over 10,000 miles, putting them in the top ten



Heidi Benson

Do you speak horse?

in the country, and Skoldur has over 7,000 miles. The point being that the Icelandic horse has stamina and willingness to go far beyond what we generally ask of it.

## Competitive Trail Riding

Another form of riding and competing is Competitive Trail Riding. The organization NATRC (North American Trail Ride Conference), through regional organizations, sponsors trail riding events that are not races but timed and controlled trail courses where both the performance of the horse and the horsemanship of the rider are graded by judges and veterinarians along the way. Events are held all over the country, all year long, and are both single day and two days with typical distances being 25 miles the first day and about 18 the second day.

Vicki and I have been members of NATRC for about 12 years and

quite often we have won in our divisions. The categories are divided by weight (lightweight equals under 190 pounds including tack and saddle) and experience, (junior, novice, and open) and the horses by breed. The older I get, the more I volunteer to help out rather than ride, but either way, it is a lot of fun and very educational.

## Driving

Another option is driving. Long ago in Iceland, before pleasure riding became popular, the Icelandic horse pulled wagons and carts. They still can and do in some places. Mark Dresser, who lived in Malibu, California, at one time had a pair of Icelandic palominos that he drove in various events around the country, mainly in the west. Nothing is quite like a pair of tolted horses pulling a carriage.

## **Ride and Tie**

Another option is a team event called Ride and Tie. One person rides his horse and the other runs. After some pre-arranged distance, they switch positions. This continues until they reach a finish line. Clearly this event is for more physically fit people who enjoy running and riding.

## **Skijoring**

For those who live in winter climates, skiing behind an Icelandic horse while another rides could be a fun way to pass a cold winter day.

## **Learning to Speak “Horse”**

For many folks, no competition is really enjoyable. This is where individuals and their horses can find personal satisfaction (I call it therapy) just being together at home and on the trail. Icelandic horses really don't like arena work. Going in circles is boring.

There are a lot of clinicians out there today that teach “natural horsemanship” techniques. Most of these folks have something to offer in the way of people learning the language of “horse” and then applying it to their pleasure riding. None that I know of specifically deal with Icelandic horses, but don't let that stop you. All horses speak the same language, some are just not as versatile as the Icelandic. Everything you see the larger horses doing in these clinics, the Icelandic can also do.

Some of the “challenges and opportunities” (as they say in corporate-speak) for me are learning to speak “horse” and examining just what is meant by official-sounding statements such as “use no artificial aids” and “for the welfare of the horse” found in many breed publications including FIPO, the FEIF guide for competition events, where it states in paragraph 1.1, “at all times the welfare of the horse must be paramount and never be subordinated to competitive or commercial influences.”

Another area of interest is the breed evaluation system. Learn what

it is that the judges are looking for and how the scoring has become standardized so that any place in the Icelandic horse world one can expect consistent scoring. Assimilating this knowledge can then lead you to looking for correlation of these scores to actual performance.

## **Just One Foot**

In learning to speak the horse's language, I would like to master the skill of being able to ask the horse to lift just one foot (the one I ask for) then another, then another, then the last. I have seen Buck Brannaman do this on green horses (it's all about signals, timing, and release) and get them rocking in a circle without actually lifting their feet, just shifting their weight. For humans to be responsive to this level of sensitivity (which all horses have), it seems to me, approaches the true meaning of “for the welfare of the horse.”

How many of us can tell which foot is landing where and when, and wouldn't it be nice to help the horse on difficult trails if we could?

Learning about these things, I believe I am more aware of my horse when I am riding, particularly conscious of where and how he is placing his feet. I become more aware of my own balance as I ride, because I have discovered that horses “fill in” for shortcomings of the rider. If a rider is not properly balanced, the horse adjusts his stride and body position to compensate. For me, learning how to listen for and feel my horse's footfalls, and achieving balance in various gaits, does not come easy. There is no way that I can discover these sensitivities at a fast trot or pace. Perhaps someday I will be able to, but I have my doubts.

## **Herd Animals**

Horses are herd animals. How many of us have more than one and keep them together in a social situation? They need company on a full-time basis to achieve optimum emotional and mental health. Do you know the

“pecking order” within your herd? You and your horse equal the smallest herd. Are you clearly your horse's leader? Does he look to you for direction or does he take you where he wants to go? Do you spend enough time with your horse to establish a bond where it is clear who is in charge? Horses need to know who is in charge. They don't necessarily care who, just as long as their particular place in the hierarchy is clear to them. Some really have an inner drive to lead, usually recognized as lead mares. In the wild, lead mares are the natural leaders of any size herd. The stallions are the herd owners, but the mares make most of the daily decisions.

Studying your small herd helps you learn to speak “horse.” Books have been written on the body language of horses. You can learn a lot by reading, but try staying with your herd long enough to start recognizing the “conversations” your horses are having among themselves. They have worked out a social system of peaceful co-existence over millions of years that most humans have never examined closely.

Some of what I am suggesting will require you to re-think or re-examine the volumes of “folklore” we have all been exposed to regarding what is “correct” for our horses. Shoeing, saddles and saddle fit, bits, reins, supplements, various treatment protocols, general husbandry, you name it, there is folklore attached to it. Tom Dorrance said it best: “There is fact and there is opinion. The horses have the facts.” Buck Brannaman adds: “If you are out there somewhere and you're having trouble with your horse... It's not the horse.”

# TRAIL OBSTACLE COMPETITIONS

by Karen Olson-Fields

I have never hosted a Trail Obstacle Competition; here I have some basic suggestions. I do, however, compete in Trail Obstacle with my show horse, the first-prize stallion Omur fra Brun [IS1994165520]. The real question is whether a horse can succeed in both the show ring and on the trail, and if this is derived from “nature” or “nurture”? My answer is: both!

There are several types of trail competitions. Trail Obstacle involves a horse and rider team negotiating a number of stations. These are “tasks” that the horse and rider must navigate. All of these tasks are meant to simulate situations that a horse and rider may encounter on the trail.

It is my opinion that trail ob-

stacles are much more of a challenge for our equine friends than for us humans. These tasks would be like our horses asking us to walk down a dark street alone, in a crime-ridden neighborhood, or pick up a spider, snake, or scorpion with our bare hands. I believe, whether riding for pleasure or in competition/pleasure:

1. You and your horse must have trust.
2. You must know how to communicate clearly with your horse.
3. You must never put your horse or yourself in danger.
4. You must never force your horse to continue if he is afraid. The welfare of your horse is always first priority.

5. Have fun—that’s what it’s all about!

I competed in my first Trail Obstacle Competition with my first Icelandic horse, Sol (affectionately called “Sophie”). Eleven years later, I own seven Icelandic horses, but have lost count of trail competitions (well over ten).

In October of every year, the Utah All Breed Horse Association, hosts a Trail Obstacle Competition. The event consists of 18 to 20 obstacles situated throughout a 600-acre equestrian park. I think I have only missed this event twice in 11 years. There have been other courses, through all breed horse shows and state fairs. But this event is really special, as it on the trail, outside of the show ring or arena.

One of my fondest memories was with Sophie, at this first Trail Obstacle Competition. We were waiting our turn to navigate an obstacle: a very large rock. The rider/horse team had to approach the rock, and the rider had to pick up a clipboard and sign her name. The judge was an older fellow, wearing overalls and a baseball hat. He had obviously added his own special touch to the obstacle: On the rock was a fake coiled-up snake, and strands of white toilet paper were flapping about in the wind. I jokingly asked him, “If my horse blows her nose on the tissue, do I get extra points?” My turn came, Sophie walked right up to the snake-adorned rock, I signed my name, and she,

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Karen Olson-Fields and her first-prize stallion Omur fra Brun [IS1994165520] have competed in several trail obstacle competitions. The following pictures are from the 2008 Utah All Breed T.O.C event, held in October. Here, crossing a noisy metal bridge, Omur is attentive but calm.



Eric Fields (all photos)



In this obstacle, one must back up hill smoothly without touching the rails.

curious with the tissue, left a big glob of green slobber on the tissue! We all got a good laugh and I got my extra point!

My greatest success in Trail Obstacle Competition has been with my wonderful stallion, Omur fra Brun. In 2005, among 120 horse/rider teams of all breeds, we won the High Point Champion trophy! That meant we not only won our age division, but scored the most points of any team. My favorite memory of that year was, again, a humorous moment. The obstacle required you to approach a plastic bag hanging in a tree. The bag was filled with empty, noisy pop cans. The rider had to untie the bag from the tree and pass it over the saddle to tie it on the other side. I knew my boy, and he is pretty unflappable. So I just thought I would pass the bag over his head. By accident, I dropped the loose, floppy bag, cans clanging ... on his head. He did not move a muscle but turned, with the bag draped over his head and ears, and gave me this look. I thought the obstacle judge was going to bust a tube laughing.

Some interesting obstacles we have encountered:

1. Dragging a heavy log by rope, be hind the horse, a certain distance.
2. The team approaches a coat on a coat rack, the rider puts the coat on, goes to another site and takes the coat off, hanging it up nicely on the second rack.

3. Backing an "L" shape, within the confines of railroad ties or poles. The horse's hooves must never touch the poles.
4. Walk up to a mailbox, stopping to open the creaky door, get the mail, and close the door.
5. Walk calmly over a noisy tarp, with or without scary "props."
6. Pick up a metal bucket with rocks, shake the bucket as one goes to a second location, and then set the bucket down again.
7. Approach a scarecrow or scary Halloween figure, picking a small piece of candy out of its basket.
8. Walk through a simulated traffic intersection or construction site, with moving, noisy or flashing objects.

I have never judged a Trail Obstacle Competition. But a few basic judging principles are:

1. That the team approaches the obstacle calmly, with little or better yet, no hesitation. A refusal is a big deduction. The horse has a certain amount of time and number of refusals before they are disqualified from that obstacle and therefore get no points.

2. The horse must navigate the entire obstacle correctly and calmly.

They need to show a level of concentration, like eyes and ears forward, clearly listening to the rider's cues. The team can't use improvisation. The obstacle must be performed the same way by every team.

3. The rider needs to appear calm and patient. Forcing a horse with spurs, crop, or any form of harshness is a big negative. In my book, this is reason to disqualify the rider, right then and there.

Over the years, I have chosen to alternate which horse I will enter into a Trail Obstacle Competition with me. Last summer, a friend asked me to take her young gelding for the summer and put some mountain miles on him. He had already been well handled and trained in gaits. My job was to work his gaits (that was easy, as he was already very nice in the gait department!) on the trail. More importantly, he needed trail experience, and to be evaluated as far as trail safety and character. We worked in a variety of settings and terrain, crossed rivers, climbed single-track mountain passes. My husband and I took care to bring Omur or one of our mares along, as an anchor or example for the young horse. Before I sent him home, I wanted to put him through the ultimate test. I entered him in the 2007 October Trail Ob-



Side-passing, past the hanging streamers, to the "Scary Rock."





Dragging an object between cones was the first obstacle in this years Utah All Breed event.

stacle Competition. He placed third in his first Trail Obstacle Competition ever, having no previous exposure with tricky obstacles and no practice. Nature or nurture?

In preparing for a Trail Obstacle Competition, there are some basics that a horse and rider team should practice, if looking to score well and win a ribbon or trophy. Backing and side passing, especially on a loose rein, are very helpful. Riders are often required to use their hands for a task. Since Icelandic horses are usually “plow reined,” this can require you as a rider to use lots of leg cues.

Ensure, with practice, that your horse steps easily over objects, such as poles or bottom rails of a fence or gate. These are easy ways to accrue points. Every obstacle course I have participated in included these basic tasks. We have lost these easy points in the past. My horses have taken these tasks too casually, clunking over the rails, half asleep!

Planning and executing a Trail Obstacle Competition is something I have never done. I can say, it is a big commitment. The obstacles must be pre-planned and designed for easy set-up. There needs to be plenty of volunteers to help out. There must

be plenty of volunteer judges for the planned stations. Or, the course needs to be kept to a small number of stations. I have seen certain obstacles bottle-neck an event. Even small courses can end up taking all day for all riders to get through. But, these events are really fun! There are always plenty of participants and many return every year!

My future goals with Trail Ob-

stacle Competitions are to ride Omur with a halter only. This will take practice and learning in natural horsemanship. Another goal is to compete on a national level. While still in Iceland, Omur advanced to “A” finals in five gait in Landsmot 2000, won the Club of Lettir as a four-year-old, and won the Northern Cup in five gait—he is an accomplished show horse. He has two major state trophies in Trail Obstacle Competition, as well as many second- and third-place ribbons—he is an ideal trail horse. By nature, he was bred to have an easy, gentle character and talent in gaits. With patience, love, and trust, his trail abilities have been nurtured.

I was the first Icelandic horse owner in Utah to enter an Icelandic horse in a local or state show or competition. I have grown very tired of hearing and correcting the usual exclamation, “Oh what a cute pony!” The definition of “Omur” in the Icelandic language is “a lovely tune.” Nowadays, what we hear most, from our friendly competition when we arrive at a local show or Trail Obstacle Competition is: “Oh no, the Icelandics are here!” Folks are singing a new tune—which is music to my ears!



For this obstacle, the rider has to pull a water bottle out of a cooler.



A "scary object" ... Omur is not impressed!



Passing through a gate, a T.O.C basic.

## TIE BREAKERS!

by Janice McDonald

Here are a few of the more unusual trail obstacles, though some are standard in some registries for gaited horses or in local or regional open shows:

- A teeter totter (heavy wood that when stepped on balances and moves as the horse walks to the other end).
- Standing on a stump or pedestal.
- Going through a "carwash" of flappy material overhead or through a long tunnel.
- Making a tight circle around a barrel or pole, sometimes having to have one hand on the pole at all times.
- Stopping halfway up a steep hill and backing down, never breaking a walk.
- Executing a standing jump.
- Mounting and dismounting smoothly.
- Loading and unloading into a parked trailer.
- Opening and closing a gate (best to utilize sidepassing and leg cues only).
- Allowing a hoola hoop over the head.

And mounted posse exercises such as:

- Walking between two rows of horses moving toward you in a line.
- Standing while guns are fired and people yell and jump up and down and wave their arms.
- Carry a large flapping flag using only leg cues.
- Moving very very slowly in a "sweep," horses and riders so close they form a solid barrier line.

## WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

by *Bernie Willis*

What do you say when someone asks, “what the difference between your Icelandics and other horses?” You could go on about their gaits, their temperament, size, and habits, but have you thought about their hair?

Their hair coat has some significant implications for their well-being. Here are some things I have discovered that you should know too. Warm-blooded animals like us and our horses have safe inside temperature ranges that must be adhered to or death results. It rare for a person to live if his or her core temperature falls below 70 degrees Fahrenheit or goes above 110. Every parent knows that normal is 98.6 for their kids, and us horse owners know that 101 is normal for horses. A horse whose core temperature is above 107 is in trouble.

It is easy for us to put on long underwear, coats, and extra socks when it is cold, or to strip down when it is hot. Our horse friends have some limits without our intervention. On the other hand, they have some natural abilities we don't enjoy. One cold winter day I decided to measure the value of this feature in my horses. I assumed that by measuring the outside temperature of an animal I could determine by comparison how well their insulation was working. The core tem-

perature of each was about the same, from 99 to 101 degrees. I measured the temperature using an infrared-directed remote-sensing thermometer. The particular one I used reads the temperature inside a one-inch diameter circle surrounding the red dot from a laser beam for every 20 inches it is held away from the subject. Basically, if you point the device at the side of a horse from 20 inches away, you will see a red dot. The temperature within a one-inch circle around that dot will be displayed on the screen of the thermometer. For the comparisons to be valid, I took them all within an hour on the same day in the shade. The outside temperature was minus-30 Fahrenheit.

The numbers in the chart below are an average from four Icelandics, four Quarter horses, four husky dogs, one reindeer, and myself. The parts of the animal measured were the same on all the four-legged ones.

The implications of this chart are that Icelandics don't need blanket-ing if it is cold and their hair coat and health are normal. It makes sense that they eat little more in the winter than at other times of the year, because their coat's insulating value is high. It also indicates that we should pay attention to their over-heating when it's not cold or windy, or when they are exercised extensively.



Heidi Benson

	<b>Icelandic Horse</b>	<b>Quarter Horse</b>	<b>Reindeer</b>	<b>Dog</b>	<b>Person</b>
<b>Body</b>	<b>-7</b>	<b>+35</b>	<b>-14</b>	<b>+5</b>	<b>na</b>
<b>Leg</b>	<b>-3</b>	<b>+45</b>	<b>-7</b>	<b>+20</b>	<b>na</b>
<b>Hoof</b>	<b>+16</b>	<b>+55</b>	<b>-10</b>	<b>+13</b>	<b>na</b>
<b>Ear</b>	<b>+12</b>	<b>+50</b>	<b>-12</b>	<b>+6</b>	<b>na</b>
<b>Forehead</b>	<b>na</b>	<b>na</b>	<b>na</b>	<b>na</b>	<b>+76</b>
<b>Hand</b>	<b>na</b>	<b>na</b>	<b>na</b>	<b>na</b>	<b>+69</b>

## WHO IS JANA MEYER?

by Alex Pregitzer

### What is your background?

I was born and raised in Germany. My mom is German, my dad American, which is why my brother and I both have dual citizenship, making living and working here in the U.S. easy for me. My parents had friends with Icelandic horses in Germany, and my mom was riding herself, so I was fortunate to be introduced to Icelandics at a very young age.

### Why and when did you move to the United States?

After spending the summer of 2005 in Sweden and half of 2006 in Iceland, I came to the United States in January of 2007 intending to stay for just six months to get to know my dad's family better and travel around the country. After that I planned to go back to Germany and "settle down" at a farm there. Well, that never happened. After four weeks on Long Island, NY, staying with family, I was desperate for a horse job, and just a week later I started working

for John and Debbie Dur at Icelandic Creations in New Hampshire. I went back home to Germany in July 2007 because I had a two-week riding badge clinic to teach and then came back to New Hampshire with my dog, Ronja, and more stuff.

### How long have you been riding?

When I was five years old, my family and I went to a small island in the North Sea for a vacation. There was a farm with Icelandic horses, and so I took my first lessons. That was 22 years ago! From that time on I went to some weekend clinics and camps for children and rode my mom's friends' horses.

### What is your horse experience?

My experience with horses began to develop when my best friend got her own Icelandic horse for her seventh birthday. I spent most of my free time at her house. Our parents were very trusting and let us take the horses out and ride around the fields on our own, sometimes bareback, sometimes the two of us in one saddle. We had a wonderful time!



Flikka from Icelandic Creations trained and ridden by Jana Meyer at the NEIHC evaluations.

On vacations, we often went to Lippertshof, a large Icelandic horse farm, and took clinics. Around age 10, I started taking lessons at a dressage barn, but for me at that time, it wasn't as much fun as the Icelandics. Over the years we got our own horses, and I went to more clinics. At 13, I started working at the Muellers Hoff farm during my school vacations and got riding lessons in exchange. When I graduated from high school, I moved to the farm full time. We had about 100 Icelandic horses, always a lot of young horses and horses in training. I began teaching kids and beginners and, after about a year, I went to Trainer C License clinic and passed the test. Two years later I took the Trainer B License course and, upon successfully completing the exam, I moved back to my hometown to teach and train at a small barn there.

In 2005, I went to Sweden for a summer to work with horses and then in 2006 spent six months in Iceland working with Baldvin Ari Gudlaugsson. I've been very fortunate to have had the opportunity to learn from riding many, many different horses and to work with great teachers over the years. Right now I am studying to



Jana teaching in Germany.



Bonding with an untrained horse.

be an Equine Massage Therapist to further broaden my field of knowledge and to be able to give something back to the horses for everything they do for us. I am looking forward to including that in my work.

**What is your training philosophy?**

For me, the most important thing in training horses is that we work with each other as partners. As a trainer I need to have a clear goal to work toward with the horse, and then I have to break it up into small steps that the horse can understand and follow. Riding should always be like a conversation—you talk and listen, ask for something and respond—on both sides. I want to be gentle so that the horse is happy to work with me, clear to make sure the horse understands what I want, and sensitive enough to feel and understand the horse’s response and react quickly to it. I want the horse to be respectful and trusting and I want to appear the same way to the horse. I try to find ways to make it easy for the horse to respond in the right way. If the horse doesn’t understand, it’s my job to explain/teach it better.

**What is your teaching philosophy?**

When teaching people, my goal is to bring horse and rider together in a way that they can understand each other and have fun together. I think it’s very important to teach people a correct seat so they can be in balance and be able to give the right aids to the horse.

In addition to teaching specific riding techniques, I try to help people understand their horses and give them some guidelines on how to ride and deal with their horses in general. It’s also very important to foster confidence in riders so they can relax and trust in their horse and their own abilities. Ultimately my goal is to make all riding fun, and I want my students to enjoy themselves and their horses.

**What are your hopes for the Icelandic horse in the U.S.?**

I hope that the interest in Icelandic horses here in the U.S. keeps growing and that more and more people will find their way to and their love for these wonderful and remarkable horses.

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Jana and Tjaldur in a Theatre Equus performance.



## A FEIF YOUTH CUP THAT MADE US PROUD TO BE AMERICAN

By Lucy Nold

Starting out very scared and excited for what was to come, I traveled alone to Switzerland where I met Sophie and Jasmine. Sophie and I stayed with Jasmine at her mom's house while we selected horses to consider from a nearby facility, Hester Hof. I chose to take a black gelding named Máttur frá Múla and Sophie selected a chestnut gelding named Blossi vom Wolfshof. On July 12th we trailered the horses to what we would all call "home" for a week so that we could work with them and prepare for the competition.

When we arrived, we were split into international teams—groups that we would spend most of the rest of the week getting to know by training and competing with them. The teams were made of six teenagers representing each of the 12 different countries participating. In all, there were 68 girls and four guys. That night all 12 teams had to complete a test of knowledge about the others on their team. Each team was then given a letter from the alphabet and had to come up with a name starting with that letter. My team was assigned the letter E and we chose a name based



The FEIF Youth Cup is all about horses and friendship. At top, the American team. Left, Carrie showing toll. Right, a sightseeing trip to Lucerne. Bottom, teammates Jasmine and Sophie.

on the Icelandic word for lightning, Eidingarnars.

After all the excitement of the night was over, we returned to the old military house where we were to sleep and shower for the week, sharing a bunkroom with team members from Iceland. For the next three days we worked in our teams training with five different trainers to help us get to know our horses and decide what areas we wanted to compete in. At night we would return to our countries for dinner.

After dinner on the first day of training, each country team was told to prepare some sort of talent show representing something from their country. The four of us representing the U.S., Carrie, Sophie, Amber,

and I, couldn't think of anything but finally we decided to do a dance to Cotton-Eyed Joe, a traditional Appalachian song. To our surprise we ended up winning and being asked to repeat the dance.

On the fourth day we took a day away from the horses and went to a nearby mountain. We were split into two groups: group one would hike down the mountain and group two would take the tram. I chose to be in the first group and we started out with climbing on a series of obstacles at the bottom of the mountain. Then we went on the cart ride once before we took the lift to the top of the mountain. Once we arrived at the top of the mountain, we ate lunch and took lots of pictures. With our





Lucy and Carrie relax at the barbeque.

already tired bodies we started the three-hour hike down the mountain which drained any energy remaining, leaving us all very sore and weak. When we finally returned home, we all hurried to tend the horses and eat dinner so we could get a good night's sleep before the competition began the next day.

### The Competition

The first day of competition made for an early start. We had a team test about a welfare lecture we had been given, a vet check, and we had to make sure all our tack was clean. Along with this, our teams were told

to create a model horse that could fit two people for a "five-gait" competition we (humans) would compete in on Friday night. All this had to be done by 2:00 when the opening ceremony would take place.

During opening ceremony we came in as countries and then joined our teams to represent how we were working in international teams. As soon as the ceremony was over the competition began with all the tolt classes and flag race.

The next day, the competition continued with the four-gait, five-gait, cross country, trail, and dressage classes. At the end of the first two days of competition all four team members from the U.S. had made it into finals. Amber had come in third in T6 loose rein tolt, making it straight to A-finals, and Sophie came in tenth, putting her in the B-finals. Carrie came in fifth in V4 Special four-gait, sending her to the A-finals, and I came seventh in T7 and seventh in dressage. We were all very excited to be the first team from the U.S. to have every rider make it to finals.



Concentrating on competition.

### The Finals

The day of finals was an amazing day for our nation's team. Sophie and I both ended up coming in eighth in our tolt finals, and Carrie came in third in her four-gait A-final. Amber tied for first in the loose rein tolt class, but ended up being bumped to second. (Both riders had decided they didn't want to ride again, and they let the judges choose; they chose the girl from Switzerland to be first place.)

The day came to an end much too soon, and it was time for the closing ceremony. For the ceremony we entered on our horses in our international teams and then returned back to our separate country areas. All too soon one of the best and most exhausting weeks of my life was coming to an end. At the last dinner and award ceremony, we rushed around trying to get as many email addresses as possible. We all made so many new friends, people who share the same passion for the Icelandic horse as we do. I hope to keep in touch with many of them and stay friends with them for life. I'm going to miss them so much, but the memories will stay forever.



Taking a trail ride through the Swiss woods.

## PUTTING THE HORSE FIRST

by Ed Hilgaertner

Having just finished the June issue of the *Icelandic Horse Quarterly* and the article about knowing your horse, I was motivated to put my two cents' worth down for the readers' consideration.

I agree with Bernie Willis's conclusion that there is no short answer to the dictum of "putting the welfare of the horse first." There is an answer, however, and it requires some forthrightness to get to it. The first step is to identify a few elements of what is in fact the nature of the horse (any breed, not exclusively the Icelandic horse, since firstly he is a horse).

In other words, what is required based upon the horse's design (nature) that has evolved over many centuries to satisfy his needs for survival and continued evolution? To do this we must set aside what I call the "folklore," the stuff that "everybody knows" about the needs of the horse. The kinds of equipment, tack, bits, shoes, stabling practices, feed, and indeed the hearsay regarding what different breeds require should all be set aside until a clear understanding of "horse" emerges from factual information.

### Domestication

The horse has been a part of man's existence as far back as recorded time and probably long before that. He is the only large animal that Mother Nature has designed to be a willing partner with man. Domestication (as we call it) of other large creatures is very limited. We might fairly conclude that a part of the horse's designed-in nature is to be a tolerant companion of man, and his physical makeup provides a convenient mode of transportation for man (allowing



Heidi Benson

When thinking about the welfare of your horse, remember: Horses are herd animals. Here, Solfaxa from Seigur Icelandics and Freylsa from Elk Ridge Icelandics have a chat.

us to ride astride or pulling heavy loads without sustaining injury).

So, based upon the historical record, the horse is willing to trade his strength and conformation in exchange for consideration from humans. I grant that a horse who is free would rather remain free, but once he is caught, he is usually willing to "make a deal" with humans. That consideration in its elementary form is ample food, water, and health care, including protection from other predators. Now we should begin to refine the "rate of exchange," so to speak, to consider the horse's welfare beyond food and shelter.

It took a while, but eventually the smarter humans began to learn the horse's language and obtained enhanced cooperation from the horse in the form of smoother, more comfortable riding and driving. Many of these folks passed along these methods and skills to untold numbers of other folks who benefited greatly but had not studied the "language of the horse," and the "fair exchange" (the welfare of the horse) did not take place.

### The Herd

To begin with the most obvious, and perhaps the most neglected fact, the horse is a herd animal and needs the companionship (read intimate contact) of his own kind. He is a prey animal and needs the security of the herd to relieve his anxiety regarding his safety and general well-being. There is no choice here. It is genetically programmed over some millions of years. The smallest herd is two. Perhaps you and your horse, but it is unlikely you can spend sufficient time with him to substitute for a four-legged buddy.

This fact has to be number one in providing for your horse's welfare. A newborn foal needs this contact with a herd to develop the social skills all horses need to interact (get along) with their peers.

### At Liberty

Perhaps the second most overlooked fact today is that the horse needs to move around. At liberty a horse may cover 15 to 20 miles a day foraging for food and water. The designed-in function of his feet and legs (to remain healthy) is to allow him to move freely over various terrain and varying distances. Studies at the University of Michigan by Dr. Robert Bowker (see below) indicate that horses on a two- to three-acre pasture will take between 4,000 and 6,000 steps in a day (three to five miles), whereas a stalled horse in a small turn-out will take about 800 steps a day. The horse's welfare, therefore, requires that he have the opportunity to move about significantly on a daily basis (read: not be stalled).

Since domestication of the horse has been with us so long, we need to look at the wild horse to see how Mother Nature designed him to function at liberty. It is not relevant how difficult the wild horse has it nor that



his life cycle is short compared to his domestic cousins. What study of the wild horse brings us is an understanding how things work without the “assistance” of man.

Perhaps the least understood (until very recently) is the function and physiology of the horse’s foot as it relates to his welfare. Dr. Robert Bowker, Professor of Anatomy and Director of the Equine Foot Laboratory at Michigan State University College of Veterinary Medicine, has some insights based upon many years of scientific investigation and microscopic examination of literally thousands of cadaver hooves.

On the assumption that some of you readers would like to understand the horse’s foot a little more, I recommend you go to his website ([www.cvm.msu.edu/RESEARCH/efl/index.htm](http://www.cvm.msu.edu/RESEARCH/efl/index.htm)) for specific documentation.

A particularly interesting portion of Dr. Bowker’s work relates to young horses needing to be at liberty until they mature in order to allow their feet and everything related to movement to develop as nature intended.

By design, a newborn foal, wild or domestic, is capable of hitting the trail to the tune of 15 to 20 miles a day, barefoot, and in fact this freedom of movement is required in order for the feet to properly develop. The foal has no trouble achieving a heel first landing with every step. First the heel makes contact, then the frog, and finally the sole. The entire foot expands and contracts during this process to insure proper blood flow. Just above the heels and the frog and sole, there is a digital cushion, and the lateral cartilages.

In a foal, the digital cushion is just a blob of fat, but as the foal moves about and gains weight this cushion develops fibrous tissue full of blood vessels and sensors to provide



Heidi Benson

At liberty a mare and foal may cover 15-20 miles a day. Without room to run, a foal’s feet may not fully develop. Pictured are mares and foals at Elk Ridge Icelandic in Evergreen, Colorado.

feedback about surface conditions he is encountering, enabling him to adjust his footfall to protect the foot from injury and also to ignore minor difficulties. The lateral cartilages on either side of the digital cushion and just above the heel bulbs provide side-to-side and front-to-back movement support. In a mature healthy foot, these cartilages are about three-quarters of an inch thick. If these mechanisms are prevented from developing to maturity (read confinement and/or shoes), life-long foot problems can result. The development process takes about five years.

So the horse’s welfare requires him to be at liberty until maturity to insure proper (and healthy) development of his feet.

### Summary

A short summary of facts about the horse’s nature include the following:

- The horse needs companionship of his kind.
- The horse needs as much freedom

as possible during his formative years to develop properly.

- The mature horse needs the freedom to move around in his living space to maintain good health.
- The horse by his nature is a willing and tolerant companion to man.

The first three of these facts, obvious as they seem, are probably the items most neglected by human caretakers. It seems that for all the pleasure and satisfaction we gain from our relationship with the horse, we are short-changing him in terms of fair exchange. While there are a myriad of things we do for our horses, which we think are meaningful to the horse, denying him the basics required by his nature does not serve the horse’s welfare, only our own.

## LEAVE NO TRACE

by Alys Culhane

When our local Backcountry Horsemen of Alaska group nominated me to go to Nine Mile, Montana, for the four-day Master Leave No Trace training, I jumped at the opportunity. This training would better enable me to assist other BCHA members in preserving our front and backcountry areas.

This would also open the lines of communication with those in other user groups, hikers, bikers, and ATVers included. The Mat Su area (where I live) is one of the fastest-growing areas in the U.S. Consequently, trail-use access is becoming a primary concern. Future work in this area would also be a much-needed form of breed promotion. Icelandics are well-suited for backcountry use. They consume less forage than their larger counterparts and, because of their size, have less of an impact on trails. Their calm dispositions also

enables them to be used for service work, some of which includes trail clearing and preservation.

The focus of the Nine-Mile Master Educator Program is on teaching people to teach others the Leave No Trace principles. And so, the 12 of us were required to give presentations to the other trainees. We were each assigned a mentor who critiqued our presentations. This made us even more invested in the subject matter. So did three days of camping, which allowed us to put theory to practice.

The Leave No Trace movement is an educational program that teaches outdoor enthusiasts how to protect the places they love. The LNT principles originated out of a need to protect backcountry and wilderness areas from human-caused recreational impacts. A structured grassroots training program complements this objective. Those who take the Master Educator class are certified to teach three-day trainer courses. Certified trainers are then certified to teach awareness courses.

At the heart of the leave No Trace are seven principles for reducing the damage caused by outdoor activities, particularly non-motorized transportation. LNT principles can be applied anywhere and in any recreational endeavor. The horseperson's creed is, "When I ride out of the mountains, I'll leave only hoof prints, take only photographs, and will pack out all the extra garbage I can!"

The general principles are as follows:

### 1. Plan Ahead and Prepare

- Know the regulations and special concerns for the area you'll be visiting.
- Prepare for extreme weather, hazards, and emergencies.
- Schedule your trip to avoid times of high use.
- Visit in small groups. Split larger groups into 4-6 people per group.
- Repackage to minimize waste.
- Use a map and a compass to eliminate the use of rock cairns, flagging, or marking tape.

### 2. Travel and Camp on Durable Surfaces

- Durable surfaces include established trails and campsites, rock, gravel, dry grasses, or snow.
- Protect riparian areas by camping at least 200 feet away from lakes and streams.
- Good campsites are found, not made. Altering sites is unnecessary.
- In popular areas: Use existing trails and campsites; walk single file in mid-trail, even when the trail is wet or muddy; keep campsites small; use areas where vegetation is absent.
- In pristine areas: Disperse use to prevent the creation of campsites and trails; avoid places where impacts are just becoming evident.

### 3. Dispose of Waste Properly

- Pack it in, pack it out. Pack out trash, leftover food, litter, toilet paper, and hygiene products.
- Dispose of solid human waste in catholes at least 6-8 inches deep and 200 feet from water, camp, and trails. Cover and disguise catholes when finished.

### 4. Leave What You Find

- Preserve the past: observe, but don't touch, cultural or historic structures or artifacts.
- Leave rocks, plants, and other natural objects as you find them.



In the Back Country "Leave No Trace" course, Smoke Eisner gives the lowdown on packing.

- Avoid introducing or transporting non-native species.
- Don't build structures, furniture, or dig trenches.

### 5. Minimize Campfire Impacts

- Use lightweight stoves for cooking and use candle-lanterns for light.
- In permitted areas, use established fire rings, fire pans, or mound fires.
- Keep fires small. Use sticks from the ground that can be broken by hand.
- Burn all wood and coals to ash; put out campfires completely; scatter cool ashes.

### 6. Respect Wildlife

- Observe wildlife from a distance. Don't follow or approach.
- Feeding wildlife damages their health, alters natural behaviors, and exposes them to predators and other dangers.
- Protect wildlife and your food by storing rations and trash.
- Control pets or leave them at home.
- Avoid wildlife during sensitive times: mating, nesting, raising young, or in the winter.

### 7. Be Considerate of Other Visitors

- Respect others and protect the quality of their experience.
- Be courteous. Yield to other trail users.
- Step to the downhill side of trail when encountering pack stock.
- Take breaks and camp away from trails and other visitors.
- Let nature's sounds prevail. Avoid loud noise and voices.

The LNT principles and practices extend common courtesy and hospitality to other outdoor visitors and to their immediate and distant surroundings. They are based on an abiding respect for nature and people. This respect, coupled with good judgment, allows one to apply

the principles in your own unique circumstances.

We as "stock users" have some of our own LNT principle-related concerns. When trekking, the slowest animal determines the speed of the pack string. Who are the followers, and who are the leaders are questions that should be asked in advance. It's also important to get your animals used to highlines, pickets, and hobbles.

If you plan to pack in bear (especially grizzly) country, obtain and understand safety and food regulations. Be aware of where bears live, eat, and travel. Food odors can attract hungry or curious bears and other animals, so it's important to store food properly. In some areas, this means using bear-proof boxes and panniers.

If you're going on a lengthy ride, that is, one that will require you to feed your horses en-route, take supplemental and weed-seed-free feed. Get your stock used to all new feed before you go. Find out in advance if certified weed-seed-free feed is required. You can also help prevent the spreading of noxious weeds by

removing weeds and burrs from animals, tack, trailers, and trucks.

My experience at Nine Mile was life-changing, because it took my teaching career (which was previously centered around teaching writing) in a differing direction. I've since begun to work with those who are interested in promoting and putting leave no trace principles to practice.

### Additional Information:

The Center for Outdoor Ethics ([www.lnt.org](http://www.lnt.org)) is located in Boulder, CO. Their website contains more information on the LNT principles as well as contact, volunteer, and resource information.

The national offices of the Backcountry Horsemen of America ([www.backcountryhorse.com](http://www.backcountryhorse.com)) is located in Graham, WA. The BCHA is a non-profit corporation that's dedicated to preservation of historic stock use in the backcountry commensurate with our heritage. The BCHA is comprised of state, organizations, affiliates, and at-large members. Their website contains volunteer, resource, and contact information.



Above, waste disposal techniques were covered in the Leave No Trace course (no pun intended). Below, Alys watches a demonstration on back country basics (we have no explanation for the bear skin...).

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