

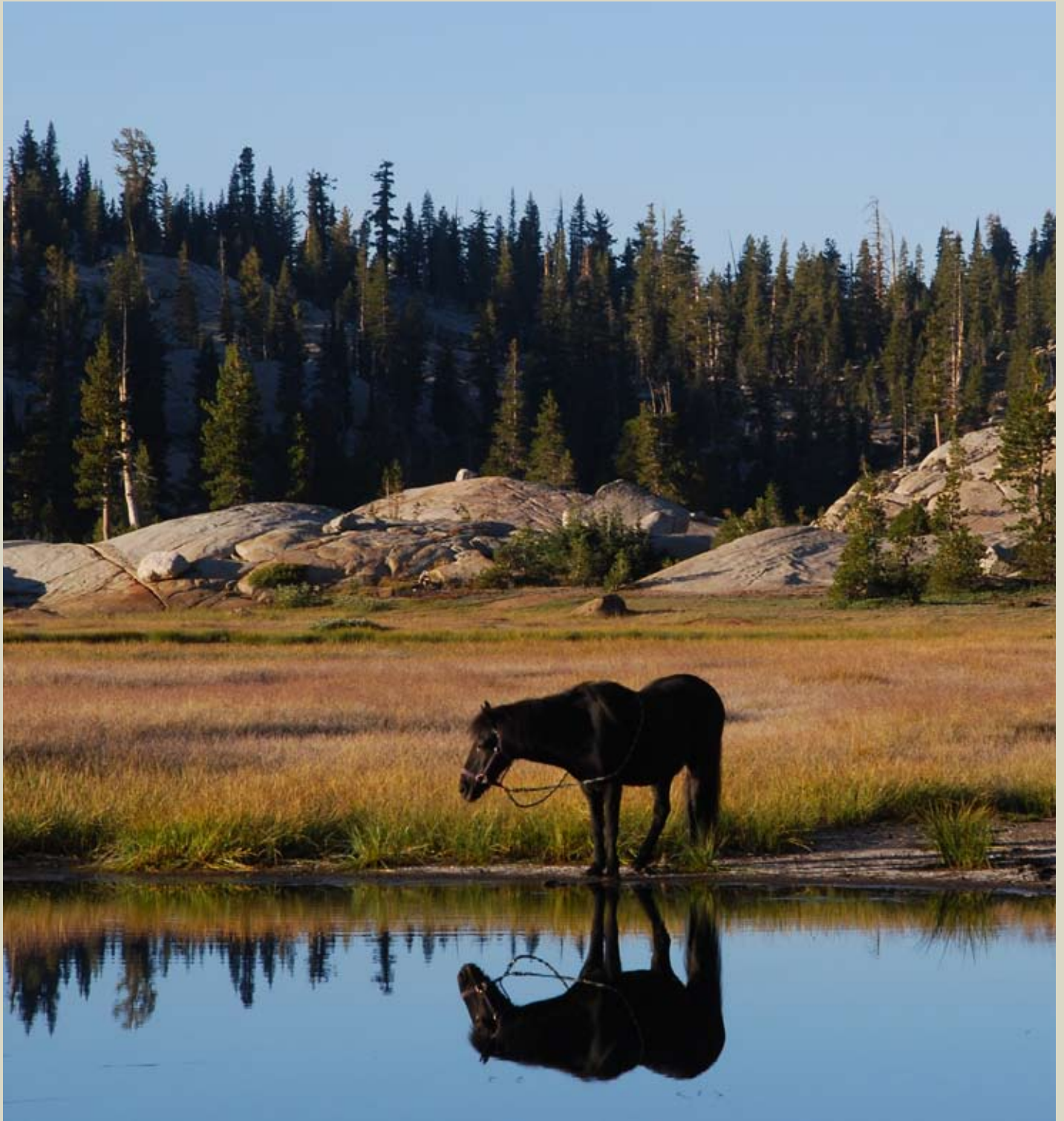
ISSUE TWO

THE

2011

# ICELANDIC HORSE

Q U A R T E R L Y



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



Mark Johnson (2009)

## THANK YOU!!!

*The following USIHC members have generously made donations to the 2011 World Championships Team:*

Maria Brecher • Susan Milloy • Katherine Norton • Bernie Willis  
Maggie Brandt • Cindy Wescott • Caeli Cavanaugh • Marilyn Tully  
• Susan Peters • Sara Lyter • Sali Peterson

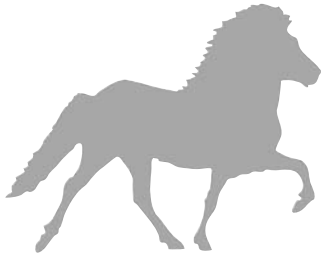
It isn't too late to join them. Contributions to the team may be sent by PayPal to [treasurer@icelandics.org](mailto:treasurer@icelandics.org) or by check to:

Kari Pietsch-Wangard  
USIHC Treasurer  
4525 Hewitts Point Road  
Oconomowoc, WI 53066



Your support will help the team with uniforms and other group expenses, and will be greatly appreciated!





THE  
ICELANDIC  
HORSE  
QUARTERLY  
Issue Two 2011

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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Advertising rates and instructions are also online at [www.icelandics.org/ad\\_rates](http://www.icelandics.org/ad_rates)

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

*Quarterly Committee:* Heidi Benson, Andrea Brodie, Nancy Marie Brown (co-editor), Juli Cole, Alys Culhane, Anne Elwell, Eileen Gunipero, Jessica Haynsworth, Maïke Liekweg, Pamela Nolf, Alex Pregitzer, Chris Romano, Judy Strehler (co-editor), Helga Thordarson, Bernie Willis, Nancy Wines-Dewan

*Graphic Design:* James Collins

Contact the Editorial Committee at [quarterly@icelandics.org](mailto:quarterly@icelandics.org)

# ICELANDIC HORSE

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**On the cover:** Twenty-two-year-old Fudgy (registered name Stigandi II from Viking Saga California US88100437) enjoys drinking from an icy pond on a pack trip last summer to California's Emigrant Wilderness, next door to Yosemite National Park. (Note that he is trained to safely go loose with reins.) See "Ice Age Horse in an Ice Age Meadow." Photo by C. Romano.



## 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; foreign friends, \$70. For more information, see the Congress website at [www.icelandics.org/join](http://www.icelandics.org/join).

## MAIL

United States Icelandic Horse Congress  
c/o Kari Pietsch-Wangard  
4525 Hewitts Point Road  
Oconomowoc, WI 53066

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Sam Castleman  
Ásta Covert  
Anne Elwell, President  
(919-533-1030; [pruthur@aol.com](mailto:pruthur@aol.com))  
Kathy Lockerbie  
Sara Lyter, Vice President  
Kari Pietsch-Wangard, Treasurer  
Katrin Sheehan  
Doug Smith, Secretary  
Cindy Wescott

## 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). Contact Ásta Covert: P.O. Box 1724, Santa Ynez, CA 93460; 805-688-1393; [registry@icelandics.org](mailto:registry@icelandics.org)

## 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, and learn more about FEIF and the USIHC

## QUESTIONS?

Toll-free 866-292-0009  
Email: [info@icelandics.org](mailto:info@icelandics.org)

## COMMITTEES

### Breeding

Katrin Sheehan (706-347-0900)  
[breeding@icelandics.org](mailto:breeding@icelandics.org)

### Constitution Review

Kari Pietsch-Wangard (262-567-6560)  
[constitutional\\_review@icelandics.org](mailto:constitutional_review@icelandics.org)

### Education

Sara Lyter (828-712-8658)  
[education@icelandics.org](mailto:education@icelandics.org)

### Membership

Kathy Lockerbie (631-TOLTING)  
[info@icelandics.org](mailto:info@icelandics.org)

### Pleasure Riding

Ellen Wilson (609-220-9984)  
[pleasure\\_riding@icelandics.org](mailto:pleasure_riding@icelandics.org)

### Promotion

Anne Elwell (919-533-1030)  
[promotion@icelandics.org](mailto:promotion@icelandics.org)

### Quarterly

Judy Strehler (763-498-8432)  
[quarterly@icelandics.org](mailto:quarterly@icelandics.org)

### Regional Clubs

Lori Gillespie (512-376-2340)  
[regional\\_clubs@icelandics.org](mailto:regional_clubs@icelandics.org)

### Sport Competition

Will Covert (805-688-1393)  
[competition@icelandics.org](mailto:competition@icelandics.org)

### Website

Doug Smith (831-238-3254)  
[web@icelandics.org](mailto:web@icelandics.org)

### Youth

Sam Castleman (301-271-2423)  
[youth@icelandics.org](mailto:youth@icelandics.org)



The California Icelandic Association opened the 2011 show season with the CIA Spring 2010 Open, held April 16-17 at Flying C Ranch in Santa Ynez, CA. Here are the four-gait finalists (left to right) Ayla Green, Madison Prestine, Rachel Ng, Christina Granados, Laura Benson, and Ásta Dögg Bjarnadóttir-Covert, with announcer and scribe Doug Smith on the far left and FEIF International judge Florian R. Schneider from Germany on the far right. Photo by Willy Ma.

## 2011 SHOW SEASON

The California Icelandic Association opened the 2011 show season with the CIA Spring 2010 Open, held April 16-17 at Flying C Ranch in Santa Ynez, CA. A total of 30 horses were entered. FEIF International judge Florian R. Schneider from Germany presided; Doug Smith assisted as announcer, scribe, and IceTest expert. High-scorer was Ásta Dögg Bjarnadóttir-Covert riding Dynjandi frá Dalvík, with a T1 (Tolt) score of 8.83 and a VI (Four Gait) score of 8.20. Full show results are available on the USIHC website, [www.icelandics.org](http://www.icelandics.org), under Ride.

The next scheduled sanctioned shows are the Summerlot Icelandic Horse Competition, held at Winterhorse Park in Eagle, WI on May 29-30, and the World Ranking Show, held at Silver Maple Farm in Tunbridge, VT, June 18-19. For announcements of additional upcoming shows, check the USIHC Event Calendar on the website.

## STARS OF ICELAND

The Stars of Iceland, the performance team of the Flugnir Icelandic Horse Association of the Midwest, performed April 16 at the Midwest Horse Fair in Madison, WI. The riders and their horses were: Kevin Draeger on Ari, Jessica Elmlblad on Moldi, Elizabeth

Everson on Fjalar, Haley Martens on Flis, Megan Milloy on Hlodyn, and Amber Perry on Dagfinnur. A video of their performance has been circulating to applause on Facebook.

## PA WORLD EXPO

The USIHC had a booth at the PA World Expo, held February 25-26 in Harrisburg, PA. Curt Pierce and Knuter and Cerice Berndsen were on hand to answer questions. Icelandic demos were performed by members of the Frida Icelandic Riding Club (FIRC).

## BREEDING EVALUATION

An Icelandic horse breeding evaluation was held May 27-28 at Winterhorse Park in Eagle, WI, in conjunction with the Summerlot competition. International judges Herdís Reynisdóttir and Elisabeth Jansen presided. Scores will be posted on the USIHC website under "Breed."

## WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS

In alternating years, the international Icelandic horse community comes together in Europe to hold the World Championships. Each FEIF member association sends a team of horses and riders to find the best in the world. The competition includes Sport classes and Breeding evaluations. The 2011

World Championships will take place at Islandpferde Reithof Piber in St. Radegund, Austria on August 1-7. For more information, see [www.islandpferde-wm.at](http://www.islandpferde-wm.at).

Even if you don't have any interest in participating as a rider, please consider joining us in Switzerland. The U.S. Team appreciates friendly faces in the audience. This is a great opportunity to see top Icelandic horses and meet people from around the world who share your interest in the Icelandic horse.

## TEAM BOOSTER CAPTAIN

If you are planning to be in Austria for the World Championships August 1-7 and are interested in helping the team in exchange for some behind-the-scenes access at the event, we are looking for someone to help with the coordination of the International Night party and some of the other side events that happen at the World Championships. Contact the Team Leader, Doug Smith, at [drsmith@yankee-pt.com](mailto:drsmith@yankee-pt.com) if you have questions or think you might be interested in joining the team as a non-rider.

## US TEAM

Members of the U.S. team for the 2011 World Championships were announced on [www.icelandics.org](http://www.icelandics.org) on June 1. Tryouts for the team took place at Flying C Ranch in

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Santa Ynez, CA (May 22), Creekside Farm in Rutledge, GA (May 24), Silver Maple Farm in Tunbridge, VT (May 28), and Mill Farm in Ancramdale, NY (May 29). Riders could also try out by video.

The judge was Thorgeir Gudlaugsson. Thorgeir has judged many world ranking competitions and World Championship tryouts in several countries over the years. He was one of the judges at the 2009 World Championships in Switzerland. In addition, he serves on the FEIF judges committee with oversight responsibility for all sport competition in FEIF.

The final selection of the team was made by the USIHC Sport Leader, Will Covert, based solely on the in-person and video tryout marks given by the judge. The team was selected by computing the average score of each rider's best results in the required tests. (The requirements can be found on the USIHC website, [www.icelandics.org](http://www.icelandics.org), under Competition.) In the event of a tie, the judge chose who should take priority.

All riders who reached the minimum score will be considered as alternates in the event that one of the team chooses not to attend the Championships.

## COMPETITION RULES

The USIHC Sport Competition Rules have been updated to reflect this year's changes in the international rules (FIPO). In summary the changes include:

- Allowing riders in the green horse classes to use shanked bits.
- Allowing riders to dispense with coats and ties in hot and humid weather.
- Changing the T2 preliminary to be shown with one rider on the track at a time.
- Adding a T4 test which is the group equivalent of T2 (in other words, the "old" T2)
- Changing the final of T3 to only be shown on one rein, as in the preliminary.

The Sanctioned Show Application and After-Show Report forms have also been updated to reflect the current rule revisions.

## BREEDING SHOW GUIDES

The USIHC Breeding Committee has prepared a short guide to help organizers of breeding evaluations track the essential jobs for a successful show.

The committee has also completed a short guide to help organizers of young horse evaluations.

Both guides, as well as the FEIF Young Horse Assessment form, Breeding Show Applications, and other useful links, can be found on the Breeding Committee Page on the USIHC website.

## YOUTH RIDING SCHOOLS

*At the February Board of Directors' meeting, Youth Committee chair Sam Castleman introduced a discussion of Youth Riding Schools:* During the Annual Meeting a question was asked, "Why don't we have riding schools for our young riders?" Great question! The discussion that followed indicated that riding schools not only improve the abilities of young riders of Icelandic horses but also introduce Icelandics to young riders who are currently either pony or big horse riders or have

never ridden before. What better way to grow the popularity of the Icelandic horse in America, through burgeoning numbers of young riders?

It was fascinating that out of our 20-plus attendees at the Annual Meeting we had a member (Krista Westcott) among us who has been schooling children at Bolder Ridge Farm for two summers. So the follow-up question is, "If, right under our noses, Krista is schooling young riders and we don't know about it, who else might also be bringing young riders into the world of the Icelandic horse?"

The Youth Committee has talked about working more closely with the Regional Clubs, creating regional excitement for youth programs and determining ways we can be relevant and support young Icelandic horse riders. This schooling question may be an appropriate vehicle for both getting to know our regional clubs and digging into what is going on with youth in each area. We as a committee will attempt to answer the riding school question. As we uncover the Kristas of our U.S. Icelandic horse world, we will document and share what we learn.



Rachel Ng competes on Kaliber frá Laekjarbotnum at the CIA Spring Open in Santa Ynez, CA, April 16-17. They scored 7.00 in T1 (Tolt), taking second in the A-Final. Photo by Ryan Ng.





A scene from the CIA Spring Open in Santa Ynez, CA, April 16-17. Here, Lucy Nold (left) and Marina Nyberg show trot. Photo by Willy Ma.

## RESCUE COMMITTEE

The newly appointed USIHC Rescue Committee agreed that materials should be sent to people who have adopted/rehomed Icelandic horses out of rescue situations. These materials would consist of a Quarterly magazine, membership information, USIHC website information, and lists of regional clubs. A book list was suggested also and that still needs to be developed. People would have to find us or learn about the USIHC from someone or somewhere, and request that information. The structure of the Rescue Committee will be discussed at the May Board Meeting.

## EDUCATION

The USIHC Education committee has several new and continuing initiatives, as outlined at the April Board Meeting. Alex Pregitzer is translating materials from German for the Trainer C course. Bernie Willis is developing written materials for the Riding Badge program. And Pamela Nolf is working on the idea of a webinar, How To Use World Fengur. This is a joint project between the Education and Membership committees.

## BRING A FRIEND

USIHC members who sell or give away an Icelandic horse to someone who is not a Congress member now have an easy way to introduce this new Icelandic horse owner to the USIHC community by sending them a free copy of the Quarterly.

On the Quarterly page on the website, [www.icelandics.org](http://www.icelandics.org), under "Membership" is a link to a form called "Request Replacement Copies or Back Issues." Horse sellers can fill out this form with the new horse owner's address and check the box, "I have sold a horse to someone who is not a Congress member. I'd like them to receive an introductory copy of the magazine."

The USIHC will immediately send the new Icelandic horse owner a free copy of the Quarterly, along with a letter outlining the benefits of joining the USIHC.

## BOARD MEETINGS

The USIHC Board of Directors met on February 8, for an executive session on February 24, for its Annual Budget Meeting on March 10, and on April 19. Minutes of the meetings can be found on the USIHC website, [www.icelandics.org](http://www.icelandics.org), under The Congress. Major initiatives and reports are presented throughout this News section; some addi-

tional highlights of the meetings follow.

At the February meeting, secretary Doug Smith outlined the efforts made to encourage members to renew on time. This year saw the lowest mid-January membership level in several years (198 members as of January 11); the Board authorized the secretary to send out an additional email reminder to all 2010 who had not renewed. This reminder duplicated the one sent in November. This reminder and some direct phone calls brought the membership numbers up to 70 percent of the total membership as of December 2010.

In conjunction with the Quarterly committee, one last-ditch effort was made to boost the 2011 membership numbers. The March issue of the Quarterly was sent to all 2010 members who had not yet renewed for 2011. Included in the envelope with the magazine was a letter reminding/inviting these members to renew.

In February, the Board accepted Alex Pregitzer's resignation as Education Chair; Sara Lyter, the former Board liaison for education will become the new committee chair. At the April meeting, Cindy Westcott announced she would be stepping down as chair of the Promotion Committee; Anne Ellwell will be the new chair of that committee.

## YOUTH CAMP

The FEIF Youth Camp 2011, for riders ages 12-18, will be held July 23-30, hosted by the Icelandic Horse Society of Great Britain (IHSGB). It will take place at Broomlee Outdoor Centre, West Linton, Scotland, just south of Edinburgh. Activities will include Icelandic trail rides, equestrian gymnastics, polo, a visit to Scotland's leading equestrian veterinary hospital, a traditional Scottish ceildh of music and dancing, and shopping in Edinburgh. For more information, see <http://feifyouthcamp2011.ihsgb.co.uk/> or contact the USIHC Youth committee at [youth@icelandics.org](mailto:youth@icelandics.org).

## ANNUAL MEETING

The Annual FEIF Conference was held February 25-27 in Vienna, Austria, comprising the Delegates Assembly of representatives from all FEIF organizations, and meetings of the chairs, breeding, education, sport, and youth departments. Some highlights follow. For more information, see [www.feif.org](http://www.feif.org).

## BREEDING

The Breeding Department agreed that small changes are needed in the guidelines concerning the relation of slow tölt to tölt and slow canter to canter/gallop and that conformation judgments should last one calendar year, not only 60 days. The first seminar for young breeding

riders, which was suggested last year, was held at the end of March in Iceland with 20 riders participating. Ways to improve the education of breeding judges were discussed, including Internet seminars; Kristín Halldorsdóttir was asked to work on this idea. A working group on the linear assessment of young horses will gather information and decide how to put the information into WorldFengur and use it for research. The 10th anniversary of WorldFengur will be celebrated in 2011.

## YOUTH

Changes to the classes for the Youth Cup were discussed: an easier four gait class will be added; possibly also easier five gait and pace classes. The youth committee will also provide templates for the dressage class. A FEIF horse trek for riders 12-18 years old will take place in Sweden, August 9-13; each country can send two participants. The FEIF youth exchange will continue this year; interested youngsters and families can apply via the FEIF website. For the 2013 World Championship each country will be allowed to send five young riders and for these riders (who on the application form state they are riding in the youth classes) there will be separate finals.

## SPORT

The most important change approved by the Delegates Assembly is to introduce a new Tölt T2 where the riders ride individually. This change will apply to the World Championships 2011. A document with all changes (valid as of April 1) is available on the FEIF website.

A long and fruitful discussion took place about bits, bridles, and other equipment. Since the rules were changed from a list of permitted equipment to a list of prohibited equipment, there has been an ongoing discussion about bits and bridles that should be forbidden because of wrong use. The Sport Meeting discussed the option to allow the use of most types of bits and bridles in World Ranking classes only and to allow only snaffle bits in other classes. However, the meeting couldn't come to a final conclusion, as it is a complicated matter.



## PROHIBITED TACK

The use of the flash or Mexican noseband in combination with bits with a curb chain or bits with upper and/or lower cheeks (leveler mechanism) has been added to the list of prohibited equipment. The decision was made by the annual FEIF Sport meeting. The flash or Mexican noseband fits badly with most of these bits and in some cases the combined mechanism makes the equipment very severe. This combination of bridle and bits is prohibited at sport competitions as of April 1.

## SEMINAR

The Danish Icelandic Horse Association is organising a seminar for judges, instructors, and elite equestrians. The seminar will be held in English. Subjects covered will include bone and muscle anatomy, biomechanical aspects such as the spinal cord's mobility, hyper mobility, the upper line syndrome, the influence of weights on the hoof, and the biomechanics of speed in curves. Questions such as when and where are we damaging the horse and when we are in the "grey" zone will also be discussed. The seminar will feature horse physiotherapist Guy Blom, veterinarian Sara Mikkelsen, physiotherapist Claus Toftgaard Jørgensen, and equestrian Mette Manseth, and will consist of both theoretical and practical workshops.





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# REGIONAL UPDATES

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## FIRC

*Sandy Newkirk writes:* The Frida Icelandic Riding Club of the Mid-Atlantic region welcomed 2011 with a post-holiday party held at Barbara Sollner-Webb's house in Maryland. Prizes for the FIRC pleasure riding competition were awarded for most hours spent on and working with your horse. As always, there was plenty of good food and fun.

In March, the Spring Fling was held at beautiful ThorpeWood Lodge with hosts Sally Thorpe and Sam Castleman. Thanks went to retiring board members Jim Henry and Sally Peterson, and welcome to new board members Sandy Newkirk of West Virginia and Charlotte Riley of Pennsylvania. Over dinner, we listened to the advice of local veterinarian Javier Donnatelli on the causes and prevention of laminitis—a timely topic. Charlotte Reilly forecast some of the exciting new FIRC clothing designs and colors. Suzi McGraw, FIRC president, unveiled the upgraded web-based member sharing center. It is now even easier to schedule events and share information, discussions, and photos of riding activities.

Thanks to Susan Milloy, Gudmar Pétursson joined the event and gave private lessons before and after the party. His message was about riding the horse in a way that encourages him to lift his back, not forcing the horse into an artificial head carriage. Gudmar will be back in September.

In April, Sandy Newkirk dusted off her dressage background and offered a free riding clinic. Sixteen riders took turns as riders and then as feedback-providers on the ground to help those in the saddle avoid typical riding balance mistakes such as collapsing at the waist. Later, the lessons were put to good use riding to Icelandic folk music in pairs. Seven pairs—one a mixed pair of Icelandic and Fjord horses—moved down the center line in twos, split into single lines, crossed the diagonal, and threaded their way through the openings in the opposite group.

Susan Milloy organized a wonderful three-day clinic with Steinar Sigurbjörnsson-



Steinar Sigurbjörnsson held a clinic in April for the Frida Icelandic Riding Club (FIRC). Here he coaches Charlotte Riley on bending her horse Hatid on the circle. Photo by Susan Milloy.

son also in April; 18 rider and auditors attended. Susan's parents, Rich and Pat Moore, helped ensure the weekend held at their Kilmurray Farm in Catharpin, VA was a great success. Friday morning, Steinar demonstrated ground exercises to increase the flexibility and relaxation of the horse, enhance the leadership role of the rider, and encourage the horse to move readily forward with engagement of the hindquarters. He then supervised and encouraged each rider as they worked on the exercises with their horses.

Saturday morning brought a demonstration of correct use of the reins and their role in riding. Each rider had a turn at being the horse with Steinar holding the reins. He wanted each participant to feel how even slight downward pressure of the reins in the rider's hands can cause a stiffening reaction on the part of the horse. After a brief review of the ground exercises, we mounted our horses and worked to create lightness, forward energy, balance, and self-carriage from the saddle, steering less with our hands and more with our bodies. As we gained

coordination, Steinar asked for more forward energy. We rode around cones, rode in circles, and changed our position within our groups of three (moving from the front of the line to the back). The day concluded with many of the participants enjoying dinner with Steinar, his wife, Stina, and one-year-old daughter Frida (who when told our club was named after her, replied, "Wow!").

On Sunday Steinar discussed the need for riders to be flexible and relaxed in their bodies. He shared several stretching and loosening exercises and talked about the use of an exercise ball or a BALIMO (Balance in Motion) chair developed in Germany to improve body awareness and balance. Afterwards the riders continued their mounted work. Some of the groups ended their sessions riding in formation, Icelandic style. In the afternoon, riders inaugurated the Moore's new riding track in one-on-one sessions with Steinar, tailored to the needs and interests of each horse-rider pair. During these "wrap-up" sessions it was clear to those watching how much each



Florie Miller, Osa, and Stefmir plying their charm on the visitors to the Rocky Mountain Horse Expo in Denver.

horse and rider had benefitted from Steinar's positive energy and instruction.

We are looking forward in May to Tony and Laura Colicchio's Wisteria ride in Rosaryville State Park, and in June to bringing back clinician Katrin Sheehan to Flying Change Farm in West Virginia. Other club rides are in the planning stage.

## FLUGNIR

*Barb Riva writes:* While winters in the Midwest can be challenging, we still find ways to have fun with our horses. Many members of Flugnir, the Icelandic Horse Association of the Midwest, ride in the snow on a regular basis—until it piles higher than the horse's legs. Thankfully that kind of snow didn't hit until later in the season.

Some Flugnir members joined Winterhorse Park's Thorrablot on March 12. This event is open to the public. We were happy to see a local 4H group in attendance, along with horse-loving neighbors from the Eagle area. We ended the riding portion with a fun Beer Mug tolt, with Lori Fleming and Haukur Thorvaldsson battling to keep their beer in the mugs. The cost of attending the Thorrablot is either a dish to pass or some kind of entertainment. We got some great Icelandic dishes and a few brave souls participated in the

game of trying to get golf balls out of a tissue box tied to their waists.

This spring Gudmar Pétursson will be teaching a three-part series of clinics at Winterhorse Park in Eagle, WI, with the last of the series ending the weekend before a Breeding Horse Evaluation and the Summerlot Competition on Memorial Day weekend. Our Regional Clubs' sanctioned competition, Flugnirkeppni, is slated for September 17-18.

A clinic with Barbara Frische is in the planning stages for Minnesota in the fall. We will tie up our Flugnir events with another group outing to Woodside Ranch in Mauston, WI where our accommodations are in quaint little cabins and we enjoy breakfast cooked out on an open fire on trail.

## KLETTAFJALLA

*Florie Miller writes:* The first event of the year for the Klettafjalla Club of the Rocky Mountain region was a presence at the Rocky Mountain Horse Expo. I can hardly say it better than Tony Bruguere, writing for [www.thefencepost.com](http://www.thefencepost.com) on March 21: "Horse lovers from around the Rocky Mountain region gathered at the Stock Show complex in Denver, CO for a weekend of celebrating all things 'horse.' There were big horses, little horses, and a few really big horses. There were horse books,

horse 'art,' and lots of just plain 'stuff' for horses. There were show horses, working horses, and dancing horses. There were over 40 presenters or clinicians on hand to teach you how to 'celebrate,' 'engage,' 'retrain,' 'understand,' or 'connect with' your horse. Or perhaps you need to 'shoe,' 'heal,' 'photograph,' 'trust,' or engage in 'Neuro-Emotional technique' with your horse. Another measure of the strength of the 2011 Rocky Mountain Horse Expo and how much it has grown is in the number of different breed organizations that are represented and how much of the extensive Stock Show Complex barn area is utilized. 'The barn area has been full,' Executive Director Bill Scebbi said. 'We rented every stall in the barn—representing 25 different breeds.' "

Including Icelandics, of course. At night the Icelandics were represented in The Mane Event, an exciting horse show. A drill team made up of Darlene Johnson, Coralie Denmeade, Florie Miller, and Sandy Spitzer showed the audience how fun and smooth our horses are. As always, the beer tolt was a great success!

Lots of people came over to the booth to ask questions or to share their love of Icelandics. Several club members, like Dave Irish and Ann Kruise, showed up and helped promote our breed. We shared our expo aisle with the Rocky Mountain Team Penning Association; needless to say these cowboys were at first a bit leery about our small hairy ponies. But after a few beers one night it was decided that the next day we would try each others' horses. So the next day cowboy Keith got his first ride on an Icelandic. It was a great success and he really liked it. That night we convinced him to come ride with us in the finale of the big show. The crowd went crazy! Here was a cowboy in full gear, chaps, hat, and all, riding a feisty Icelandic in fast tempo tolt. Keith waved his hat to the crowd and had the biggest smile of anyone.

So for our club the Expo was a success. Thanks to the volunteers for making this happen! And to the members of the club who support these activities through their membership. Remember to check [www.klettafjalla.com](http://www.klettafjalla.com) for upcoming events.



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## KRAFTUR

*Bert Bates writes:* While rain reduced the number of trail rides our members took this winter, clinics were in full force for members of the Kraftur club of Northern California: Laura Benson hosted a great clinic by Gudmar Pétursson in Santa Cruz. Kraftur members traveled to Santa Ynez in southern California to attend a clinic hosted at Flying C Ranch and given by Olil Amble. Kraftur members also traveled to Lake Matthews, CA for clinics by Steinar Sigurbjörnsson. And several ongoing clinic series were held in Watsonville by Jec Ballou and Steinar Sigurbjörnsson. Please contact Bert Bates at bert.bates@yahoo.com for more information concerning these (as we mentioned) ongoing series.

Unable to get plane tickets for their horses, Leslie Johnson and David Gelpman took several rides on Hawaii's Big Island on horses not of Icelandic heritage—we'll forgive them just this once. While it's unclear how much actual riding took place, Doug and Gayle Smith traveled to the FEIF conference in Vienna, Austria this winter.

Kraftur members are planning a busy spring and summer schedule. Many are preparing for Flying C Ranch's two spring shows. In addition Kraftur will host a special "Hestardagar" (Day of the Horse)

competition on May 1, at Mountain Icelandics in Watsonville. The Hestardagar competition will include the following classes: Obstacle Course, At Liberty, Fastest Walk, Ponying, "Zack" Tolt, and Long Reining. This competition is designed to allow horses and riders (youth and adult) to demonstrate horsemanship skills and harmony. Please contact Gabriele Meyer at gm@proryders.com for more information.

Finally, Kraftur members are planning to attend several local and regional, multi-breed, gaited horse shows over the next several months. Our experience is that these multi-breed shows are a great way to introduce the non-Icelandic horse community to our furry friends.

## NEIHC

*Amy Goddard writes:* We've had more than our fair share of winter here in the northeast. Between snowstorms, the members of the Northeast Icelandic Horse Club managed to squeeze in our annual meeting and Thorrablot on February 19. Many thanks to our president, Brian Puntin, for hosting the event once again at Aspinwall Equestrian Center in Lenox, MA despite his injury (a broken knee). Thanks also to Betty Grindrod, Heleen Heyning, and those members who arrived early to help set up.

A new Board of Directors was voted in: Brian Puntin, President; Amy Goddard, Secretary; Esther Heffernan, Treasurer; Knutur Berndsen, Promotion; and Karleen Oosterwal. Our redesigned website, created by new NEIHC member and web designer Kara Noble, was unveiled. New features include an events calendar, "for sale" page, and the ability to add your own events, items for sale, links, and photos. Future features in the works are an online membership form, the ability to pay dues through PayPal, and FAQs.

Throughout the winter, Nicki Esdorn coordinated Sunday fun rides in Bedford, NY. She writes: "This year was one of the longest, coldest, snowiest, and iciest winters! But instead of falling into the deep-winter blues, a small Icelandic horse community in Bedford, NY decided to have Fun and Games! Each Sunday morning at 11:00, everyone who could brave the trails and roads showed up at a local indoor arena. Trainers Nicki Esdorn and Pam Gockley set up music and interesting horsemanship exercises with obstacles. The group practiced drill team moves to music and got the horses going through gates hung with pool noodles, on top of pedestals, opening and closing gates—the possibilities were endless. Finally, they put it all together and rode drill team through obstacles! They even played



Seven Icelandics and two young Thoroughbreds at the Bedford, NY "Fun and Games!" From left to right: Liz Friedler on Aladdin, Meredith Brokaw on Corky, Karleen Oosterwal on Vepja, Arsenio Paez on Odur, Nicki Esdorn on Haukur Freyr, Martina Gates on Phileus, Cynthia Brill on Tyr, Brigit Huwyler on Draumur, and Nancy Nygreen on Summer. Photo courtesy of Nicki Esdorn.



'soccer' with a giant equi-ball! Afterwards, everyone hung out in the barn and had some potluck hot soup and muffins before going home through the snow."

Brigit Huwyler writes: "On February 26, after almost two months of not being able to ride due to snow and ice, Karleen Oosterwal and I loaded our horses and drove the short distance from Redding, CT, to Fairfield Beach on Long Island Sound. It was a sunny, mild day and not too windy. For 12-year-old Draumur and six-year-old Vepja, this was their first introduction to Long Island Sound. Draumur eyed the waves suspiciously as the surf lurched at his feet and retreated with a swooshing sound again and again. But once in the water, both horses enjoyed the feeling of it around their legs and loved the splashing!

"On Fairfield Beach, riders are allowed only below the high tide mark, usually during low tide. We had to circumvent the jetties jutting out into the water by seeking out the shallows on sandbanks 50 to 100 yards out from the beach. At times, the horses plowed through almost belly-high water, and we had to urge them on so they wouldn't swim. The spray from the thundering hooves soaked both the horses and us, but it was heavenly! (For Vepja and Draumur, the most rewarding part of the whole outing was the blissful roll in the warm sand after we removed their tack.) We headed back to Redding cold, soaked, and tired, but grateful for this wonderful winter adventure."

Lots happening in the Northeast starting this spring, and we look forward to several events planned in April and May, including clinics and schooling shows at Solheimar in Tunbridge, VT, and Thor Icelandics in Claverack, NY; the annual Bunny Hop ride at Rockefeller State Park; and the World Championship tryouts at Mill Farm in Ancramdale, NY, and Silver Maple Farm in Tunbridge, VT.

June through September will see three clinics with Steinar Sigurbjörnsson and Kristján Kristjánsson at Thor Icelandics; a World Ranking Show at Silver Maple Farm; Fun Days at Solheimar; an ACTHA Ride in Randolph, VT; a Schooling Show at Thor Icelan-



The Southern California Icelandic Riders often visit the beach. Here Rosalin Dockweiler rides Thröstur in Del Mar, CA, last January. Photo by Elisabeth Haug.

dics; an Educational Clinic and Young Horse Evaluation with Barbara Frische and Kristján Kristjánsson, also at Thor Icelandics; the NEIHC FEIF Breed Evaluations in Cobleskill, NY; and a clinic with Sigurbjörn "Diddi" Bardarsson and Steinar Sigurbjörnsson at Thor Icelandics. Information on all these events are on our website, neihc.com. Or contact Brian Puntin: 413-528-3003 or bpuntin@bcn.net.

## ST SKUTLA

Steve Barber writes: On March 20, I represented the USIHC and the St. Skutla Club of Western and Central New York with an informational booth at the EquiFest Equine Exposition and Equestrian Gathering at the new Showplex in Hamburg, NY. The event, hosted by Western New York's chapter of the New York State Horse Council, was a terrific success with over 80 exhibitors and 13 live demonstrations showcasing a wide variety of breeds and disciplines. A steady stream of people curious about the Icelandic horse stopped by booth #70 for more information. Questions and comments ranged the gamut from "Would they be strong enough to carry me?" to "How much are they?" to "Are there any shows for them?" and "I saw them at Equitana ... can they go slow?"

## SCIR

Kimberly Hart writes: The Southern California Icelandic Riders have been busy trying to keep our horses exercised and our corrals clean. It has rained and rained since before Christmas. But we had a great holiday meeting and plan on meeting again in Escondido in April. We have beach rides and picnic rides planned for this summer, as well as several camping trips. If you would like to join SCIR or just come ride with us, contact Kimberly Hart at 858-472-1626.

## TEXAS TOLTERS

Jo Ann Hansell writes: The Texas Tolters are toltig (pronounced "tutting" around here) again! Lori Gillespie has become chair of the USIHC Regional Clubs committee and opened the paddock gate for the Texas Tolters to reunite. The first meeting was held in Bastrop, TX on March 25. Officers elected were: Jo Ann Hansell of Midland, TX, President; Lori Gillespie of Dale, TX, Vice President; Jane Mears of Lexington, TX, Treasurer; Linda Forward of Midland, TX, Secretary; and Meg Fiegenschue of Dallas/Fort Worth, Youth Representative.

In discussing future club activities, Jane and Lori voiced interest in sponsoring an educational clinic by Barbara Frische on Conformation and Correlation in Training and Riding. Jo Ann told the group about the competitive trail riding organization, ACTHA, and the frequent trail rides avail-



Assa, a 20-year-old mare from Iceland, retired from teaching at Hansell Farms and was bought by riding student Deidie Goodman, a member of Texas Tolters.



Members of the West Coast Can-Am Club riding in the raspberry fields at a member's home with Mount Baker and The Twin Sisters Mountains in the background.

able to the group. Jane will follow up with a ride in the LBJ grasslands.

Icelandic owners in Texas are a very gifted and versatile group, some being experienced equestrians and breeders, many learning to ride and enjoying the special bond with the breed. Membership in Texas Tolters is open to everyone. Lori Gillespie is going to contact Icelandic owners and others that have voiced interest in joining us, including the large new group of riders and owners in Midland, TX. For example, Deidie Goodman of Odessa, TX, recently purchased Assa (well known to the Texas Tolters), a 20-year-old mare from Iceland who retired from Hansell Farms schooling program this year after teaching many adult and children to ride. Linda Forward owns two Icelandics and many other horses she has rescued; Cheyenne Atwater, a 16-year-old learning to jump, is the new owner of Balti a Southern California rescue horse; C.A. Haskins owns Svati, also from Southern California; while Phyliss Styker owns Tonto, a Washington state rescue.

We look forward to promoting the wonderful, versatile Icelandic horse throughout Texas using all our various interests, from breeding to jumping to classical riding to grooming and just hanging out with our hairy friends. Contact us at [Texastolters@texastolters.com](mailto:Texastolters@texastolters.com).

## WCCA

*Kathy Lockerbie writes:* The West Coast Can-Am Club has been very active this year. Winter weather usually brings rain in the Pacific Northwest. We come prepared to ride in any weather as long as the trail is safe. Toltling in the raspberry fields at a member's home, with Mount Baker and The Twin Sisters Mountains in the background, is a favorite activity. We can tolt for miles on the flat, sandy packed rows.

In February we had a ride-and-dine at a Canadian member's farm. Six of us had fun riding on the levees in Abbotsford, BC; some borrowed horses, some brought their own. We returned for a tasty dinner and a wine/beer tasting at our hosts' brewery, The Copper Kettle in Aldergrove, BC.

In March, 15 of us spent a weekend trail riding on Vancouver Island, BC. We had our traditional ride to lunch at the Crow and Gate Old English pub in Lady Smith. It was like a summer camp for grown-ups. We even enjoyed a bonfire and s'mores.

The weekend of April 10, some of us attended the Conformation and Correlation in Training and Riding clinic given by Barbara Frische and Svanny Stefansdotir in Battle Ground, WA. This USIHC-sponsored clinic has been given in several locations, with Barbara working with local

Icelandic horse trainers around North America. We highly recommend it. You will learn a lot even if you only audit. Members of our club are working together with the USIHC Membership and Education Committees to create a DVD or Webinar on parts of this clinic for educational purposes.

April 15-17 around 40 of us headed north again for a combined event with the British Columbia Icelandic horse association, the local BC Regional club. (Many of our members are members of that club as well.) Our host this time was The Icelandic Horse World Resort in Vernon, BC, owned by members Arnold and Toos Faber. Again, some of us brought our horses but most of us rode horses provided by the resort.

As summer comes and the days get longer and drier, we have more fun events planned. There will be a weekend hosted by a member who owns property at a huge local trail head, local rides on the beach, and day rides on Forest Service lands. We have planned trips to a lake where we can swim with our horses, and a trip to the San Juan Islands to visit Wanda and John Evans, who are breeders and members of our club. It is no wonder our local Regional Club is growing.



# ICE AGE HORSE IN AN ICE AGE MEADOW

BY C. ROMANO

I promise the Icelandic horse we'll bring him home to Iceland and Norway, which is of course impossible. He doesn't understand the promise, and he's not welcome in Iceland, at least. Fortunately, California's Emigrant Wilderness, next door to Yosemite National Park, is made of glaciated igneous rock, as in Iceland, and glaciated metamorphic rock, as in Norway. That's where we'll take the Icelandic and Paso Fino on an eight-day meadow-tasting tour. This will be as uplifting an experience as a horse can have, but it entails considerable effort by the expedition's human members. For a good horse's happiness, no amount of human effort is too great, right?

The northern part of the Emigrant Wilderness is volcanic, with sheer dark layered ash cliffs, topped with harder teeth, chimneys, gargoyles, and troll formations. Glaciated granite dominates the south. Our trail will cross gentle passes constructed on rock arms at an average elevation of 9,000 feet (2743 meters). These conifer-dotted arms encircle hanging meadows which drop off into deep canyons. These canyons become the Stanislaus River, which joins the San Joaquin, then the Sacramento, ending at San Francisco Bay, a journey of over 170 linear miles (273.5 km). Besides grazing in meadows, we hope to take a few day rides from various camps, visiting sapphirine lakes tucked into rocky arms.

Camping with horses, especially with your very own horses, achieves a close bond like no other. The 24-hour contact integrates you into the herd. Moving from campsite to campsite reignites old rhythms difficult to recapture in our modern world. Horses I've known understand camping. They know where each camp is, even when it changes from day to day. When you think about how long horses have been with humans, odds are that there are epigenetic links between our two species, which may be greater than we yet know.

## BALANCE IS ESSENTIAL

Most of the weight we carry is for the hors-



es. Big rubber kayak bags contain pelleted feed. Then there are the bulky items, like the horse blankets and line tie ropes. We have one rigged sawbuck pack saddle with two Utah-style bags. Utah bags are canvas, with thick leather bottoms and flaps that cover the bag top, secured by straps and sturdy buckles. The bags are looped onto the sawbuck. Our panniers are two big rip-stop nylon pockets attached in the middle and placed right over an existing saddle. Later in the trip, with provisions eaten up, we hope to only use the packsaddle and stow the panniers. One of us can walk and

lead a horse and one of us can then ride.

Balance is essential, because I'm not skilled enough to secure the packs with traditional canvas Mantie and knotted ropes. The panniers just balance on the saddle unattached, too. Both saddlebags and panniers are filled before we put them on the horses. The husband repeatedly lifts them up, reckoning their weight. While his back recovers from a spasm or two, he switches items until the loads are even. If the saddle bridges or pinches, the pannier "balance only" system will not work. The very round Icelandic also has a dropped or swayed



back, so I now use a dressage Specialized Saddle. Mainly used by endurance riders, these saddles have foam and Velcro panels that can be adjusted specifically to a horse's back. This saddle enables panniers to balance very well.

There is an unpredictable amount of feed in the Sierras. Some districts require what is called weedfree feed; feed with no invasive seeds. By using a cooked feed, the regulations are automatically accommodated. We use Nutrina Prime; 10 cups is about 4 lbs. (2.36 liters or 1.8 kilos a day per horse). It's best to bring at least one extra day of food. We also bring collapsible feed and water buckets, dried apples, salt, Bute, antibiotics, iodine soap, bandages, thermometer, an EZ-boot, duct tape, extra hoof pick, clips, hobbles, nylon bags, straps, and our dayride saddlebags.

We carry two horse blankets. The Paso Fino needs his "Binky." The Icelandic has no problem in September even with frost, but having a light rain blanket does help in possible snowstorms at higher elevations. Plus, the blankets are comforting and cozy, helping the horses sleep and be less hungry. Hungry cold horses may paw all night, which is dusty. Hobbling helps curb this activity, but the Paso Fino will just paw with his back feet, if hobbled in the front.

We started backpacking 35 years ago. We would go "in" for several weeks and our provisions were streamlined, with no cooking required. We continue this tradition, and for this trip I prepare jerky, cookie bars, packaged cereal, gorp with crackers, plus the odd vitamin. Drinking water is treated with iodine pills. I now bring coffee singles, and cold brew a cup by leaving the bag in a water bottle for an hour, adding powdered chocolate and milk, which suffices.

## THE TRAILHEAD

Getting to the trailhead is stressful. The husband has to make the six-plus-hour drive from the San Francisco Bay area to the trailhead camp. We make two horse and human pee stops along the route; usually if one horse pees the other will pee. They might need some water and a little walk, as well. We finally pass the historic Gold Rush town of Senora and now we're on Highway 208, traveling through pine- and cedar-scented forest.

As dusk falls, we arrive at Eagle horse camp, a new but primitive camp with trailhead access. The camp consists of a dirt

loop road, an outhouse, and pull-in camp sites with fire pits. It's Saturday night and we eke out the last spot. The camp is lively with horses, mules, and campers, coming and going. The husband sets up the horses' line ties for the night, and we crawl in the back of the truck to sleep.

The next morning is frosty. I lead the horses out to graze, but they just tug me around to the various sparkling grassy spots. They're too excited to graze, wanting to explore and ogle other equines. I decide to fill their hay bags, and begin to organize all the gear to be placed in the panniers and saddlebags. It takes hours to finalize gear, fill the packs, and load up the horses. At 3:00 p.m. we head out, hoping to make it the 1,800 feet (548.6 meters) and 4 miles (6.4 km) over the pass. Yes, yes, I know, everyone else starts at 7:00 a.m. It's always tense doing the final pack loading—especially this time, since we've never taken the Icelandic into the mountains. He is patient as we hoist the panniers on top of his saddle. The Paso Fino, a very good pack horse, is not happy with the upcoming prospects and formally submits his request for transfer to a Petting Zoo. He swings his butt and tosses his head, making it difficult to cinch the sawbuck, place the full Utah bags and strap on his English saddle up top. Even treats won't settle him down. The Icelandic calmly and curiously watches it all unfold.

## VOLCANIC "ICELAND"

We hit the trail. Now the Icelandic is very animated and wants to lead us all. I wedge myself in front of the Icelandic and maintain leadership. The good part is that both the pack and panniers *are* balanced well and we *are* able to go up this very steep route through sliding volcanic ash slopes and over rough volcanic conglomerate layers. There are a few downed logs to cross, which the Icelandic's panniers might not clear, but at 12 hands (48 inches, 122 cm), he's just tall enough.

Near sunset, we pop over the pass and descend into a lovely little hanging valley. The Castle and the Chimneys, tall volcanic formations, surround us. This is the "Iceland" part of our trip. This wilderness has cattle grazing, but this year the spring was so wet that cattle were never brought up to graze. The meadow grasses are tall and headed out. We walk by a cow camp, two historic, tiny steep-roofed log cabins, falling into disrepair. We find a good grove

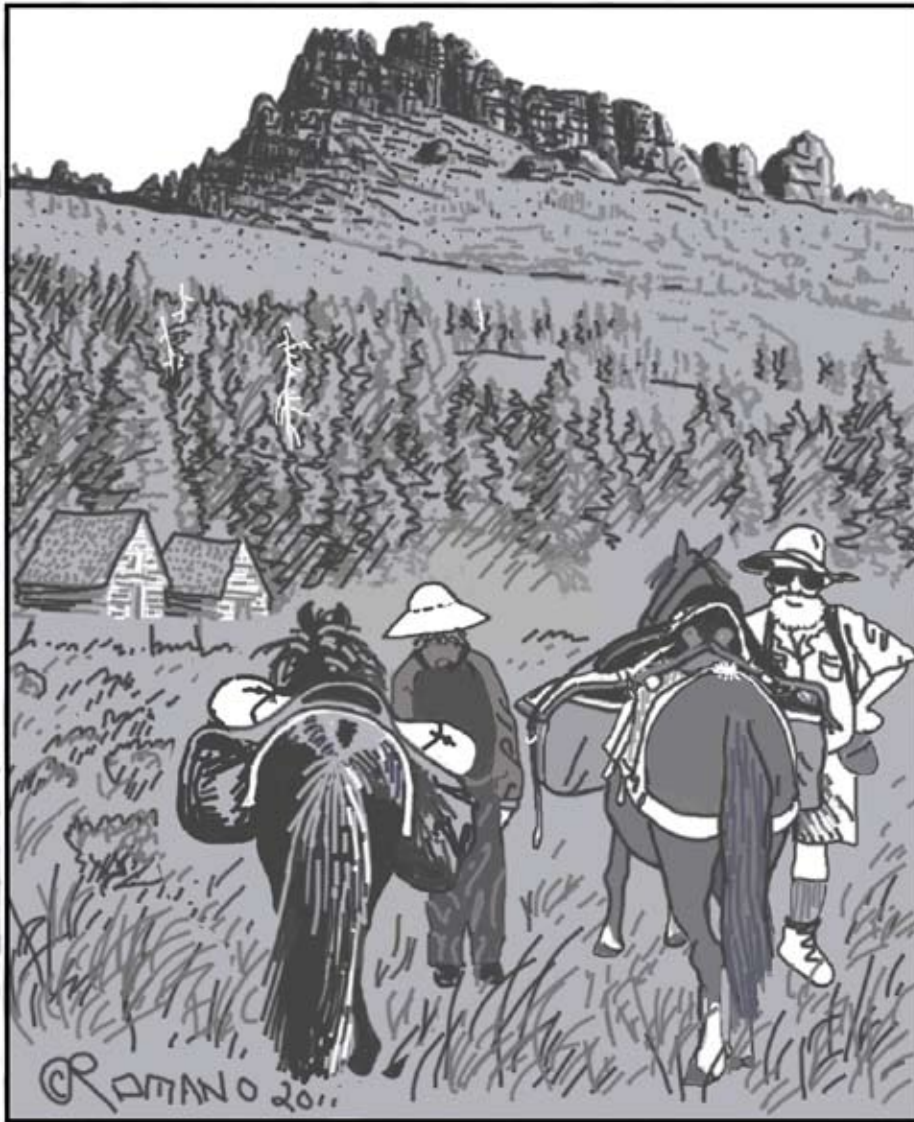
of limber pine at the bottom edge of the meadow. Tired, we unload the packs and unsaddle, feed the horses and blanket the Paso. I discover I've forgotten my flashlight! We do have a moon for this trip, but what will we do if the husband's flashlight fails? I blow up our air mattresses and we snuggle into our bags. Packing up, going over a pass and 4.5 miles (6.43 km), was a big day for four wimpy old-timers.

Restless pawing wakes me. It's dawn. The Paso Fino is saying it's time to graze. I muster all my attention and drive ... and close my eyes again. I do this about 20 times before I haul myself up into the frost. Without the frost this area would be filled with mosquitoes. I take the blanket off the Paso Fino. My plan to use a rain sheet for the Icelandic has failed. It's slid off several times during the night, and my successive attempts to jerry-rig a better attachment system fails. At least his coat does grow a bit during our trip.

## MEADOW MOWING

I snap on the leads and out into the frosty meadow we go, me glancing backwards to see the precise location of camp. The Paso Fino grazes due east to meet the sun. It takes awhile, but the rays come over the ridge, pleasing him no end. The Icelandic is not cold. He tears the grass as if it is the very best he's ever tasted. They both do a little "shopping," trying the various types of grasses offered, tugging me around. After about an hour of grazing, the Paso Fino instantly falls asleep standing. Then he wakes and decides to lay down full out, snoring. The Icelandic continues his meadow mowing.

If there were other horses about, I'd be holding onto both horses. This frosty morning we have the meadow to ourselves. It's safe to let one horse graze free, but with a halter and lead. I've rigged a rope to have clips at both ends, like long reins, which are about 9 feet (3 meters). These loop nicely over the horses' back during grazing. Sometimes one rein goes under a front leg, but there's enough slack not to be of concern. But I watch to make sure both front legs or worse a back leg doesn't get tangled. I release the Icelandic, he rolls in the frost, then races off a short way, kicking for joy. The Paso Fino seems to appreciate being within the proximity of my dried apple bits. I always carry a rustling bag with dried apples and can get horses' attention by whistling and rustling the bag. Once



one horse is interested the other will be interested, too. I don't let the loose horse go more than 100 feet (30 meters) from me.

They're thirsty, tugging me along as they search out a pothole. Their hooves sink deep into the gravel. Gravelly creeks, now with intermittent flow, trap schools of trout fry. They swim frantically in isolated pools, especially when the horses are drinking! In fall, it's deeply quiet, without the roar of water. One horse decides to jump up the bank, and they graze the lush grass, one on top of the bank, one below, sniffing noses on occasion.

I can tell when horses are full. Generally this takes about an hour and a half. Full horses will start to rove, or just run off, rather than graze, or they fall asleep. I watch the Paso Fino, once again fully stretched out, snoring with rapid-eye movements and twitching muscles. Usually, one horse will lay down, with the other on

guard. Sometimes they both lay down, but one is always watching. Now, they're up in an instant, hikers are coming over the pass about a 1/2 mile (.8 km) away.

I persuade them back to camp, clip them to their tie lines, and feed two cups (.47 liters) of pellets. They'll rest now. I can eat breakfast and work on my cartoon trip diary. Bruce sleeps in or reads. We slowly pack up the camp and at about 2:00 p.m. start out for our next destination. We're not going to make the 7 miles (11 km) to Long Lake. We are stiff and tired. We struggle to go about 3 miles (4.8 km) to Whitesides Meadow. A packer with a mule string passes us enroute, and it turns out he guided us into the high country two years ago. Again, it's near sunset and we pitch camp on a volcanic ash platform, above a lovely meadow. The site has short pine forest and one giant Ponderosa pine towering above the fray. We check the line tie areas for toxic vetch and

one site has some, so that tie line has to be moved.

Each meadow has its own unique blend of grasses and wildflowers, now all turned to seed in late September. Sagebrush huddle together at the meadow edges, like flocks of dusty turquoise sheep. This meadow is dry and full of small lupine. Some horses relish legume-family plants, even toxic ones. It pays to know the local plants and watch what your horse is eating. Lupine, toxic vetch, and locoweed are all legumes that can really make a horse sick, as we know from personal experience.

## ON TO "NORWAY"

Today we'll make a little more progress. The rock has changed from volcanic to granite. We're entering "Norway." The trail has rock steps and water bars made and maintained by forest service crews. The Icelandic does a good job of learning to take the steps, some of which are nearly 2 feet (.6 meters) high. I give him bits of dried apple to reinforce his waiting above any big step down. If he rushes ahead, the pack will knock me right over. We go up and down a couple of little passes and find ourselves in Spring Canyon. There is a huge flat meadow with little lakes and a graveled meandering streambed. One lake resembles a very complicated jigsaw piece, with an island. There is a legal campsite nearby. We unload the horses, saddle up and ride off to graze and watch the granite turn pink with alpine glow. Above our heads, bats hunt for the last mosquitoes. The Icelandic is sure this is the best munching meadow of our trip.

The next morning, I graze the horses and then we slowly prepare for our day ride visiting Long and Starvation lakes. With little saddlebags full of treats, we ride to Long Lake. The lake has many small glacier-smoothed white rock islands and peninsulas. This is a brilliant country full of sparkling blue lakes. It's a small scale Yosemite, complete with mini Half Domes. The next day we day ride to Wire Lakes. The husband climbs a dome, while I tend to the horses. These lakes have no meadows; it's good we've brought lunch pellets.

Next dawn, I feed the horses their breakfast. I'm going to climb a dome above the meadow before grazing. I disappear, hiking up a rocky arm. The husband is on duty at camp, and soon the Icelandic is upset and shaking. Something is amiss. Far off there comes a honking sound, is it mi-

grating geese? When I return and lead the horses out to graze they are stiff-legged and alert. When I let the Icelandic loose he puts on a display, trotting with front legs high, head up, snorting. Then a lady with an orange hat pops out of the woods and there is braying. Mules are line-tied in the trees.

Back home, we forgot to check what day hunting season opened, and it is tomorrow. We are too lazy to fish or hunt, and we always forget to check this date. While this group of hunters is very experienced, the area will be filled with those who are not as well versed. In California the permitted age for a hunting license is 12, and, in our state, fashion often substitutes for authenticity. We're wary now. Everyone we see, except this group, sports very new shiny gear; even the fishermen have new side arms. With the Icelandic looking like a black bear and the Paso Fino like a pregnant elk, an "accident" might happen, so no more loose horses or grazing after dark. We decide to head back a couple of days early. We move camp back to Whitesides Meadow. The moon is bright and some night hunters ride the trail below us. This upsets the horses. The Paso Fino bugles and paces. Morning brings a few shots echoing on the cliffs. Despite concern over the influx of inexperienced hunters, we decide to do one more day ride.

We take all day to saunter up hill to the alpine zone. Upper Relief Valley has long dark green compact meadows that look like they've been mowed. Actually it's the elevation that changes the species and height of the grasses. The meadows are strewn with big erratic white granite boulders, their bases surrounded with clumps of frosted orange bilberry leaves. Small arctic tarns reflect both volcanic Flange Rock and enormous Granite Dome. Upper Relief Valley was named after rescuers who rescued a Gold Rush party who'd lost a wagon wheel enroute. The wheel hoop still hangs on a big rock wall with a plaque.

## HEADING OUT

There's no frost on our eighth and last morning. Clouds are over the crest. Each fall day the sky has been uniformly deep ultramarine and the night sky busy with stars, even through moonlight. Each clear evening we've watched pink alpine glow hit the high peaks. Not one thunderstorm has boiled us up a wild sunset. The whole country, very dry now, waits for a good rain or a first dusting of snow. I watch the clouds

build while cinching the packsaddle on the Icelandic. I place the rolled-up panniers on top and then his saddle over them. I throw a long strap overtop and snug the strap to buckles on the packbags. The Icelandic has never had this full weighted rig on before, but he doesn't mind, not when there's a dried apple ring about. The Paso Fino is saddled, with both little saddle bags clipped on top of each other behind his saddle. They're full of lunch and odds and ends, and it's a little unwieldy to mount.

We head out, one riding the Paso Fino, one leading the Icelandic. The clouds thicken and wind peels off the huge black rock monuments. Clouds thin in the late afternoon sun; the storm front has fizzled. We head up and over the pass and down the steep rough path through loose ash and volcanic rock. The trail is suddenly tight, between two volcanic gargoyles. One pack bag hooks on the smaller gargoyle. The Icelandic just pauses, raises his shoulder, and pops the saddle bag right over the rock.

The horses are happy to see the trailer and beg for goodies as we unload. How happy they are to eat hay! We four sleep well, the horses line-tied and us in the back of the truck.

At home, it is sad to see how very disappointed the horses are, mouthing at the old dried grass and swatting flies. To make matters worse, we are in a moderate heat wave, and the Icelandic has grown a lot of winter coat. I hose them off and feed them carrots. Is there a deeper hidden sadness in the Icelandic's eyes, the knowledge of paradise lost? Hopefully, next year our Ice Age Horse will return to his Ice Age meadows again.

## HELPFUL WEB LINKS:

[www.aspenmeadowpackstation.com](http://www.aspenmeadowpackstation.com)  
[www.mcgeecreekpackstation.com](http://www.mcgeecreekpackstation.com)  
[www.easternsierrapackers.com](http://www.easternsierrapackers.com)  
[www.specializedsaddles.com](http://www.specializedsaddles.com)  
[www.backcountryhorse.com](http://www.backcountryhorse.com)  
[www.outfitterssupply.com](http://www.outfitterssupply.com)





# THE WEB TOUR, PART 2

BY JULIE COLE

United States Icelandic Horse Congress

New Member | Login | Search

Home: Calendar, News, Magazine, FAQ

Membership: Profile, Member List, Regional Clubs

Breed: Registry, Search, Evaluations

Ride: Compete, Pleasure Rider

Learn: About the Breed, Article Reprints, ...

Train: Trainers, Riders, ...

The Congress: Board, Committees, Archives

Contact Us: Registry, Officers, Website help

Find us on Facebook: USIHC - United States Icelandic Horse Congress

Our Mission: Support, Advance, Represent, Maintain a registry of purebred Icelandic Horses.

Competition: Rules, Results, Ranking

Competition Rules

Sanctioned Show Results

Schooling Show Results

National Rider Ranking

Masthead image courtesy of Martina Gates.

In the last issue of the *Quarterly*, we introduced the new USIHC website—[www.icelandics.org](http://www.icelandics.org)—which was updated in January to make it more user-friendly. The USIHC website is a valuable source of up-to-date information about the Icelandic horse, and we encourage all members to check it out. To help you get the most out of your web-browsing experience, we've put together this several-part “web tour.”

This, the second part of our tour, explores the features and information found under the **RIDE**, **LEARN**, and **TRAIN** tabs immediately under the beautiful banner photo of a running herd.

## RIDE:

This drop-down menu features sub-categories specific to riding, both Competition and Pleasure. Starting with the Competition tab, you will find four more tabs that break down the various areas of Icelandic horse showing.

First is the subcategory for Competition Rules. Here you will find detailed information via hyperlinks (in blue text) to both the USIHC-specific rules for competition, and also to FIPO, which is the official competition rulebook compiled by our international parent organization, FEIF.

Following the Rules tab are two tabs that track the results from the various Sanctioned and Schooling Shows held throughout the country. The final tab is for the National Rider Ranking. Here you will find the current ranking of riders in all of the sanctioned classes; this tab also gives detailed information about the various USIHC Year End Awards for competition riders, and information on how a rider can participate in the National Ranking program.

The second tab in the Ride drop-down menu is for the USIHC Pleasure Rider Program, also known as the PRP. It too provides sub-categories that explain the program, provide the names and scores of the winners of the Pleasure Rider Awards from the previous year, and link to the application form needed to participate in this program.

The USIHC Riding Badge Program, or RBP, is featured in the third tab of the Ride drop-down menu. This tab will take you to a page giving a detailed explanation of the RBP in an easy to follow question-and-answer format. There are also hyperlinks that will take you directly to the RBP page, or allow you to email the Chair of the Education Committee directly with

questions about this program.

You may notice that there is a tab for the RBP on all three of the menus discussed in this article: the topics Ride, Learn, and Train all apply to the RBP. The RBP is designed to be an intensive educational, yet fun and rewarding program for both adult and youth riders. It encompasses both Pleasure and Competition riding, with each having ascending levels of experience, from beginner to advanced.

When you follow the hyperlink to the RBP page, you will find a very detailed, yet easy-to-follow manual for the program, including a breakdown of the levels, and the requirements and goals of each.

The final tab in this menu is for the Regional Clubs. This tab will take you to the same page for the Regional Clubs that was discussed in part 1 of our web tour, found in the Spring 2011 issue of the *Quarterly*.

## LEARN:

Opening the drop-down menu of the LEARN tab will present you with several interesting pages about the history and use of the Icelandic horse, and also lead to other valuable information for newcomers to the breed.

The tab titled “About the Icelandic

Horse” takes you to a page providing very basic information about our breed, including the breed standard. Also found on this page are hyperlinks, in blue text, that will take you directly to great informational features, such as a “Buyer’s Checklist” especially useful for first-time buyers.

Other hyperlinks take you to the page for the USIHC’s quarterly magazine, *The Icelandic Horse Quarterly*, where you can find links to current and back issues and information on advertising or submitting articles.

Also on this page are links to a number of useful and educational articles related to Icelandic horse health, tack, and riding. (The number of links here will grow as we continue to add articles published in back issues of the *Quarterly* to the website.)

Next on the Learn drop-down menu is a tab for the page “1,000 Year History.” This is a fun, yet informational page that provides some of the colorful history of the Icelandic horse—both actual history and myths. The stories and information

on this page are sure to whet the user’s appetite to learn more about our ancient breed.

Our next two tabs, “5 Natural Gaits” and “Colors,” give brief descriptions of two of the prominent traits of the Icelandic horse. Also found on the “5 Natural Gaits” page are two animated boxes that show the correct footfall of the horse in the Tolt and Flying Pace gaits.

These tabs are followed by the one for featured educational articles from the *Quarterly* magazine, and one that will take the user directly to “The Buyer’s Checklist.” The titles of the contents in blue text are again hyperlinks that will take the user to each topic directly.

The final tab on this drop-down menu is for the Riding Badge Program.

### **TRAIN:**

The drop-down box for the Train gives you two sub-categories to choose from. One is the previously addressed Riding Badge Program, and the other is titled “Horse Trainers.”

The Horse Trainers tab goes to a page where you will find a brief history and description of the process a person follows to become a certified trainer. There are hyperlinks in blue text that will take you directly to either the FEIF website, or to a PDF file that contains detailed information regarding the education matrix for the different levels of certification.

Information is also found about the different certifying agencies, with blue text hyperlinks to their respective website and programs.

Rounding out this page is a listing of all certified trainers who are current members of USIHC. Contact information is given for each, along with blue text hyperlinks to their websites and email addresses (if applicable) and also to the page describing the program summary for the level of certification that each holds.

This concludes our tour of the website for now. In the next issue of the *Quarterly*, the final two drop-down menus will be addressed.

## **Cartoons by C. Romano**





# WHO IS SIGRÚN?

INTERVIEW BY ALEX PREGITZER

## WHAT IS YOUR BACKGROUND?

I was born in Akureyri, a small town in the north of Iceland. I was born with the love of horses and started riding at a very young age. I have been riding ever since I remember. Horses have always been a part of me and my life.

I moved to the U.S. in 1999 to go to school and became a lawyer in 2002. I am licensed in both Massachusetts and Vermont. I met my husband, Jason Brickner, in 2002. We married in 2004 and have made a home here in America, at Solheimar Farm in Vermont.

## WHAT IS YOUR HORSE EXPERIENCE?

I started training horses at a big horse farm outside of Akureyri when I was 10 years old. The owner of the farm had over 100 horses with shoes on at a time. Horses would come and go, so by the time I started working independently training horses (at 14 years old), I had ridden hundreds of horses.

All these horses taught me a lot. Getting to ride all these horses was the best experience for a young rider eager to learn. I learned to read a horse and solve problems on a daily basis. I became educated in using both traditional and nontraditional ways to train a horse to the best of its potential. I learned at a young age what I thought was wrong and right in the process of training horses. I learned that instilling confidence in a horse, rather than breaking a horse, was the key to success.

At that time in Iceland, dressage was almost unheard of, so I resorted to books and taught myself exercises that I later taught the horses. It was pretty funny to see the look on some of the older farmers' faces when I was experimenting with these exercises. Often I would hear them say, "Why are you wasting your time doing this hocus-pocus? Just ride the darn horse." But I was stubborn, so I continued with my so-called dressage training.

I began my competition and showing



Sigrún Brynjarsdóttir teaching in Solheimar's indoor arena (still under construction). Her students are (left to right): Richard Davis, Marilyn Blaess, Sylvia Dow, and Carol Andrews.

career when I was 12 years old. I competed in many Landsmots, the national Icelandic horse show, and made finals. I was Icelandic Champion, and rode the highest rated five-year-old stallion to gold at the 1999 World Championships. I have shown numerous breeding horses who have won first prize.

I am also a member of FT (the Icelandic Trainers Association). I have worked with many excellent horse people during my life. I love learning new things and I believe in the saying, "As long as you live, you learn."

## WHAT IS YOUR TRAINING PHILOSOPHY?

When a horse comes to Solheimar for training, the first thing we do is talk with the owner about his or her goals for the horse. Once we know the owner's goals, we assess the horse. If the horse has the potential to reach the owner's goals, a training plan is set out. We assess how long it will take to reach those goals and we inform the owner.

We believe it is very important that the owner has an idea of how much capital it takes to mold the horse to his or her goals. We also believe that horse training

is not like producing a factory merchandise! All horses cannot be trained the same way and over the same time frame. Each horse learns differently and has to be allowed to grow and develop in a relaxed way and not be rushed.

If the horse cannot reach the owner's goals, we inform the owner and he or she can determine if the horse should be sold or if the goals should be modified. If the owner decides to sell the horse and buy a horse that better fits his or her goals, we can assist with the sale and help the owner obtain their dream horse.

That being said, we believe in focusing on the positive in each horse. Every horse has a purpose and should be allowed to shine where it can.

The Solheimar training philosophy is all about being horse and owner friendly. We use natural horsemanship, dressage, and Icelandic methods in our training process.

When an untrained horse is started at Solheimar, we use natural horsemanship. The horse starts with groundwork. All the aids are taught from the ground, so there is no confusion once the riding begins. We ride the horse in a natural horsemanship halter during the first few

weeks under saddle. When we feel the horse understands the basic cues about stopping and bending through the seat and the voice, we introduce the bit in combination with the natural horsemanship halter. It is extremely important not to pull on the bit no matter what happens. The rider's balance is very important, because at no time can the rider balance him/herself with the bit. The first couple of months of training a horse is the most influential in the training process, with good and bad habits getting imbedded in the horse's mind. Therefore, keeping the mouth soft and the cues gentle are crucial for the future and the well-being of the horse.

Solheimar also specializes in gait training, show training, and training a horse to be a great trail horse. Our training program includes keeping a horse soft and supple, straight, collected (once they are ready for it), and relaxed. The horse's state of mind is very important. Each horse develops differently. Some horses are quick learners, but others take more time.

A horse should never be pushed harder than its mental or physical capacity allows. A relaxed and happy horse learns a lot faster than a horse that is pushed beyond what its mental and/or physical ability allows for. We spend a lot of time building up muscles and keeping the learning experience fun and variable in order to stimulate both physical and mental growth. It is a misconception that a show horse or a high performance horse should be tense. Any horse should be relaxed and know how to perform at the highest possible level with ease and relaxation.

Once the horse has reached the owner's goals, we teach the owner how to ride the horse, so they can reach their goals together.

### **WHAT IS YOUR PHILOSOPHY IN TEACHING?**

I approach teaching riders the same way as training horses. Each student learns in a different way. My goal is for the student to learn in a relaxed and a positive environment, with encouragement and stimulation.

I ask the riders about their goals and we go from there. First, I assess if the rider's horse can reach those goals. If

the horse can reach the goals, a learning plan is set in motion. If the horse cannot reach those goals, I help the rider either to adjust the goals or acquire a horse that can reach them.

I usually give the rider homework, and each session we build on the previous session. The goal is to get the rider in a positive mind frame and to have a lot of fun in the process. Whether the goal is to be successful in shows or to be safe on the trails, the rider and the horse have to have positive stimulation.

My teaching philosophy includes teaching the rider to keep the horse soft, supple, straight, and collected (when rider and horse are ready), and to ride the various gaits using these methods. It is very important to teach the rider to become one with the horse. I use Centered Riding methods to help the rider learn to use his or her body correctly in order to help the horse; I also use natural horsemanship, dressage, and Icelandic methods.

### **WHAT ARE YOUR HOPES FOR ICELANDIC HORSES IN THE U.S.?**

I hope that the Icelandic horse market keeps growing and that more people learn about how wonderful our horse is. I would like to see the breeding program for Icelandic horses in America improve.



A very pregnant Sigrún Brynjarsdóttir competing in four-gait on her stallion Parker frá Solheimum at the Solheimar Open 2010 in Tunbridge, VT. Photo by Denlore Photography.

There has been a huge growth of good horses in America in the past few years, but there is always room for improvement. I would like to see American breeders become more conscious of breeding for excellence. It costs the same to raise an average foal as an excellent foal.

### **CONTACT**

Sigrún Brynjarsdóttir and Jason Brickner  
 Solheimar Farm—Training Center of New  
 England  
 387 Strafford Road, Tunbridge VT 05077  
 802-889-9472  
 sigrunb@aol.com  
 www.usicelandics.com



Sigrún introduces her five-month-old daughter, Kamilla Brickner, to just-born Dagur, a 2011 foal of Parker frá Solheimum and Sif frá Efri-Raudalaek.



# THE RIDER'S AIDS: PART ONE

BY ALEXANDRA PREGITZER, PHOTOS BY HEIDI BENSON

There are endless good books and endless good websites covering this topic, but just in case you are up for a tune-up or have not yet had the time to dig into these topics or just prefer to read about it in this magazine rather than be overwhelmed by a big book, here is some basic information on the rider's aids.

Part one of this article will explain what the aids are. Part two, to come in the next issue, will cover some examples of how we use the different aids.

A special thank you goes to Laura Benson from Valkyrie Icelandic Horses and Heidi Benson from Centaur City Icelandic Horses, who volunteered their time to take the wonderful photos for this article. The photographer is Heidi, the rider is Laura, and the horses are Sjarni frá Blönduósi (chestnut) and Rán frá Hófi (pinto).

## WHAT ARE THE AIDS?

The aids are the actions a rider uses when riding to influence the horse. Basically, they are our way of communicating with the horse under saddle and our way to influence the horse's behavior, movement, and form while riding.

The different aids we use are weight aids, leg aids, rein aids, and supporting aids. Those are the "official" terms.

The aids are combined actions of weight, legs, and reins. These actions are *not* successful when used singly. Correct application entails delicate coordination of all four kinds of aids: weight aids, leg aids, rein aids, and supporting aids.

## WEIGHT AIDS

The weight aids are also called seat aids. These aids are applied through the rider's seat, determining how we distribute our weight in the saddle or on the horse's back. We differentiate between three different weight aids:

1. Increasing the weight on both seat bones, for example, in half-halts, halts, and transitions.

2. Increasing the weight on one seat



Thanks to Laura Benson (the rider) from Valkyrie Icelandic Horses and Heidi Benson (the photographer) from Centaur City Icelandic Horses, who volunteered their time to take the wonderful photos for this article. Here, Laura demonstrates regular rein contact. She is riding Sjarni frá Blönduósi.

- bone, for example, in leg yielding and turn on the forehand.

3. Easing (or lightening) the weight on both seat bones, for example, in loosening exercises while riding young horses or sometimes when trotting Icelandic horses if the trot is insecure.

## LEG AIDS

These aids are applied through the rider's legs. We differentiate between three different leg aids:

1. Forward driving leg aid. For this aid, both legs are positioned at the girth. You would use this aid, for example, when picking up the walk from a standstill.

2. Forward-sideways pushing leg aid. One leg is positioned a handwidth behind the girth (on the side that you are asking the horse to move away from). You would use this aid, for example, when leg yielding or performing a turn on the forehand.

3. Guarding leg or supporting leg. One

leg is positioned a handwidth behind the girth (usually the outside leg). You would use this aid, for example, with your outside leg in turn on the forehand or when cantering on a circle.

## REIN AIDS

These aids are applied by the rider's hands through the use of the reins. Rein aids are different from how we hold the reins (see the next topic). We differentiate between a variety of rein aids:

1. Yielding rein aid. You are giving the rein, always combined with asking, in a "give and take" pattern. You would use this aid, for example, when starting to walk from a halt, and riding forward.

2. Asking rein aid. You are taking the rein, always combined with yielding, again in a "give and take" pattern. You would use this aid, for example, when performing half-halts, halts, and downward transitions.

3. Non-yielding rein aid. You are not asking, but also not giving. You would use

this aid, for example, if your horse goes against or above the contact.

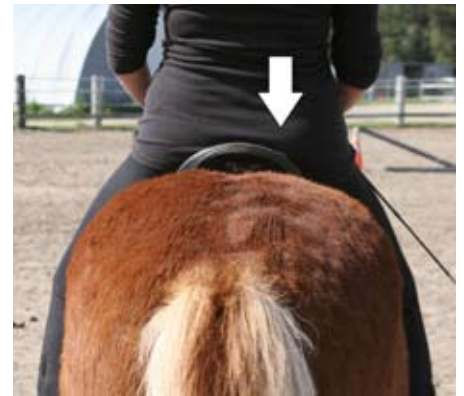
4. Guarding rein, also called supporting rein or regulating rein. These terms describe the rein connection on the outside rein. You would use a guarding rein, for example, when riding on a bent line, on a circle, or through a corner. The guarding rein compliments the action of the inside asking rein when the horse is flexed or bent.

5. Sideways-acting rein, also called opening reins. You are guiding the horse sideways and helping him to move in a certain direction. You would use this aid, for example, when teaching horses to turn or to do lateral movements and when riding young horses.

### HOLDING THE REINS

How you hold the reins affects the amount of contact you have with the horse's mouth and is determined by what you want to achieve with your horse. The different ways of holding the reins are:

1. Long and loose, on the buckle. There is no contact between the rider's hand and the horse's mouth. You would hold the reins this way, for example, when cooling the horse off or as a reward.
2. Long rein, yet having contact with the horse's mouth. The horse can stretch out, but there is still a connection between your hands and the horse's mouth. You would hold the reins this way, for example, during warm up or on trail rides.
3. Taken reins, or "regular rein contact." There is a soft and steady connection between the rider's hands and the



Above, Laura and Stjarni demonstrate weight aids. Top left, increasing the weight on both seat bones. Right, increasing the weight on one seat bone, here the right seat bone. Below, lightening or easing the seat—taking some weight off the horse's back without losing contact with the saddle. Right and below, Laura and Stjarni demonstrate leg aids. Clockwise, a forward-sideways driving leg aid, a guarding leg or supporting leg in a turn on the outside of the horse, and a forward, driving leg aid.





horse's mouth. The horse is not necessarily on the bit, but can be. This is the normal manner of holding the reins while working with the horse, if not asking otherwise. You would hold the reins this way, for example, when gait training or performing dressage.

4. Holding both reins in one hand. There are different techniques of how to hold the reins in one hand—western style, creating a bridge, making a knot etc. Inside the riding arena, the reins are held with the outside hand, the inside hand holds the whip (if the rider is using a whip). You would hold the reins this way, for example, when ponying horses, in T2 and T4 (loose-rein tolt) classes in sports competitions, and in beer tolt competitions. Sometimes you will have rein contact (as when riding beer tolt or ponying horses) and sometimes the reins will be completely loose; in T2 and T4 competition, for example, there cannot be any contact when showing the loose-rein portion of that class.

5. Chewing the reins out of the hand. The rider allows the horse to completely stretch out/forward and down into the bit, while chewing; the rider allows the horse to chew the reins out of the rider's hands. You would hold the reins this way, for example, while cooling off, as a reward, and to check if the horse is relaxed and in balance.

6. "Überstreichen," or give and retake.

There are two different ways of Überstreichen (a German word that doesn't translate very easily!). Both are ways to check if the horse stays in balance while maintaining a good beat and a good form without supportive rein contact. In Icelandic horse riding and training, Überstreichen usually refers to holding both reins in one hand and reaching forward towards the horse's mouth with that hand, so that the reins are clearly slack and there is no rein contact whatsoever. In dressage, Überstreichen usually means that the rider keeps contact on the outside rein while completely releasing the inside rein for a moment. In either case, there is no rein contact whatsoever on the rein(s) in question. Leg and weight aids encourage the horse to keep moving and to stay in form. You would hold the reins this way, for example, when training, in loose rein tolt competitions like T2 and T4, and in dressage riding when checking the horse's balance.

2. A whip (and in some disciplines, spurs) can be used to support and reinforce the leg aids. Spurs are very uncommon in Icelandic horse riding.

3. Treats can be relaxing. They can turn exercise or work into a positive experience for the horse, but they need to be used selectively, depending on the situation and the individual horse.

## HOW TO USE THE AIDS

A prerequisite for the correct use of any aid is for the rider to have a relaxed, secure, and well-balanced, independent seat. The better the horse and the rider are trained, the finer and less visible the aids will be.

Like with all languages, there is a basic structure in this communication with the horse. But it is emphasis and timing that lend expression and refinement. It is essential that anyone who wishes to ride well understand the use, the reasons for, and the effect of all the aids before he tries to teach them to his horse.

With regard to the desired effect, we differentiate between driving aids—those aids that ask the horse to move—and restraining aids, which are all those aids that, in simple terms, hold the horse back. The driving aids should always be dominant, when compared to the restraining aids.

One of the basic principles of riding is: *No aid should be applied by itself, but usually*

## SUPPORTING AIDS

In addition to weight, leg, and rein aids, we use a variety of other aids when riding Icelandic horses. These can be either natural or artificial.

1. Voice signals support and reinforce other aids. They can be calming, encouraging, praising, or correcting.



Laura and Stjarni demonstrate rein aids. Top left, an asking or taking rein aid. Top right, a supporting or guarding rein on the left side, with the horse flexed to the right. Lower left, a sideways acting rein or opening rein, guiding the rein sideways to help the horse understand the exercise. Lower right, yielding or giving the rein.



Laura demonstrates ways of holding the reins on Stjarni frá Blönduósi and the pinto, Rán frá Hófi. Top left, holding the reins in one hand, making a bridge. Top right, letting the horse chew the reins out of the hands, while stretching into the bit. Lower left, loose reins, “on the buckle.” Lower right, long reins with contact.

as a combination of aids to achieve the desired results. The combination of aids does not necessarily mean that the combined aids will always be given at exactly the same time; often there will be a minor delay which occurs within seconds, depending on the rider.

No aids should be applied for any longer time than it takes for the horse to respond: As soon as the horse responds, the rider must stop asking. Anything else will be confusing for the horse and is not fair.

One of the most important characteristics of a good rider is sensitivity. Sensitivity is important to make use of all aids:

1. In the right manner.
2. At the right time.
3. In the right amount.
4. In the right proportion.

Only a well-balanced use of all aids will ultimately lead to success!

### THE HORSE'S VIEWPOINT

When attempting to teach a horse our means of communication, we must remember to proceed with patience. We need a good plan and we need to be very fair, always remembering that the horse by nature does not know what our intentions are. The goal is to communicate very clearly, to avoid any misunderstandings, and to reward the right reactions to our requests immediately.

The horse must be taught in stages and with complete clarity. A rider who can combine intelligence with mental and physical control and co-ordination can produce a highly trained, alert, and happy horse.

Each horse has its own level of

sensitivity to the rider's aids, with some horses requiring very subtle aids and others requiring stronger aids. But regardless of the horse's sensitivity and the reasons for it, a good rider should aim to always use the least amount of pressure necessary, without being aggressive or causing the horse any harm or discomfort.

### SOURCES

To put this article together, I used a variety of resources. Some of the information is common knowledge that I wrote down using my own explanations and expressions; some explanations and terminology are taken from these three sources:

1. *IPZV Trainer C materials* by Rosl Rösner
2. FN book “*The Principles of Riding*”
3. [www.classicaldressage.net](http://www.classicaldressage.net)



# RESCUE RESPONSE

BY GRETCHEN ANTHONY

I am writing in response to the articles in the last *Icelandic Horse Quarterly* concerning the adoption processes of some Icelandics in need of placement.

I would first like to commend those who realize that they cannot care for their horses any longer and step forward to find them good homes. I have the highest respect for those people, as should we all. That could be us at some point.

My family and I have been members of the Icelandic Horse Congress for a couple of years. We currently have three Icelandics on our farm. All three came to us under unique circumstances, which I will explain later.

## WHAT TO EXPECT

My purpose here is to try to clarify for anyone thinking about adoption or rescue just what you can and cannot expect from these animals. I am by no means an expert, but I do have 15 years of experience with over 20 rescue/adoptions on our farm. I felt overwhelmed by the articles I read in the last *Quarterly*; I see there a lot of good intentions. However, good intentions do not make a good home for a needy horse. A barn, pasture, and a rider are not the primary needs of these animals.

The most important thing these animals need is patience. Next come love and understanding. Giving a wild horse a month or two to produce is unacceptable. They are adoptions for a reason, so keep that in mind. This brings me to the questions we should ask ourselves before jumping into adoption.

## WHY ADOPT?

If your answer includes pedigrees, a low price for a particular breed, or breeding possibilities, maybe you should consider everything again. The chances of adopting a champion show horse are slim to none.

What do you expect from this horse? This is the most important question facing an adoptive home. What *should* you expect from this horse? The answer is simple: Nothing.

Yes, I said nothing. Any person who owns an Icelandic can tell you they are a



Bangsi fra Wallamolloy Land. When he was put up for adoption at age 10, he had not been worked at all except by a farrier. Photo by Gretchen Anthony.

passionate breed, and need to be handled as such. Would you still want this horse if you will never ride it? Would you still want it if it takes the horse a year or more to come to trust you and respond to you?

It is so important to keep your expectations low in the beginning. Give the horse time to adjust to you and its new surroundings. Imagine one day being taken from your home and everything you know to be sent somewhere strange, with new demands being put on you from total strangers. How would you respond? Should we expect any different response from a horse?

Start slow. Get the horse to come to you willingly. Treats work very well. Soon the horse will look forward to your visits. Start touching it slowly and with kindness. Let the relationship grow. Allow the horse time to adjust to you.

When dealing with adoptions and rescues, you are not just starting a fresh green horse. On the contrary, you are starting behind the eight-ball. Each horse will have its own circumstances: abuse, neglect, or simply never being handled. Time and patience are the only ways to overcome the problems, and only then actual training can begin.

Sounds like a lot of work, doesn't it? It

is. But there is no greater enjoyment than the first time one of these horses responds to you with trust in its eyes. Nothing in this world compares. I have a couple of stories of ours to share with you. These are from different beginnings but come to a common ending.

## OUR FIRST ICELANDICS

Our first Icelandics were given to us by a family friend. A 20-year-old mare, Hrefna, and her 10-year-old gelding son, Bangsi. Our friend was not in the best physical shape and hadn't ridden the mare for years. Bangsi had not been worked on at all except by the farrier. I had been around them for years and loved their dispositions. I was talking to my friend about two mules we had rescued recently from a local sale barn, and how badly they had been treated. She said she wished she could find a home for her "kids." We already had a total of 15 equines in our herd, and I didn't really know what to say. My son was coming of age to ride, and I thought Hrefna would be great for him. I was not sure what Bangsi would be, but we thought long and hard about it. We went to her home and spent time with both of them before agreeing to anything. They were both very responsive

and willing to accept us into their personal space, especially Bangsi.

After a five-hour ordeal of getting them loaded onto the trailer, we brought them home. I had already been working on the mules, and they were first to accept the newcomers. The “pecking order” was quickly decided, and they adjusted better than I had hoped. Hrefna loved working with my son, and to my surprise Bangsi was more than ready to learn. He grabbed a bridle from me and would not give it back until I put it on him. I removed the reins and let him wear it around for a couple of hours. He strutted around, showing off. The next weekend I decided to try sitting on him. He gave me a look of, “Just what are you doing?” I caressed him and cooed to him and got off. The same thing happened when I put a saddle on him. We are still in training, but the results are amazing, considering where we started.

## ANOTHER ADDITION

During the start of our Icelandic adventures, I discovered the Congress and the many helpful people there. I was directed to a few websites that discussed the horses’ care and special needs, especially saddles. During this quest for information, I was approached by a person who said he knew of another Icelandic mare in desperate need of someone like me. Of course I am thinking, “Another addition?” I emailed her owner for pictures and all the information I could before making any decision.



Hrefna fra Unicorn Valley was 20 years old when she needed a new home. She is the mother of Bangsi, who came with her. Photo by Gretchen Anthony.

And so Eir was added to our family. Eir was 18, bought directly from Iceland for their daughter. I’m sure you know the story: Child grows up and horse is no longer needed. Eir was imported with a gelding who had already been sold and the owner wanted an understanding hand for Eir. All he said was that she would need to be retrained. Have any of us heard that one before?

I live outside Louisville, KY, and Eir was in Georgia, so a road trip was scheduled. I fell in love with her color and her outgoing attitude. She coozied right up to my dad, and I could see she needed to be loved and appreciated, but on her terms. Okay, I thought, I can do that. Only after she was loaded and paid for did the owner tell me she and the gelding had been loose on the main interstate, closing it down for about eight hours. She and the gelding had never been the same afterwards. Imagine that! He said, she would let you get on, but the man who bought the gelding did not want her because she fought him all the way. Now you tell me? He went into the barn and brought out a bunch of tack to go with her. Imagine my shock when two standard western saddles came out. Narrow tree quarterhorse saddles! I smiled and loaded the tack and headed for home.

Now it was not as easy as the others to earn Eir’s trust. We have had her for about two years and only recently did we have a wonderful breakthrough. Last fall she began to include us in her world of play.



Eir fra Tunguhlid was 18 and “needed to be retrained” when she was rehomed. Photo by Gretchen Anthony.

She would stand in front of our ATV and wait for us to chase her, then she would turn and chase us back. Now when we go to ride any of the other horses, she will bump them out of the way so she can be the first to be ridden.

## NOT FOR EVERYONE

Sometimes earning trust can take a lot of time and work. Do not give up and leave the horse abandoned in your home. Be sure that what you offer is better than what they already have. I cannot say it often enough: Keep your expectations low. I would have kept Eir even if I could not have ridden her, just to love her and give her a better life. Is that something you would do?

Not all animals will respond positively to you in the beginning. Be prepared to accept failure along with small successes. The mules I spoke of earlier have been with us for about three years and neither have been ridden. They were not only starving when we found them, but one was physically abused beyond imagining. He is, however, the most affectionate and spoiled one in the barn. I will not give up on him, I love him! Are you prepared for a relationship like that?

Adopting is not for everyone. Be prepared for medical needs. Be sure your farrier is willing to work with an animal who is less than cooperative. Do you have separate accommodations for those who will not respond to other horses? And most of all do you have what it takes to go the distance for them?



# MORE ADVENTURES IN ICELAND

BY JESSICA HAYNSWORTH



Northern Iceland on a mild winter day. All photos by Jessica Haynsworth.

As I write this, it is snowing heavily outside my window here in Iceland. This snow is accompanied by wind, the likes of which I have never seen in the United States. This wind is so strong it can literally knock you over. (I should know. I got knocked flat the other day.) We had to tie down our horse trailer because it was blowing away. I have never seen anything like it. Snow on its own isn't a problem for our studded car tires and horseshoes, but when combined with this crazy north-Icelandic wind, the results make horse training more or less impossible. The snow is blown about so much that if you stretch your arm out in front of you, you cannot see your hand, and you run the risk of getting blown out of the saddle as well.

Although it looks and feels like winter to me, the horses are shedding, the stallions are increasingly vocal, and the truth is that spring is, in fact, upon us. At Baldvin Ari Gudlaugsson's farm, Efri-Raudalaekur, where I am working as an assistant trainer, this means that the pressure is on. In only a few short months, our

three-year-old mares and stallions will need to be ready for breeding shows, to qualify for the Landsmot, and the competition schedules for our older sport horses are getting heavier, too. Not a week goes by without at least one competition, and that means there is no such thing as downtime for me and the rest of the staff.

I, for one, am very excited about several of the young horses that I spent the fall starting and the winter training. It's amazing how much these horses are capable of. No other breed can do what the Icelandic horse can—they bend their bodies at our will, stepping so far under and coming up so far in front to tolt at varying speeds, becoming round and collected to trot and canter, only to then stretch out totally flat and shoot forward in flying pace. It seems incredible that we ask three-year-old (turning four this summer) horses to carry us in all these different frames and at such varying speeds, but what is even more incredible is the willingness and readiness with which they deliver. As far as I am concerned, these are the Ferraris of the horse

world. They are pure power and willingness, and I consider myself blessed to have been given the chance to work with them daily in their native country.

## IT'S A SPORT!

Nothing gives me more pleasure than to report that my beloved Dugur is well on his way to achieving the willingness and talent that we'd hoped he would. In fact, if he continues on this path, he may well exceed it. Training him has been nothing short of exhausting, but that is as it should be, and he pays me back tenfold for every ounce of energy I put into him. I think that people forget sometimes that this is a *sport*—your muscles should hurt after riding, you should be just as tired as your horse.

If there is one thing that I have learned from Baldvin Ari ("Baddi"), it is that you have to be strong and balanced to ride correctly, to support your horse as he bears your weight, to help him balance and be the best he can be. We throw off a horse's balance by riding him, so we must use our bodies to work twice as hard not only to put him back in the balance

that he would have if he were rider-less, but to improve him, to make him a little bit better, every day. That's what it's all about—watching a horse's body change as he becomes well developed, self confident, strong, and balanced.

Ultimately, a well-trained and well-ridden horse is a happier horse, because you have made his job easier for him. He is strong, and so he does not get sore, does not become fearful, and does not dread his job. In fact, he delights in showing off, in feeling his own power, and in working together with you, because you do not hinder him, you help him. This is the kind of relationship I am striving for with Dugur, and by working hard every day we are beginning to achieve it.

## DUGUR'S PROGRESS

Below are three pictures of Dugur, taken months apart over the year that I have been his full-time trainer and half-owner. It is fascinating and very satisfying for me to look back at these pictures and see how my horse has developed and changed under my care. It certainly wasn't easy: There were days when I dismounted on the verge of tears, certain that this horse would never be rideable, and that I had made a terrible mistake in buying him; and there were days that I seriously considered selling him and giving up all together. With Baddi's encouragement, my inherent

stubbornness, and my affection for Dugur, I persevered, and that is what I am most proud of. For once, I didn't give up on something, even though it seemed impossible. I know that Dugur is thankful that I stuck with him; I think that is apparent even in the pictures.

### PHOTO NO. 1

This is Dugur shortly after he arrived at Efri-Raudalaekur in March 2010. He is a naturally well-built horse: good proportions, long, high-set neck, withers slightly higher than croup, well-sloped shoulders, and very good legs. However, see how his muscles were developed, through poor training. The muscles under his neck are heavy, with almost no definition from the throatlatch to the point of his shoulder, while the crest muscles on top of his neck are under developed. It almost looks as if his neck has been attached upside down.

This is because he was ridden very high and tense, with his head in the air, avoiding the bit. I watched his former owners ride him, so I know that their strategy for training tolt was to push the horse hard with their legs, seat, and voice, and then try to pull him into tolt with their hands and upper bodies. They were large men and did not do this gently. For a horse as sensitive as Dugur, this was very frightening, resulting in his incorrect head carriage (and his habit of thrusting his tongue

over the bit and bolting—fast). Although he is wearing a saddle, you can see from the way it dips down behind that he does not have much in the way of back muscles, and that his belly hangs down. This is not because he is fat. In fact, he was far too thin when he came to us, and all of his ribs could be easily felt under his winter coat. It is because he had not been ridden round and on the bit, the correct frame in which the horse supports himself with his abdominal muscles. Instead he had been allowed to be hollow through his back, with his hind end not engaged, and carrying his head almost impossibly high.

Being ridden in this way was uncomfortable for him, and the aids he was given were not clear. As prey animals, horses respond to confusion and discomfort with fear, and as a result Dugur had learned to be afraid of people, and afraid of his work as a riding horse. This is certainly apparent in his expression in this picture. The whites of his eyes are showing, his nostrils are flared and tensed, and I hardly recognize this horse as the beautiful, trusting friend my Dugur has become. It may also be worth noting that at this point in his life he was at the absolute bottom of the pecking order when we put the horses out in a group. He was bullied by even the youngest and most submissive of the horses, and was always chased as far from the group as the paddock allowed.

### PHOTO NO. 2

This is Dugur in June 2010. He already looks completely different, and not just because he's shedded out. Most notably, the muscles under his neck, which were so thickset and overdeveloped before, are now much smaller. He has a visible throat, and quite a well-developed chest above the point of his shoulder. The muscles on his crest are better than they were, but still not particularly well developed, so at this point in his training his neck looks rather skinny, although this will certainly improve with more training. While his back looks much stronger (although it is still hard to tell because he is wearing a saddle), his tummy muscles are still not very well developed, giving the appearance of a big belly. His hind end is also visibly more "under him," although the muscles don't look strong yet.

At this stage in his training, he is perhaps not particularly attractive, but to



Photo number 1 of Dugur, just after he arrived at Efri-Raudalaekur in March 2010. See how his muscle development changes with proper training in the succeeding two photos.



the trained eye he is definitely developing in the right way. He still didn't trust me as much as I wanted him to, and although our relationship was getting stronger, the whites of his eyes are still showing. As far as his place in the herd hierarchy goes, he was still fairly low in the ranking, but he had made friends with a tougher mare who protected him. The pair kept mainly to themselves, and the mare did not appreciate other horses getting near Dugur.

### PHOTO NO. 3

This is Dugur in April 2011. Now we are talking! His neck is highset, arched over the top, and elegant through the throat latch and under-muscle. This is the neck of a horse who has been using himself correctly, and working well through his back. His back muscles are strong, as are his hind end muscles. Compare the slope from his croup to his tail in this picture to that in the first picture: the change is amazing. His belly muscles are tight and trim. He has been supporting himself well with his abdomen. Perhaps the best part of this picture for me, however, is how he is carrying himself. He looks proud, strong, and self confident. His eye is bright, his nostrils are relaxed, and he looks as though he feels like the king of the stable.

Interestingly, Dugur is now at the absolute top of the pecking order when we turn the horses out every day. He is well-liked by the mares and he plays constantly



Photo number 2 of Dugur, above, shows a difference in the muscles under his neck, as well as his crest, back, and hind end. Photo number 3, below, was taken after a year of training.

with the other geldings—I marvel at his energy. I find this really fascinating, that his confidence under saddle has extended to his confidence in the herd. Today, I watched him push a recently gelded (and therefore rather alpha) horse away from the saltlick just by pinning his ears at him. He certainly has changed, and I get chills looking at these pictures. I am so, so proud

of how far he has come, and I know that it's only going to get better from here.

I wanted to share these pictures, because it is my hope that other riders will work as hard with their own horses, and that Dugur's story might encourage others to take a chance on a horse that no one thought would ever be good. Looking at these pictures only reinforces my belief that hard work and correct riding and training lead to a happier, healthier horse, and that any horse can become good if someone takes the time to get him there.

I hope that everyone will begin to or continue to take lessons, and strive to learn more about how their horse's body works, and how, by using our muscles, we can help them use their muscles more comfortably. I know that I'm only at the tip of the iceberg when it comes to understanding this, and I plan to spend a good part of my life continuing to study the physical relationship between horses and humans. We know that horseback riding is good for our bodies, and that it makes us happy. I believe that it can be good for the horse's body and happiness, too, and that's why I find what I do to be so rewarding. Wish us all luck preparing for the Landsmot, and in the meantime, you can find out more about where I live and work at [www.efri-raudalaekur.is](http://www.efri-raudalaekur.is).



# THE LIFE OF A THERAPY HORSE

BY DAWN BRUIN-SLOT

**M**y Icelandic, Stikla from Wind-song, is a therapy horse for the Therapeutic Equestrian Center ([www.tecfarm.org](http://www.tecfarm.org)) in Watervliet, MI. I've been keeping somewhat of a journal on our endeavors with therapeutic riding and wanted to share it with other Icelandic horse owners, so this will be the first part of an ongoing series for the *Quarterly*. I'll begin with an introduction to Therapeutic Riding.

What exactly is therapeutic riding? Many terms describe how horses are used to help humans overcome physical, emotional, and mental challenges, but most therapeutic riding centers now use the term "Hippotherapy." Hippotherapy is any "physical, occupational, or speech therapy treatment strategy that utilizes equine movement." Basically, it's about using a horse to help a human in a variety of ways.

## SPECIAL HORSE

It takes a very special horse to be a therapeutic horse. Some of the required characteristics are as follows: It has to remain extremely calm in every possible setting you can think of (and even some you'd never consider!). It has to be very gentle, never risking harm to its rider—who may not be able to move very fast to get out of its way. It has to be aware of where its body is in relationship to its rider at all times and have an awareness that it cannot move its body into a person's space unless given instruction to do so. Additionally, it has to be trained to move out in any given gait with varying speeds without breaking into a different gait. It has to have good cadence and rhythm in all gaits. It has to be able to start and stop gently, not abruptly. It also must be able to tolerate riders riding off balance, giving inconsistent leg, seat, rein, and verbal cues, and it cannot get frustrated if the person leading it gives cues that conflict with those from the person riding. This is a lot to ask of a horse! But thankfully, there are a number of Icelandic horses who can and do work within these parameters. Stikla is one of them.

Stikla is a true "been there, done that" horse. She's a 23-year-old cremello mare born in New Mexico. She and I



A mock therapeutic lesson for Stikla, with Dawn riding and Katie leading, in the indoor arena at the Therapeutic Equestrian Center in Watervliet, MI.

found each other in 2008 when I looked at her as a potential horse for a friend. She was 20 years old and over eight months pregnant at the time and, as it turns out, didn't work out as a horse for my friend. But I fell in love with her the minute I laid eyes on her. I knew I was going to bring her home within a few hours of that first meeting. After I worked out a few details, Stikla came home to northern Michigan with me. She had that first year completely off to be a mother to her baby.

## VALUABLE JOB

I'd been volunteering for the Therapeutic Equestrian Center in Watervliet, MI for about three years. I knew that they were a fantastic facility, lovingly caring for the horses in their program, and that the work the TEC horses were doing helped riders in the most amazing ways. So after giving it much deliberation and thought, I decided to bring Stikla down from northern Michigan to TEC to try out as a therapeutic riding horse. I knew that she would get the regular, light riding that she needed at her age and that she would be performing a valuable job

in helping riders.

I moved her down to TEC in January of 2011. She was given about a month to settle in and become acquainted with TEC's routine before the first riding session of 2011 started. She settled in within a day or two and was ready to start her new training as a therapeutic riding horse within mere days. That sweet little fuzzball breezed through every bit of her "training," as if she'd done it hundreds of times! She never batted an eye at the people slinging basketball into hoops off her back, the crazy sounding "singing batons," the windmills and pom-poms, the variety of stuffed animals, the wheelchairs, or the erratic movements of her riders. The first time she was taken up to the platform mounting ramp (used by those in wheelchairs), she actually stopped, stood calmly next to it, and gave it a lick to see what it tasted like!

Stikla has now been through one full six-week riding session as a therapeutic riding horse, and it's clear that she's found her calling in life. I have many more stories to come about Stikla's adventures in therapeutic riding, some which will warm your heart.



# GRASS, GRASS EVERYWHERE, NOR ANY BITE TO EAT

BY PAMELA S. NOLF

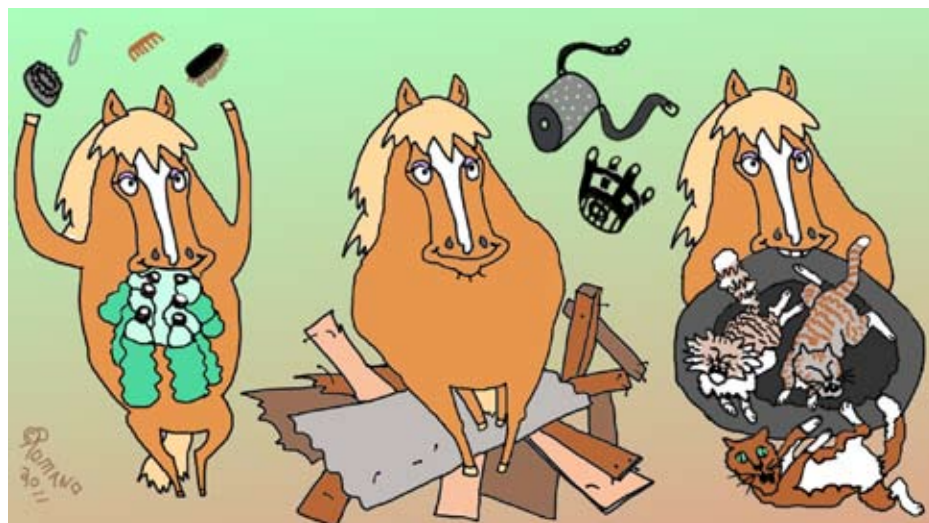
**M**y Icelandic horse Blessi and I used to live in Chester County, PA, near Philadelphia, which was home to a lot of thoroughbred breeders. Smarty Jones, the winner of the 2004 Kentucky Derby, was born in Chester County. Pastures were large and contained rich grass and clover—which was like a candy store for an Icelandic horse. By midsummer, Blessi was overweight and well on his way to obese.

I asked advice from the local horse owners about how to deal with this potential problem and they recommended a grass muzzle. “Just snap a grass muzzle onto Blessi’s halter,” they said. “He’ll be able to get some grass through the openings in the muzzle but he won’t be able to vacuum up grass like he normally does.” As Blessi and I rode around the countryside, we had seen a lot of thoroughbreds come trotting up to the fence to greet us—many of them contentedly wearing grass muzzles.

So to reduce the risk of laminitis or founder, I started to use a grass muzzle. Well, putting something on Blessi that restricted his eating was like giving him a Rubrik’s Cube to play with. He was getting the grass muzzle off in shorter and shorter time periods. I tried many models—muzzles attached to halters and one-piece grass muzzles, cage muzzles and sieve-type muzzles, muzzles with big holes and muzzles with little holes. I tried adding additional metal clips to reinforce the plastic clips—all to no avail.

## THE MUZZLE PUZZLE

Blessi had many different ways to defeat the grass muzzle puzzle. He would scrape the bottom of the plastic muzzle against the ground until he wore a big hole in the bottom of the muzzle. He would position the muzzle against a handy post or stump and rub the muzzle off. Somehow (I never figured out how) he undid the clips on the muzzle and removed the muzzle but left his halter on. Once I walked into the pasture to find another horse tugging on Blessi’s grass muzzle as he was wearing it—probably



Blessi’s misadventures are often amusing. We laugh when he unpacks the tack bags, pulls water bottles from their six-pack rings, destroys an old shed, or dumps the kittens out of their bed (thinking it was a feed pan). But when he tears off his grazing muzzle time after time and gets fat, fat, fat? Not funny, Blessi.

because there were wisps of grass stuck in the muzzle.

It got to the point where I was spending more time walking the large pasture looking for the muzzle than Blessi actually wore it. I would find the muzzle in a different place each day—hanging off a fence, sitting on tree stump, buried in a clump of grass. I would find a detached grass muzzle, sometimes the muzzle-halter combination, and, occasionally, muzzle and halter in different parts of the field. Just a note of advice to those of you who also own clever Icelandics: Never get a muzzle/halter combination in any shade of green. And all those thoroughbreds watched me search the field while they contentedly grazed through their muzzles.

And the pounds kept piling on. In desperation, I went to a local Amish harness maker for a customized grass muzzle. The harness maker confessed he had never been asked to do custom work on a grass muzzle, so I explained the situation. After he stopped chuckling, he went to work on the design. The muzzle had two extra levels of straps around the muzzle and an extra chin strap; it was attached to a cribbing collar.

I wanted to make sure that Blessi did not feel trapped or uncomfortable with the new muzzle. I slowly introduced him to the muzzle and made sure he had no problem with it. However, he did look like Hannibal Lecter wearing the mask in “Silence of the Lambs.” We spent a half hour hand-grazing to see if Blessi had any issues; he immediately put his head down and started vacuuming up much smaller amounts of grass—the difference between a portable hand vacuum and the industrial shop size vacuum.

Since he seemed comfortable with the contraption, I led him back to his pasture. When I turned him loose, Blessi took a dozen paces into the pasture, stopped, dropped, rolled to his back, and used his front leg to brush the muzzle off the end of his nose. When I was done laughing, I gave up on grass muzzles and put him in the pudgy pony pasture, i.e. an almost dry lot, for the rest of the summer. He even managed to lose some weight. Now if I can just find a pudgy pony pasture for myself.

## LAMINITIS

When the grass becomes lush and rich in the summer, many Icelandic owners try to restrict their horses' grass intake to control weight gain. Evolution, in the extreme climate of Iceland, seems to have developed a thrifty, easy-keeper horse. Recent research supports the idea that some Icelandics can be very easy keepers. Using Icelandic and Standardbred horses, Ragnarsson and Jansson (2010) studied grass haylage digestibility from hay harvested at different stages of maturity and compared the resulting metabolic plasma profile. Over the course of the study, the researchers found that the Standardbred horses lost weight and the Icelandic horses gained weight, regardless of the type of haylage fed; the metabolic profiles also differed slightly.

Unfortunately, when you talk about easy keepers and weight gain, the dreaded word "laminitis" often comes up.

"Laminitis is the most serious disease of the equine foot and causes pathological changes in anatomy that lead to long lasting, crippling changes in function (chronic laminitis or founder). It is the second biggest killer of horses after colic. In the USA National Animal Health Monitoring System (NAHMS) report of the year 2000, 13 percent of all horse establishments (excluding racetracks) had a horse with laminitis in the previous year and 4.7 percent of these died or were euthanized" (Pollitt, n.d., para 4).

Horse owners can better help their horses lead long and comfortable lives by learning more about this debilitating disease. This article will focus on what is laminitis, how to recognize the symptoms, and some steps the average owner can take to help prevent its onset.

## WHAT IS IT?

The Merck Veterinary Manual (Aiello, 1998) defines laminitis as "transient ischemia associated with coagulopathy that leads to breakdown and degeneration of the union between the horny and sensitive laminae. In refractory cases, rotation of the pedal bone is a common sequel that may progress to perforation of the sole" (p. 216).

Ah, but what does this mean?

The Equine Information Library (Laminitis, n.d.) provides a definition of laminitis that is more understandable by the average reader. Laminae are the leaf-like structures that secure the wedge-shaped coffin bone (or pedal bone) to the hoof

wall. Laminitis occurs when blood flow to the laminae is disrupted and the laminae are weakened. In moderate cases, the coffin bone starts to rotate downwards. In severe cases the coffin bone and the hoof wall separate and the coffin bone starts to sink. In extreme cases, the coffin bone may sink down and actually penetrate through the sole of the hoof.

## WHAT CAUSES IT?

In her excellent article "Laminitis," Dr. Judith Mullholland (2005) states that "something has to happen within the body or to the body to trigger a laminitic episode" (para 1). She goes on to discuss the multiple causes of and associations with laminitis, such as overfeeding of grass or grain, injury, stress, genetics, interaction of certain drugs, bad shoeing, road founder, high doses of corticosteroids, retained placenta, exposure to certain fertilizers, any disease with a toxic basis such as pneumonia or colic, certain phenotypes (body types), starvation, and obesity. High fever and bedding containing black walnut shavings can also cause laminitis (Laminitis, n.d., para 3). Factors also associated with laminitis are Cushings' disease or previous bouts of laminitis (Laminitis, n.d., para 4).

In a study of risk factors for laminitis among 160 ponies, Dr. Kronfeld (2006) found that metabolic changes associated with pregnancy and obesity, combined with changes in pasturage, resulted in insulin resistance that led to laminitis. This condition, Pre-Laminitic Metabolic Syndrome (PLMS), has a genetic component, so that individuals within a breed may have different levels of susceptibility for developing laminitis.

Dr. Harris (Kline, 2008) has found that certain horses are "thrifty"; they maintain weight easily and gain weight with just small

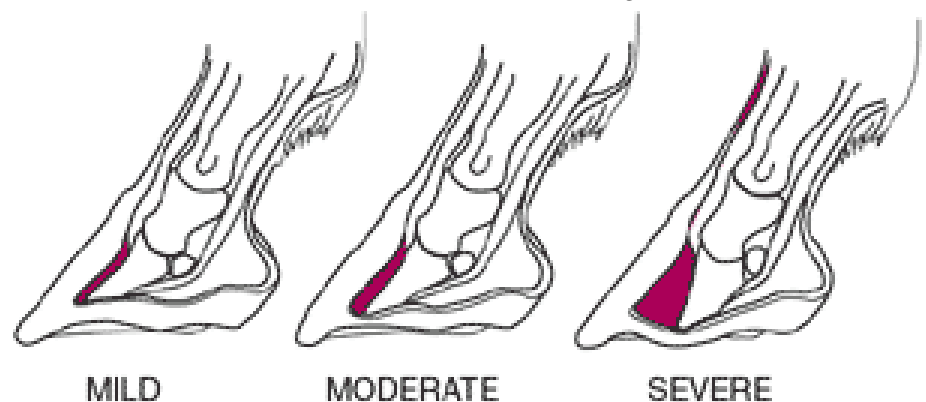
amounts of excess food. This condition is related to the glucose transporter proteins, especially glut-4, that carry glucose to various parts of the body such as muscles, tissues, and hooves. Certain horses have a gene that inhibits glut-4 and is associated with a propensity for laminitis.

"It is conceivable that it may have been beneficial for ponies with the 'thrifty gene' in the wild, under harsh conditions of feed restriction. Blocking glut-4 would leave more available glucose for use in tissues like the endometrium (lining of the uterus) that do not require glut-4 to transport glucose in order to support pregnancy when times were tough. However, under modern conditions of feed abundance, these animals are more prone to high levels of visceral fat and elevated portal fatty acids which the liver converts to glucose" (Kline, 2008, para 3).

Recent research has found a strong link between insulin levels and laminitis. Sillence, Asplin, Pollitt, and McGowan (2007) examined the hormonal and metabolic causes of laminitis and its relationship to insulin and glucose transportation. They discovered that in a healthy horse, stress, exercise, or food intake causes a short term increase in glucose followed by a short term increase in insulin, which prevents the level of blood glucose from rising too high.

"However, when the glucose transport proteins are overworked (e.g. through chronically elevated cortisol concentrations or chronic overfeeding), they become less responsive to insulin, such that glucose intolerance/insulin resistance develops" (p.3). The researchers found a direct link between excess insulin and laminitis.

The causes of laminitis are complex and varied. Scientists are continually conducting research on this topic to improve our understanding of this disease. Of course, the



This diagram shows the rotation of the coffin bone as laminitis progresses from mild to severe. Reprinted with permission from the American Association of Equine Practitioners (AAEP).





This owner has discovered that letting her horse out in a grazed-down field lets the horse get some activity while restricting grass intake. Photo by Pamela Nolf.

easiest way to deal with laminitis is to try and prevent its occurrence.

### COMMON SYMPTOMS

As Dr. Mullholland (2005) states, the classic symptoms of full blown laminitis are: “A bloated horse with foul smelling manure with grain in it, a temperature of 39°C, a heart rate over 60, swollen legs, hot feet, and strong digital pulses” (para 5).

If symptoms progress to this point, the horse is in a lot of pain and you should contact the veterinarian immediately.

Dr. Mullholland goes on to suggest that the horse owner can greatly reduce the impact of a bout of laminitis by being extremely vigilant for any of the first signs of the disease. Watch for constant foot shuffling, a stance with the forelegs out and the hindlegs underneath and an arched back, reluctance to move, standing in one place for long periods, or longer times than usual spent lying down. Laminitis is more likely to occur in the front feet, but can occur on any combination of feet. If you even suspect laminitis, cool the feet by soaking them in cold water and call the veterinarian!

### LOOK AT DIET

How can you reduce your horse’s risk of laminitis? As Dr. Vialls (2007) notes, “The vast majority of laminitis cases (especially if you include Low Grade Laminitis) appear to be caused or at the very least triggered by diet in some shape or form. So it makes sense if we’re trying to either avoid laminitis or get an active attack under control to take a long hard look at the diet of the horse in question” (para 1).

Types of hay—orchard grass, legume hays, oat hays, alfalfa—can vary in their levels

of protein, starches, sugars, and fructans. For example, legume and Bermuda hays contain fewer carbohydrates than oat hay (Ask the, n.d.). Factors such as location of harvest, harvest conditions, time of day harvested, recent rain, and drought also can impact the levels of carbohydrates in the hay (Kline, 2008). Further discussion of equine nutrition covers so many factors—such as protein, carbohydrates, minerals, roughage, etc.—that it is beyond the scope of this article.

Several authors (Kline, 2008; Ask the, n.d.) have made the following suggestions for feeding horses that may be prone to founder:

- Use a type of hay that is lower in fructans.

- Allow grazing at night, when fructan concentrations are low and restrict grazing during the day.
- Don’t allow horses to graze in frosted fields, since sugars build up in the grass.
- Feed hay that has been dried in the field for a longer time since it has lower carbohydrates.
- Soak hay in water before feeding to reduce some of the sugar content.

If you think your horse is too “thrifty,” talk with your veterinarian about the proper diet to meet the nutritional needs of your horse and reduce the chance of laminitis. You may also want to get your hay assayed to determine its nutritional content.

### TRY THE MUZZLE

Another way to restrict your horse’s feed is to use a grass muzzle—though it did not work for me and Blessi, you might be lucky. Manufacturers make a variety of grass muzzles. Which one you use will depend on your personal preferences, the grazing habits of your horse, and his or her puzzle-solving abilities.

B. Benard (2010) reviewed several muzzles from several different manufacturers. In general, she suggests that the muzzle “should be lightweight, but durable enough to withstand at least one full season of use. It should be airy and comfortable for the horse. It needs to come in many sizes and/or



Some people use a grass muzzle to limit the amount of grass that the horse can eat. The grass muzzle should be properly fitted and the correct size for the horse. In this case, the basket is a bit too small for the size of this horse’s muzzle. Photo by Pamela Nolf.

have multiple adjustments to fit every equine head and, once fitted, it should stay on that head. It must be safe. In the rare event of entrapment, its safety mechanism should release long before the muzzle sustains damage” (para 3).

She also suggests looking for reinforced bottoms on basket style muzzles to help combat repeated scraping, and safety snaps that can release if the muzzle becomes entangled on something. You may need to pad the muzzle straps with sheepskin to prevent rubbing away hair. Be prepared to experiment with different styles of grass muzzles, since Bernard found out that at least one horse could eventually remove each of the models tested.

## DRY LOT

If all else fails, you can put your horse in a dry lot so that you can precisely control what it is fed. Try to prevent boredom by supplying frequent small feedings and providing more attention. And increased exercise is also a good way to control weight for any species.

There is always a discussion as to whether grazing muzzles or dry lots are better for equine weight control. Icelandic horse trainer and USIHC member Alexandra Preigitzer has observed benefits and drawbacks to each method: “I have friends boarding at a farm without dry lots. All horses there, no matter what breed, are in muzzles between May and November. It works well for some horses, others keep taking theirs off. They added a kind of collar around the neck for those, and then tape the collar with duct tape to the muzzle. But in order for it to work, the ‘collar’ has to be relatively snug. And what if the horse ever gets caught in the fence with this construction? On the one hand, there are huge pastures and these horses can eat all day and have so much room to run and roam and play. On the other hand, I am wondering if the added collars on some horses are not uncomfortable once the horses bend down to eat. The muzzles tend to get smelly if not cleaned regularly, screaming bacteria. In the heat of the summer, I wonder if the loud breathing through the muzzle means that the horses cannot breathe as easily. And the horse dentist found that quite a few horses have their front teeth worn down unevenly—others did not—from eating through the muzzle and their teeth constantly rubbing on it.” But, as Alexandra concludes, nobody wants to risk



One option to control the grass intake of your horse may be to place him in a dry lot, sometimes known as the pudgy pony pasture. Photo by Pamela Nolf.

laminitis! Dry lots versus grass muzzles have different advantages and disadvantages, so the owner needs to find the best compromise that meets her horse’s needs.

## IS MY HORSE FAT?

Most of us don’t want to admit that our horses are too fat. And with the amount of hair that Icelandics sport, it may be difficult sometimes to differentiate between excess weight as opposed to fluffiness. Harrison (n.d.) lays out a precise method to measure and calculate body weight. You assign a numeric rating to six areas on the horse—neck, withers, tack crease, tailhead, ribs, behind the shoulder—to calculate your horse’s basic body condition. This may be a useful tool if you need more precision because your horse is prone to laminitis.

However, for most of us it may be easier to answer the following questions based on S. Raston’s (2004) criteria:

- Is it true that you can’t feel your horse’s ribs?
- Is your horse’s neck “cresty” or bulgy and floppy” along the line of the mane?
- Is the top of the withers covered with fat?
- When you girth your horse, does fat bulge on either side?
- Is the loin area directly behind the saddle creased?

- Is there is a pad of fat at both sides of the root of the tail?
- Do your horse’s inner thighs rub together when the horse stands square?

If you answered “Yes” to more than one or two of these questions, your horse is probably fat not fluffy, and you may want to look at restricting food intake and increasing exercise.

Sometimes strict rationing and a gradual exercise program are the only way to save a horse’s life. Janice and Tim Hutchinson, of Siamber Wen Icelandics in the United Kingdom, obtained an Icelandic mare named Raena who weighed approximately 1200 pounds, which was about 300 pounds above her last known fit weight of around 800 pounds. As the Hutchinsons (n.d.) warn, “A horse carrying this amount of excess weight is a ticking time bomb of potential ill health and even death. Laminitis and Cushing’s are two obvious possibilities, with the very real danger of hyperlipaemia [abnormally elevated levels of lipoproteins in the blood related to cardiovascular disease and acute pancreatitis] and death if she were to be dieted too drastically. ... This mare of under 14 hands, was carrying the equivalent of two large adults around all of the time” (para 1).

“Dieting the Obese Horse” on their website documents their 30-week program





During the shoeing done at week 7, the Hutchinsons could see the shadow of the coffin bone on Raena's front hooves. This picture shows Raena's front hoof around week 13 of the diet at the next shoeing. There is bruising around the toes where the laminae had been subjected to tearing. The white line, which should be of equal thickness around the perimeter, was wider at the toe. Reprinted with permission of J. and K. Hutchinson.

of diet and re-introducing gradual exercise. When Raena first arrived, she was so obese that her front legs stood outside her back legs. After 13 weeks into the program, an equine physiotherapist examined Raena and found "that her shoulders and chest muscles were very painful, possibly due to being forced to walk with her front feet so far apart, due to the vast amount of fat around her shoulders and also partly due to discomfort in her front feet through carrying such a massive overload" (para 19). Raena was typically short-strided. After a variety of exercises and some weight loss, Raena began to move more easily under saddle and lengthened her stride. When the farrier removed Raena's shoes at week 7, the shadow of the coffin bone was apparent on the bottom of her hoof, indicating a close call with laminitis. The Hutchinsons have generously shared photographs of Raena through her stages of weight loss. Note: In extreme cases of obesity, consult your own veterinarian to develop a nutritional and weight loss program tailored for your horse.

## TREATMENT

As mentioned above, you should call the veterinarian if you even suspect laminitis.

Dr. Mullholland (2005) cautions, "In all cases of laminitis, if the acute phase can be kept to 12 hours or less, damage within the foot will be greatly reduced. Never wait until the next day to ring the veterinarian, do it at the very first signs, even if you are

unsure whether it is laminitis" (para 4). Soak the horse's feet in cold water while you are waiting for the veterinarian. She will prescribe the proper treatment. If the horse has already foundered, consult with your veterinarian and farrier to develop an appropriate maintenance plan. Once foundered, the horse will be even more susceptible to further outbreaks. With proper treatment and care, a horse with laminitis can often live a comfortable and even productive life.

## CONCLUSION

"The best way to deal with laminitis is preventing the causes under your control" (Laminitis, n.d., para 10). However, even if you think you are doing everything to control those causes you may be unpleasantly surprised.

USIHC member Nancy Marie Brown cautions, "My 20-year-old mare had a bout of laminitis last year. I learned three things: First, it doesn't only happen at the beginning of summer; in the fall, grass can have a 'sugar-spike,' as my vet calls it, and become richer after the first frost. This is what caught us. Second, the horse's hooves don't need to be hot. The best way to tell is to know your horse's regular walking gait, and if you see anything odd, call the vet immediately. We caught it early enough that there was no rotation of the coffin bone. Third, laminitis in an older horse that has never had it before, is not obese, and was not out on grass for an unusual amount of time (mine went from 12 hours a day to 24 after the first frost, and in 3 days foundered) could be a sign of Cushing's disease and should be tested for it. We tested her this spring and, luckily, the result was negative—but that also means we don't really know why she foundered."

Ultimately the responsible horse owner needs to be ever vigilant. By educating ourselves on equine nutrition, hoof care, and signs of illness, we can better help our horses from developing this painful disease.

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# MASTERS OF EQUITATION

BOOK REVIEW BY BERNIE WILLIS

Deb Bennett, Ph.D., the popular author and authority on horse anatomy says in the April 2011 *Equus* magazine, “The old European masters most certainly did practice many things that benefit a horse’s carriage, way of going, and conformation: lateral work, flexions, doubling, untracking, and lengthening of step and stride. ... Today as in the past, the horse must be helped to acquire the peculiar strengths and coordination necessary for his main task—the task that underpins literally everything else—which is to carry a rider well.”

Martin Diggle has compiled four books in a series titled *Masters of Equitation*. They are *Canter, Trot, Counter Canter & Flying Changes*, and *Collecting and Lengthening*. *Collecting and Lengthening* is the subject of this review.

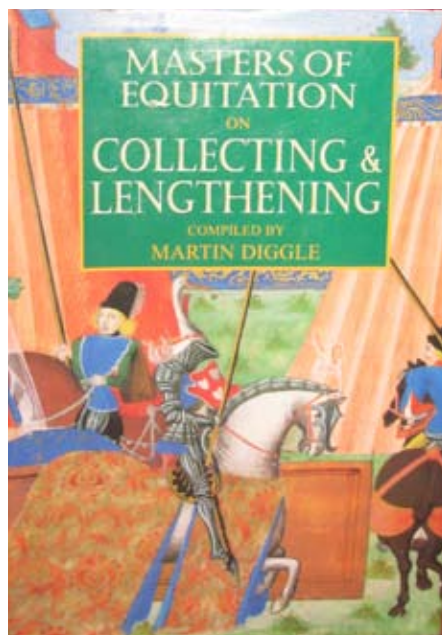
“Masters of Equitation” refers to riding masters of centuries past, such as Oliveira, Steinbrecht, Klimke, Watjen, Seunig, Winnett, and Pluvinel. Instead of reading the volumes of each of these authors and looking for the gems that apply to your concerns, Diggle has compiled the information on a subject-by-subject basis from the recognized masters. *Collecting and Lengthening* consists of 155 pages about horses and riding, followed by a bibliography and a series of short biographical sketches on the original authors.

## THE RELATIONSHIP

The chapter “The Relationship between Collecting and Lengthening” provides these insights:

Diggle comments, “It is all too easy, on a superficial level, to think of collecting and lengthening simply as ‘opposites,’ but this is to misunderstand the special relationship between them.

“Extensions are, in a sense, a relief from collection, but they are also proofs of collection. If a horse cannot immediately lengthen the trot, there is a good chance that the previously collected trot had no power. If nothing can be let out, nothing was being stored up. Collection and extension should be like the proverbial cannon—the same amount of gunpowder, only a



different angle of the barrel.’ –Paul Belasik, *Dressage for the 21st Century*

“The difference between the various tempos—the ordinary trot, the collected trot, the extended trot—does not lie in the acceleration or the reduction of the pace, but exclusively in the lengthening of the stride or the elevation of the steps while maintaining the rhythm.’ –Alois Podhajsky, *The Complete Training of the Horse and Rider*

## PRINCIPLES

The chapter “Principles of Collection” addresses my personal concerns about Icelandic horse competition here and in Europe. It seems to me that many of us want more, but because of misunderstandings end up with less, much less. You will recall the principles of dressage from earlier editions of this magazine. Diggle makes this compilation:

He writes, “It is one of the principles of Classical equitation that everything is done in due season; training is not only a layered process, it is also a process in which different aspects interlock to support each other.

“Proper collection is the result of a long process of education through various stages that allow no tricks, no short cuts.’ –Alfred Knopfhart, *Fundamentals of Dressage*

“Premature collection either produces

horses without impulsion or disobedient horses. The drive forward is the basis of all dressage training and cannot be established securely enough.’ –Gustav Steinbrecht, *The Gymnasium of the Horse*

“For this collecting ... it is ... important that one should not make the deplorable mistake of trying to imitate the picture of a collected horse. The temptation is strong, especially if certain single points are over-valued. Collecting and erecting a horse must needs take a long time. ... The quarters (haunches) must first of all be physically trained and strengthened to make them fit to carry the load. If this process is hurried the horse will probably feel pains, soreness, stiffness, even lameness may result.’ –Wilhelm Museler, *Riding Logic*.”

## WAY TO SUCCESS

It is my hope that these sample comments from the old masters will encourage you to develop the potential of your current horse, that you will either take the time to read the volumes the masters wrote or the compilations of Martin Diggle. I believe the shortest way to success with our Icelandic horses is to recognize their rich history and the collateral education of all horses, as described by those who have gone before us.

The *Masters of Equitation* series is published by J. A. Allen, Clerkenwell House, Clerkenwell Green, London EC1R 0HT and is available through [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) and other booksellers.



# IT'S A PLEASURE!

COMPILED BY NANCY WINES-DEWAN  
INTRODUCTION BY KAREN OLSON-FIELDS

The USIHC Pleasure Riding Program is about us. Who are we? People who love to ride our Icelandic horses. It is that simple. This program is open to any USIHC member and is about this community. You all belong. Whether you ride at competition level or putt along the trail with your reliable trail horse, you can belong to the PRP.

I have enjoyed my three years as PRP director, and it is with some regret that I stepped down. What I will miss is getting to know you. Over the years, via email and USPS, I corresponded with many PRP members across the country. Pictures and notes gave me clues and insights into the different experiences and regional activities and riding climates (weather and conditions).

The mission of the PRP includes promotion of the Icelandic horse to the greater horse community. This happens quite naturally. Although I have done my share of expos and event booths, I have talked more about the Icelandic horse out on the trail. I rarely pass other riders without stopping to answer questions about my horses. In the early days, the opening question was almost always something like, "Cute pony, is that a ..."

Shetland? Seriously? I cannot count the times I patiently explained that the Icelandic horse is a *horse*. Nowadays, most people ask, "Is that an Icelandic?" I stop every time and talk about my horses and the breed. Face it people, we love to talk about our horses—like parents talking about their kids' straight A's.

The PRP is a great way to get our horses out in public and promote them large as life! Be a part of the PRP and be prime-promoters of our wonderful breed! The following are stories submitted by some of this year's Pleasure Riding Award winners, while the next article in the *Quarterly* introduces the new chair of the Pleasure Riding committee, Ellen Wilson. You can learn more about the PRP on the USIHC website, [www.icelandics.org](http://www.icelandics.org), under Ride.



Nancy Wines-Dewan of Maine drives her mare Sinna through an obstacle course.

## **NANCY WINES-DEWAN ALL STARS #2 2500 HOURS**

This was the year of change! After years of searching, we found a new farm not far from our home of many years and set to work making the transition to a smaller house, bigger barn, and more land. My time spent riding and driving my Icelandic mare Sinna and gelding Máni became shorter as the year progressed, but all the more appreciated because of its relative infrequency. Although my usual daily trail rides and drives proved to be the exception rather than the expectation, we still managed to fit in a variety of events: a benefit ride for a non-profit equestrian center and carriage museum, carriage driving clinics, an annual drive through 10 miles of beautiful trails amid woods and fields along the coast in southern Maine. Two events stand out for me in 2010, one ridden and one driven.

For the second year, I volunteered with a local land trust to monitor a conservation easement via horseback. The Royal River Conservation Trust holds many acres of easements along the Royal River watershed in southern Maine. Once a year all of these easements are visited by volunteers who meet with the landowners, and walk the property to make sure that the terms of the easements are being met. Usually these visits are by foot, but some lend themselves to "mounted monitoring." Happily, one of these easements is owned by an equestrian who is delighted to be able to participate in the process on horseback. I provided the horses and we both enjoyed riding the boundaries of her 100-acre parcel.

The second event was a demonstration and Carriage Day held for the third year at an assisted living facility nearby. Many of the residents have ridden or driven horses in their youth and are delighted

to see various types of carriages pulled by a wide variety of horses: Icelandic, Mini, Hackney pony, and Morgan. The driving area is small, but the smiles on the faces of the spectators are wide as they watch the horses and drivers, listen to descriptions and commentary, ask questions and meet the horses afterwards.

Now that Sinna, Máni, and I are settling into our new farm, I'm looking forward to many more hours spent in the saddle and in the driving seat, exploring new trails in 2011.

## **WALTER DAVIS 1000 HOURS**

Last summer Efstur and I, along with my wife and her horse (an Icelandic, of course) entered two horse shows. Both were small and more of a schooling nature. Efstur got reserve champion in the one sponsored by our local horse club and we got reserve champion in the series of shows at the Green Mountain Horse Association. Efstur is also trained to drive, though because of the hills up here in Vermont driving is somewhat limited, and not our favorite thing to do. Efstur is three-gaited—no tolt or pace—but he more than makes up for it in other ways. Trail riding is our favorite activity, but we do like variety in what we do. Efstur likes going out on new trails and is faster leaving the barn than coming home, especially if a new trail is involved. Though nowadays we have to truck to get to new trails. But the old trails are new again every spring.

We have started our spring training after a few months off. I don't ride when it is below zero and the snow is three feet deep or it is very icy. We are doing a daily hand-walking, increasing the distance over the course of the past two weeks. We have gotten up to two miles on the dirt roads, and are both in better shape for the hand work. The trails are still deep in snow and ice.

What I like about trail riding is the quietness, listening to the birds, the sound of the tree branches as they squeak and rustle in the wind. You can hear the horse breathe when you go up hill and he is working, the sound of his feet as they touch the ground, the sound of the foot-falls on a trail are so different from when you are in a flat ring with consistent footing. You can hear it when they hit a rock on hard soil, the snap of a twig as he steps

on it or kicks it out of the way. The swish of his tail as he pushes the flies away. Sometimes we spook a deer and away it goes crashing through the brush and leaves. Efstur just stops and stares. I think he would follow them if he could. He really does not need a trail but he does need some direction or who knows where you will end up!

There are the smells: the early morning freshness, the smell of the leaves in autumn, the scent of the grasses as we cross the open areas, the aromas of cooking and dryer sheets (from the laundry) as we pass the neighboring houses, the smell of Efstur as he works up the hill or trots down the road. All horses have an individual smell a little different from all the others, and Efstur's smell is very special to me. We can smell the vernal pools in the spring. In the summer the rivers and streams have that special smell as we pause to take a drink, and stand just for a minute to listen to the sound of the water. And then we move on to feel the breeze or sometimes the wind on our face, cool in the spring, warm in the summer (it never gets really hot up here in Vermont), and cold in the late fall.

Then there is the feel of the horse under you as he walks along, always the feel of the horse. No matter what other

things are there, the subtleties of movement are at the forefront of consciousness, the twitch of an ear, the feel of the trot, the exhilaration of the canter. The evenness or unevenness of the walk or trot as he works down the trails and shuffles down the really steep trails, feeling for the excitement, nervousness, or calmness of the horse. You have to know the signals or trouble may ensue! This is the real world, not the show ring or an indoor arena or our safe barnyard or pasture.

The feel of Efstur slowing down as he realizes we are approaching the barn, the feel of the sun as we exit the woods and walk across the small orchard. I usually get off the last quarter mile and hand-walk him to the barn. It helps him cool off. Then onto the cross ties, untack, and check his feet for stones, brush him off, though I still can't figure out why I do that because he then goes for a long roll in the sand pens getting both sides before getting up and running out to the pasture.

Another great day in the woods with my friend, the little palomino, Efstur.

Efstur fra Icelandic Magic, born in the northwest U.S., is 12.3 hands. He was born on 5/23/96 and is a gelding. He has been trained to drive by Wilson Groves and had two years of dressage training at an indoor



Walter Davis and Efstur of Vermont won reserve champion in a series of all-breed shows sponsored by the Green Mountain Horse Association. Efstur also drives.



arena (it is Vermont) with Jill Delany. He came to me as a five-year-old with little training (90 days), so I was told. He was ridden but not broke, was the way one trainer described him. We do lessons more or less six times over the summer months, some ground driving, hand-walking, and lots of trail riding.

## **JANET BOGGS 100 HOURS**

Professor Reykur at the Podium, or “What I learned from my wily Icelandic this year”:

Bears, cougars, pelting hail, bursting beaver dams—take it in stride. Six-inch puddle? Jump six feet to the side.

If your ladyfriend Moonlight the quarterhorse feels the call of nature, anticipate her needs and stop before she does. Over and over, again and again. If it’s not love, it’s telepathy.

Be the boss of everybody, humans, 16.1 alpha mares, and Mammoth Jack mules included.

Be free like the wild geese and go cross-country whenever possible. Ignore the hollering human on your back with the trail map. You know best.

Dogs must never, never, never be allowed to have one of your treats. Even if it means chasing them out of your paddock and stepping on your human in rebuke.

Take down all the electric fencing in the paddocks because you feel like it and because it’s fun to watch the humans put it back up. Only lower this time.

And if your human has behaved appropriately, reward her with a good strong nuzzle. She might just nuzzle you back.

## **KELLY ZHOU YOUTH #2**

Kelly Zhou transitioned from riding 17-hand Hunters to 13-hand Icelandics in 2010. The size and friendly nature of Rán enable her to blend fun, games, and friendship into her riding lessons. Kelly enjoys reading, writing and drawing horses as well as playing the cello and piano.

## **NIA CHANTANA YOUTH #3**

Nia Chantana began riding Icelandics at the age of five. Now an eight-year-old second grader, Nia is an excellent equine artist who also enjoys other arts and crafts. Born in the year of the horse, Nia enjoys riding lessons and learning to read, write, and speak her grandparents’ native Thai



Lori Birge of Washington showing a fast tolt on Geisli. They enjoy drill teams, expos, trail rides, and clinics.

language. Nia’s favorite Icelandic riding partner is Rán.

## **LORI BIRGE WEST #1**

When I first bought my Icelandic horse, Geisli from Vermont Icelandic Horse Farm, I used to get funny looks when I rode on trail rides near our home in Washington state. I’m sure they were wondering why I was riding a hairy pony. Now, three and a half years later, people often ask, “Is that an Icelandic horse?” People ask me many questions about him; they are curious about his gaits and his personality. I feel that he is an ambassador for our breed whenever we are out in the community.

My main goal for riding my horse is to have fun and learn as much as I can to become a better rider. Last year, Geisli and I participated in many different activities. During the first part of the year, we rode in an Icelandic horse drill team. The team practiced regularly for several months then performed at the Northwest Horse Expo in Albany, OR. Drill team was a blast, but the four-hour drive to practice

was difficult. The team hasn’t been able to practice yet this year, but I would do it again without hesitation. Our horses seem to really enjoy the work and the closeness to each other.

In May, we attended two Icelandic horse clinics. One was at Red Feather Ranch in Trout Lake, WA with Ann-Kristin Kloth. The next was in Vancouver, WA with Mandy Pretty. I enjoy clinics because I always enjoy the camaraderie with the clinician, horses, and other riders, and I learn so much about my horse, with the goal of becoming better partners. The work during the clinics was a prelude for our participation in the Tolt-ally Icelandic Horse Show in Chilliwack, Canada during June.

Also during the summer, we joined the Backcountry Horsemen for a number of trail rides. Geisli has absolutely no trouble keeping up with the “big” horses and is always a good sport about high-lining, as long as he gets his regular meals with a carrot or two thrown in for good measure.

Last fall, we began taking dressage lessons with a trainer who had never worked

with a gaited horse before. She says that she is learning a lot about Icelandic horses and is impressed with Geisli's strong work ethic and tenacity, even when he is pretty sure that he has absolutely no idea what I am asking him to do. Our progress in dressage has been up and down, but I feel that we are learning a lot. He is definitely becoming better balanced at all four gaits. This spring I plan to take him to his first dressage schooling show. I don't know how we will do, but it will be a good learning experience and hopefully a lot of fun. My trainer is sure the Pony Club girls who often attend these shows will fall in love with him.

I enjoyed every minute in the saddle this year. I learned a lot, hopefully became a better rider through our participation in clinics and our hard work in the arena, and most importantly had a great time. My goals for the year to learn more about my horse and have fun were definitely met. I hope to do more of the same in 2011.

### **JAN GRAY WEST #2**

Halli Thor and I had quite an adventurous year in 2010. After getting five feet of snow in February, all at once, and waiting out the thaw, we had many wonderful days riding the mountain trails here in Big Bear Lake. I truly believe that winter is his favorite time of year.

We participated in our local Los Vaqueros de Las Montanas horse shows, and at the end of the year we were awarded

High Point Champion for our division. We also participated in the first ever Big Bear ACTHA (American Competitive Trail Horse Association) ride. It was six miles long and had six timed trail obstacles that we had to overcome. I think our favorite was the Cowboy Curtain, since it was a windy day. Out of 70-plus riders, only three of us locals participated. We didn't place in the top ten, but we had fun! It was a new experience for us and hopefully they will do it again this year.

This year we are going to learn how to jump. We started last year and he loves it! Our teacher says he's a natural.

### **RONELLE INGRAM WEST #3**

As a 62-year-old owner and rider of two Icelandic mares, I try to do ground work and riding that all three of us can enjoy together. After seeing Cavalia, I decided Rán and Sletta were capable of doing a liberty act. So I taught them to walk head and tail and reverse together. This maneuver also works well when I am riding Rán and ponying Sletta on the trail. Riding or liberty ground work, this allows all three of us simultaneously to get exercise and to enjoy each other's company away from the barn.

### **CINDY NADLER CENTRAL MOUNTAIN #2**

I am so happy that I kept the logs to record my time for the PRP. I found it interesting and also fun to look back over my past year and remember what I've done and where

I've gone.

I ride Andri—all the big-horse people around here call him Andri the Wonder Horse. He is really a laid-back type of guy and he is up for most anything. And looking back over the past year, we did most things very well, we always have fun and enjoy what we are doing.

In the winter, we took riding lessons and in the summer we did trail rides. We learned how to cut cows in a clinic where the cows were as big as we were—what a rush. It's like parting the Red Sea going after a particular cow. It was also where Norman, the token Swiss steer, fell in love with Andri, following him around like a puppy and licking him every chance he got—ewww—but Andri was very gracious to Norman.

We hooked Andri's harness and cart up and competed in a couple of CDE's (Combined Driving Event—sort of like three-day eventing with dressage, cones, and a marathon). We did a reining clinic ("Look at the pony spin!!!!"). We did our last Extreme Cowboy Race—this was probably a little too extreme for my taste, but we got out there. (Side note: Andri and I were the Extreme Cowboy Upper Midwest Regional Champion in the Ride Smart Division for 2009, but we have now retired—might as well retire while we are at the top.) Throw in an Icelandic clinic with Halldor: Gotta keep that tolt crisp and clean.

I think my favorite thing this year were the American Competitive Trail Horse Association (ACTHA) events. These are several hour trail rides with a series of six judged obstacles along the way. We were able to ride in places that I would never get a chance to see or experience otherwise. The upper Midwest is full of beautiful places to explore with your horse.

I think that getting out with my horse, trying all these different activities, has really caused the two of us to work well together as a team. While I truly enjoy riding with other Icelandics (there is that huge joy factor when you get a bunch of Icelandics together), I can't help but get a kick hanging out with the big-horse people and amazing them with how versatile that little Icelandic can be.



Jan Gray of California and Halli Thor compete in horse shows and ACTHA trail rides.



## 2010 PRP SCORE BOARD

### Division Awards:

<b>All Stars</b>	<b>1. Anne Owen 1092 hours</b> <b>2. Nancy Wines-DeWan 288</b> <b>3. Donna Rich 183</b>
<b>Youth</b>	<b>1. Caleigh Anderson 358 plus events</b> <b>2. Kelly Zhou 122</b> <b>3. Nia Chantana 52</b>
<b>West</b>	<b>1. Lori Birge 337</b> <b>2. Jan Gray 313</b> <b>3. Ronell Ingram 297</b>
<b>Central Mountain</b>	<b>1. Amber Parry 631</b> <b>2. Cindy Nadler 471</b> <b>3. Kydee Sheetz 410</b>
<b>East</b>	<b>1. Alice Ryan 233</b> <b>2. Ellen Wilson 216</b> <b>3. Elizabeth Haartz 137</b>

### Hour Awards:

<b>2500 Hours</b>	<b>Anne Owen</b> <b>Nancy Wines-Dewan</b>
<b>1000 Hours</b>	<b>Walter Davis</b> <b>Karen Olson-Fields</b> <b>Amber Parry</b>
<b>500 Hours</b>	<b>Nina Beyer</b>
<b>100 Hours</b>	<b>Janet Boggs</b> <b>Alice Ryan</b> <b>Sue Staggemeier</b> <b>Sheryl Togami</b> <b>Kelly Zhou</b>

### Regional Club Awards:

**FLUGNIR and LAIHA (5 members each)**



These photos show some of the nearly 40 participants (not necessarily winners) in the 2010 Pleasure Riding Program doing what they love to do most: from left to right, Sheryl Togami rides her mare Fjóður frá Kuludalsá in a demo at the Danad Horse Festival, Sue Staggemeier and Gumi frá Barkarstöðum go swimming, and Dawn Shaw rides Freyja from Lone Cedar at a clinic.

# A TAPESTRY OF RIDES

BY ELLEN WILSON



*Editor's note: Ellen Wilson, who won the second place award in the Eastern Division of the 2010 Pleasure Riding Program, is the new chair of the USIHC Pleasure Riding Committee. She submitted the following introduction.*

It is the first day of spring here in the Pine Barrens, NJ. Although the temperatures at night are in the 30's, the days are warming up to the 50's, which makes for good riding weather. After many months of snow and layers of ice that we thought would never melt, spring is returning to the land and we cannot wait to get back into the saddle on a regular basis.

Our intrepid group of Icelandic riders have been a local icon of the Wharton State Forest for the past decade, typically

riding year round in any weather except hard rain or icy footing. There are nine of us that ride together regularly these days, and several others that come along several times a year. Throughout January and February eyes monitored the condition of the ice, some of us making forays into the forest to check the footing. Finally the word went out: The ice is gone! Spring is coming! And here at last, it is.

There is always a sense of excitement heading into a new riding year. Wondering how the horses will do, which new trails we'll discover, or if there is new tack to try. Looking back over the years it is difficult for me to pick out a distinct memory of a favorite trail ride, to choose a perfect day in the saddle with the most laughter or the prettiest scenery. Over

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Freydis frá Gimli (aka Julia) is a seasoned trail horse. A little water crossing won't faze her. Photo by Ellen Wilson.

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the years hundreds of rides have woven together into one large continually unfolding tapestry.

I've had the opportunity to experience the natural environment and explore the landscape from the saddle. Icelandics can go places hikers and jeeps just can't. I've seen crystal clear waters, cranberry bogs and swamps, hardwood and pine forests. Wharton has a unique ecosystem full of a variety of flora and fauna. Secondly there is the social aspect, the bond of horse and rider and the sense of community formed by the riders. On the rides our group chats and talks and laughs. We have lived through each other's stories and major life-changing events. We've talked about our families, our dreams, our horses, of loves and losses, vacations and work, our pasts and our hopes for the future.

Many of us, myself included, work in offices where we are surrounded day in and day out by an artificial environment. Trail riding has put me in touch with nature. I have ridden in 9 degree Arctic blasts with the wind whipping around my mare's ears, swatted at infestations of swamp gnats and biting flies in the late spring, brushed off the sugar sand from sweaty tack in the humidity of summer, and the best, the very best, ridden through the kaleidoscope of colors that make up the fall. I wouldn't trade any of those moments for another day in the office, ever.

And the horses, our horses, are amazing. Real pros on the trail, these horses love to ride as much as we do. More than once my mare has tried to open the trailer doors and load herself. They can't wait to go. And just when you think you've encountered every crazy thing on the trail that you can think of, something else comes along and the Icelandics just take it all in stride. Cement trucks, hikers, unattended camp fires left burning, dogs,



motorbikes, jeep clubs, paint ball games, berry pickers, screaming kids. Some years the forest has seemed to have more activity than a circus. It is generally agreed by all that the only thing the Icelandics didn't like was a sudden encounter with a helicopter that appeared in a clearing hovering above them, and frankly, the riders didn't care much for it either.

The tapestry of rides spans the seasons. I remember a snow ride in midwinter with all of us bundled up like the Michelin tire man in layer upon layer of ski pants and parkas, battery operated gloves, and ski masks. We rode through the barrens with the snow gently falling around us with one mission in mind, to visit a beaver dam off the trail at Atco. Mission accomplished, on the way back home we had another treat, we came across a pond where two pairs of trumpeter swans were swimming. Lovely.

Another year in the springtime, my mare Freydis fra Gimli (aka Julia) and I were in the lead on a trail several miles into the barrens. Out from a nearby tree flew a startled bald eagle. My good mare never flinched. We've had many such encounters with wild America. Does and fawns that popped up out of bushes, flocks of wild turkeys that gawked and gobbled at the herd of passing horses. An angry snapping turtle that blocked a path. There are coyotes and bobcats too, for we've seen their tracks. Once my friend's stallion stepped on the tail of a lizard who had the good sense to stay perfectly still. Leaning out of my saddle I was able to get a photo of him looking back up at me, as if to say, "Walk around me please!"

One of the things I began doing early on in the rides was packing my camera. Over the years I took thousands of pictures of the scenery, the horses, and the horse people. Freydis became a practiced "camera mare," and as soon as she felt me fiddling around in my pack she would automatically stop for the photo to be taken. I've gotten quite accomplished at action shots as well, toltng up in front of the herd and taking photos over my head in order to get snaps of the rest of the crew coming up from behind. This past year I gave my friends a treat. I selected the best photos and set them to Icelandic music in a slideshow to memorialize of all the rides we shared that year. It was real hit, and something I plan to do now every

year. (Catch it on YouTube!)

Some rides, of course, become infamous even without the photographic evidence. Like the time we were lost somewhere nine miles outside of Batsto. Wharton State Forest is over 100,000 acres and riddled with unmarked trails, so getting lost is easy to do. The horses, however, always knew the way home and constantly pointed in the proper direction. My take-away from the experience was two-fold. First, I now always ride with a Backtracker GPS system, and secondly, when Freydis tells me we're heading in the wrong direction, I listen.

The crew I ride with is an eclectic bunch. The oldest is pushing 76, the youngest is in her teens. The tapestry of rides holds many treasured moments of our times together. Some are full of laughter, like the hot summer rides when we stop mid-way at the Mullica River, a cedar water creek. We let the horses wade in far enough so the saddles don't get wet and we spend an hour lounging on their backs eating our lunch, talking, and splashing. Other moments are more contemplative: In the late afternoon when friends are engaged in serious topics, we ride along deep in thought. Other times no one talks at all, as we are just toltng along breathing in the fresh air, feeling like we're flying, looking at the forest scenery rolling by and we're glad to be alive and doing what we love.

Most holidays we have managed to share in the saddle at one time or another. Many a hiker and an occasional hunter have been surprised to see a herd of Icelandics coming through the pines on Halloween with both horse and human decked out in matching costumes. We've also ridden on New Year's Day, Valentine's Day, Mother's Day, Memorial Day, Thanksgiving, and even Christmas. Birthdays are often celebrated by hauling the trailers to Sally Starr's, a favorite food joint where we can sit at a picnic table after a ride and eat ice cream and pizza. In the autumn, we'll head to a local farmers market for apple cider donuts. Other times we just stay put, and after we tie up the horses or put them to pasture we'll pull out the lunch boxes and beer and laugh away the afternoon reliving the highlights of the ride and the things we encountered.

So many great memories. I count myself fortunate to have discovered the Icelandic horse and such a dedicated group of enthusiasts living in my immediate area. We ride a lot. So much, that every now and then I'll be out walking around my neighborhood and it feels strange to be walking on my own two feet and not moving along with four under me! I look forward to the new riding year with a sense of gratitude for all I've experienced so far. I am seeing the world from a saddle, and wouldn't have it any other way. See you in the forest.



Ellen Wilson, the new chair of the Pleasure Riding committee, and Freydis enjoy the fall weather in New Jersey. Photo courtesy Ellen Wilson.



## MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

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I prefer **not** to receive a copy of the *Quarterly* magazine in the US Mail.

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If you have selected a Family Membership, please complete the following for the second adult and any children to be included in the membership (use the back of the page to add more family members):

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Paid members of the USIHC may opt to include a farm listing on the Congress's web site ([www.icelandics.org](http://www.icelandics.org)). There is a \$110.00 annual fee for the farm listing in addition to your membership fee.

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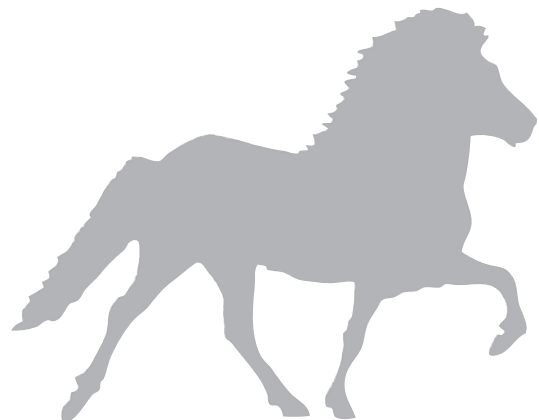


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\* These statements have not been evaluated by the Food and Drug Administration. This product is not intended to diagnose, treat, cure or prevent any disease.

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