

ISSUE TWO

THE

2012

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)

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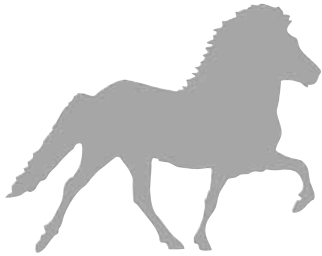
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THE
ICELANDIC
HORSE
QUARTERLY
Issue TWO 2012

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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ICELANDIC HORSE

Q U A R T E R L Y

5 NEWS

- 5 USIHC News
- 10 FEIF News
- 12 Regional Club Updates

17 FEATURES

- 17 2011 Pleasure Riding Winners *by Ellen Wilson*
- 21 Book Review: Principles of Conformation Analysis *by Bernie Willis*
- 22 The Performance Pyramid *by Andrea Barber*
- 25 Riding Guidelines *by Doug Smith & Will Covert*
- 27 Why Do You Ride? *by Stephanie Sher*
- 29 The Extremes of Extreme Farm *by Pamela Nolf*
- 31 Training an Extreme Horse *by Alexandra Pregitzer*
- 33 To Clip or Not to Clip? *by Nicki Esdorn*
- 35 Youth: The Sunrise Chase *by Madison Prestine*
- 36 Cornell Studies Summer Eczema *by Carly E. Hodes*
- 37 Spots in the Eyes *by Pamela Nolf*
- 42 In the News *by the editors*

45 MARKETPLACE

On the cover: Martha Stewart was all smiles when she rode Dagfari fra Blonduosi over the Bedford trails to her Cantitoe Corners farm on a fresh April day. Here she is toltling three abreast together with Martina Gates on Stigandi fra Leysingjastodum (left) and Nicki Esdorn on Haukur Freyr fra Hofnum (right). On May 9th, Dagfari and Stigandi were the stars on her show about Iceland. Please go to www.marthastewart.com for a link to view the show and to see more photos of the ride on her blog.



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 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.

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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. Contact Ásta Covert: P.O. Box 1724, Santa Ynez, CA 93460; 866-929-0009; registry@icelandics.org

WEBSITE

Visit 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.

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PRESIDENT'S LETTER

The following is adapted from the letter USIHC President Anne Elwell published in the 2011 Annual Report, online at www.icelandics.org:

With perhaps one or two exceptions, the members of the USIHC Board of Directors own only a few horses and are primarily pleasure riders themselves. Our goals for this organization are to breed and train ideal riding horses and to educate the average Icelandic horse owner in how to enjoy, ride, maintain, and protect the welfare of that horse.

This year, to further that goal, the Board has moved away from the notion of an Annual Meeting at one location. We will be holding at least two such meetings in 2012 in conjunction with events in different parts of the country which are already well-attended. A portion of the Board (including some who are not from that particular area) will be at each location to provide information, answer questions, and debate the relevance and benefits of USIHC programs during 2011 and in the future. There will also be a General Meeting where everyone's perspectives on these topics can be exchanged. We are looking forward to seeing you at one or more of these meetings.

This past year has been an exceed-



Top panel of the new USIHC display booth, designed by Martina Gates.

ingly difficult one for the horse industry. But the USIHC as an organization has been able to weather the recession well. Focusing on a balanced budget, tailoring our expenses to our income, we have been able in 2011 to fund all of our proposed activities with no reduction from the prior year. We usually see a small

profit each year, and in 2011 it has been somewhat larger due to lower than anticipated World Championship expenses. We have eliminated the fee for participation in the Pleasure Riding Program. And we have continued in 2011 to provide new services and education benefitting large numbers of members in the aspects of owning Icelandic horses that are the most critical.

Beginning in 2010, the Board committed to financially supporting a seminar proposed by Barbara Frische, then an International Breeding Judge temporarily resident in the U.S., that she had been teaching in Europe. The seminar focuses on the effect of various conformational features of the Icelandic horse that directly affect riding. Working with individual horses and riders, Barbara and a Certified Trainer identify each of the horse's particular conformational features affecting its ability to balance itself and its rider. These are the features that often produce pulling, resistance, difficulty in regulating speed, and the ability to relax. Each rider is then shown how to help his or her horse utilize its specific strengths and deal with its riding issues. The immediate increase in riding pleasure for both horse and person is enormous.



The USIHC booth in action in 2009, as the centerpiece of a display by the Cascade Club. Photo by Dawn Shaw.



Sigrid Younger and 13-year-old Alex Mongold at Equifest in Wichita, Kansas. The Midwest Icelandic Horse Owners, with members from Minnesota, Oklahoma, and Iowa, has promoted the Icelandic horse at Equifest for 13 of the last 15 years. Photo by Deb Cook.

In the beginning it was difficult for many people to realize that this clinic addresses everyone's most troubling questions and actually provides answers that increase the pleasure of horse and rider. In 2010 two of these clinics occurred, one offered subsidization by the Board, and one not seeking it. In 2011 three clinics were given, all offered subsidization by the Board and none requiring it. At each location—Kentucky (with trainer Gudmar Petursson), Washington (with Svanhildur Stefansdottir), and New York (with Kristjan Kristjansson)—the response was overwhelmingly enthusiastic, and in New York there was a waiting list of disappointed riders, many of whom audited. This seminar will continue to be offered in 2012; people interested in organizing one should contact Barbara Frische at the Education Committee. The Board remains committed to subsidizing these clinics on a case-by-case basis.

Similarly beneficial to substantial numbers of members have been the Young Horse Evaluations, organized by several Regional Clubs in 2011. At these informal and educational (not to mention entertaining!) events, individuals receive written information from Barbara Frische about their young horse's conformation, movement, and spirit, as well as projections on how that particular young

horse is apt to develop. This is obviously an enormous practical benefit to persons breeding a few foals. Providing practical advice to small breeders is one of the most valuable services we can provide to persons and to the breed so that we can produce horses that are a pleasure to ride. In 2011 we will be endeavouring to take this program a step further by organizing a tour around parts of the country.

The Board continues to encourage Regional Clubs to take advantage of the matching funds available for advertising

and promotion efforts, including exhibitions and demos. These endeavors are extremely important. It is the face-to-face contact with people who actually own Icelandic horses and take great pride and pleasure in showing them off that has the most important impact on other horse owners. Dramatic professional exhibitions of Icelandic horses get the attention of the horse-owning public, but it is seeing and meeting individual riders and horses at local events that brings home the breed's many remarkable qualities to other horse owners. *(See below to learn what activities are eligible for funding.)*

BREEDER AWARD

In the Breeding Committee's annual report, committee chair Katrin Sheehan announced that Barbara Frische judged 66 young horses in 2011 for scores. Of these, the highest scoring horse was Kjarval from Four Winds Farm. Congratulations to breeder Lori Leo for winning the USIHC breeder award for best young horse. The owner of Kjarval is Johanna Gudmundsdottir.

MEMBERS MEETING

The first Congress Members Meeting took place in conjunction with the second day of the Triple World Ranking event at Flying C Ranch in Santa Ynez, CA. This meeting was an opportunity for Congress



The Quarterly forgot to credit Martina Gates for the gorgeous series of photographs that illustrated Nicki Esdorn's article on Signal Riding in the March 2012 issue. Thanks Martina!

members to speak directly with a variety of Board members, including those not normally at West Coast events. This meeting considered two amendments to the Congress Constitution; the details were sent to members in the formal meeting announcement. All members were encouraged to attend if possible. A second meeting will take place later in 2012 at an East Coast event.

EXPO BOOTHS

The USIHC tabletop display booth was heavily used in 2011, appearing at Equine Affaire in Ohio and Massachusetts, at the Pennsylvania Expo, at a Colorado trade show, and in western New York. It is easily shipped (at Congress expense), assembled, and disassembled. Whenever the booth goes to an event, Congress members can send written material—brochures, flyers, business cards, etc.—about their farms, horses, and services for display in the booth. Each event is listed on the USIHC events calendar at www.icelandics.org. To reserve the booth for an event, contact the Promotion Committee at promotion@icelandics.org.

The Promotion Committee will soon have available a second booth that USIHC members can take to expos and shows to help promote the Icelandic horse. Juli Cole is spearheading the purchase of the new booth and the guidelines for using it; Martina Gates has created the design. Both the old and new displays will be available for USIHC members and Regional Clubs to borrow to help promote the Icelandic horse. Having two professionally-designed booths in circulation will make it more likely that everyone's requests can be met.

MATCHING FUNDS

USIHC Regional Clubs can receive matching funds of up to \$200 per year to help offset the costs of advertisements or breed demos promoting the Icelandic horse. Ads may be placed for any Icelandic horse event, or for promotion of the club, the USIHC, or the breed in general. All ads must be submitted to the Regional Club chairperson (regional_clubs@icelandics.org) for approval. The USIHC and the



Ayla Green, Madison Prestine, and Quinn Thomashow will represent the USIHC at the 2012 FEIF Youth Cup, to be held in Verden, Germany, July 7-15.



The drill team at the 2012 Minnesota Horse Expo: Nick Cook, Coralie Denmeade, Sharon Johnson, Kathy Love, Kevin Draeger, Ayla Green, Kydee Sheetz, and Laura Benson. Photo by Susy Oliver.

website address (www.icelandics.org) must be mentioned in the ad, and use of the USIHC logo is strongly recommended. Matching funds are limited to ads placed in magazines, newspapers, or websites, etc., that are not specific to the Icelandic horse to ensure promotion to those who do not already own or have interest in the breed. (*But please note that Regional Clubs can advertise in The Icelandic Horse Quarterly for free; contact quarterly@icelandics.org.)* Matching funds are also available to help offset the costs of breed demos (i.e. stall fees, admission fees). For more information, see the USIHC Policies & Procedures Guide at www.icelandics.org/policies.php.

EVALUATIONS

The Northeast Icelandic Horse Club (NEIHC) will host a USIHC-sanctioned breeding evaluation on the track of Thor Icelandics in Claverack, NY, June 1-3. All registered Icelandic horses are welcome to the evaluations, and the club will publish a program listing the horses and their owners. There will be an educational seminar on Friday at 4 p.m. Conformation judging and the first rides will be on Saturday, with a group dinner Saturday night. Second rides, stallion show, and awards will be on Sunday. Trainers/riders attending are Knutur Berndsen, Sigrun Brynjarsdottir, Kristjan Kristjansson, Jana Meyer, and Gudmar Petursson. See

the club's website for more information (www.neihc.com/events.html) or contact organizer Martina Gates (martinagates@mac.com).

2012 SHOWS

In 2011, there were a total of 10 USIHC-sanctioned shows in the U.S. Six were World Ranking shows, and by the end of the year 15 U.S. riders were ranked in the FEIF World Ranking List.

The 2012 Icelandic horseshow schedule opened May 11-13 with three back-to-back World Ranking shows at Flying C Ranch in Santa Ynez, CA. May 11 was a one-day USIHC-sanctioned show with preliminaries only and no finals. The results of that day and the preliminaries on May 12-13 contribute to both the National and World Ranking standings. On May 13 there were finals for the non-World Ranking classes. For more information, see www.ciaclub.net.

On May 20, the Frida Icelandic Horse Club (FIRC) celebrated its tenth anniversary by hosting a USIHC-sanctioned show at Frying Pan Park in Herndon, VA. The show had use of two arenas, one indoor and one outdoor, plus a new barn complex which holds over 100 horses. Contact Pat Moore at pat.moore81@verizon.net.

A show was scheduled for June 9-10 at Silver Maple Farm in Tunbridge, VT. As this issue went to press, it was not yet

USIHC-sanctioned. Contact Susan Peters, susan.peters@gmail.com.

The 2012 Kentucky Icelandic Horse Show (KYIHS) is scheduled for October 19-21. Contact Kathy Love at kathrynlovemd@gmail.com.

For information on additional 2012 shows, check the USIHC events calendar: www.icelandics.org/calendar.

LANDSMOT

The National Horse Show of Iceland, Landsmót 2012, will be held at the showgrounds in the middle of Reykjavik, Iceland's capital city, from June 25 to July 1. Information is available in English at www.landsmot.is/en.

YOUTH CUP

Three USIHC youth members will attend the 2012 FEIF Youth Cup, to be held in Verden, Germany, July 7-15. They are Ayla Green, Madison Prestine, and Quinn Thomashow. The country leader is Jasmine Ho, and team leader is Perry Ostrow. The 2012 FEIF Youth Cup is hosted by the German Icelandic Horse



Coralie Denmeade at the Minnesota Horse Expo. Photo by Deb Cook.

Association, with Kirsten Schuster in charge. The Cup starts on Saturday evening. Training runs from Sunday through Tuesday, "horse-free" activities occur on Wednesday, and a competition is held from Thursday through Sunday. For more information see www.icelandics.org/youth/youthcup2012.php.

YOUNG HORSE TOUR

From October 1 through November 4, international breeding judge Barbara Frische will be touring the U.S. to evaluate foals and young horses. Barbara is the developer of the current young horse evaluation system. Says USIHC Breeding Leader Katrin Sheehan, "This is a great opportunity for anyone to have their youngsters looked at. Barbara is also able to look at adult horses, do sightings for possible ridden evaluation prospects, give lectures, and hold discussion evenings for a group of interested people such as a Regional Club. Other possible happenings can be combined for a great turnout." Contact Katrin at katsheehan@mac.com if you are interested, "even if you think there is not enough interest in your area," she says. "We are determined to accommodate as many USIHC members as possible."

TRAINER SEMINAR

The FEIF Level 1 and 2 Trainer Seminar will be taught by Nicole Kempf at Creekside Farm, GA, this November (exact dates are still to be determined). This will be a two-week course, including exams and certification. At the 2011 seminar, three Level 1 trainers and two Level 2 trainers were certified. For information, see www.icelandics.org/Trainers/seminar.php or contact the Education committee at education@icelandics.org.

CALENDAR

A reminder that USIHC members and Regional Clubs may submit news and calendar items to be posted on the USIHC website at any time. For calendar items please submit the start and end date of the event, a title for the event, and any description, including a contact for more information. Send to web@icelandics.org.

2011 ANNUAL REPORT

The 2011 USIHC Annual Report is available for download on www.icelandics.org. In addition to the President's report, excerpted above, it includes reports from the secretary, treasurer, and registrar, as well as the Breeding, Competition, Education, Pleasure Riding, Promotion, Quarterly, Web, and Youth committees. Members are encouraged to join the committees working in their personal areas of interest. The bulk of the work supporting the Icelandic horse in the U.S. comes from the dedicated efforts of the volunteers who lead and staff the various committees and working groups of the USIHC.

BOARD MEETINGS

The USIHC Board of Directors met on February 9 and March 13. Minutes of the meetings can be found at www.icelandics.org, under the tab "The Congress." In addition to the items already mentioned in this issue's News section, Secretary Doug Smith reported on the success of changing our membership renewals from a calendar year system (all memberships expired January 1 of the new year) to the new anniversary system (memberships run one year from when dues are received). Members are automatically reminded when their membership is

about to run out; they can also opt for a subscription payment plan through PayPal in which their dues are automatically paid on time unless they decide to cancel. Membership reached a high point in December 2011 of 430 households. As of February 3, it was 363 households.

Doug also reported that the Web committee is looking into what is needed to host web video on the Congress website. The technology used to stream video is different from that used to serve web pages. Therefore, the best option would be to subscribe to the Vimeo Pro Service (www.vimeo.com) to host the video. Using this service we have complete control over the video and can be certain that it is only available from our website. This affords the option of making videos either public or available to our members only. The current annual cost of the subscription is \$60.

The Web committee was also given the "green light" from the Board to create a Sales page on the website open to active Congress members selling U.S.-registered horses.

The March Board meeting was devoted to the 2012 budget, which is available online. Projected expenses for 2012 are \$45,676.05, with a projected loss of \$372.24.



Sharon Johnson, Ayla Green, Kathy Love, and Kevin Draeger entering the arena at the Minnesota Horse Expo. Photo by Deb Cook.

FEIF CONFERENCE 2012 IN MALMÖ, SWEDEN

BY DOUG SMITH

The annual FEIF Conference and Delegates Assembly convened in Malmö, Sweden, the first weekend in March. The United States and twelve other FEIF member associations came together to formally accept the work of the Board of FEIF and the various working groups over the past year. The United States was represented by a team of three: Barbara Frische (Breeding), Will Covert (Sport), and Doug Smith (Delegates Assembly and free agent).

In keeping with tradition, the conference began with the Delegates Assembly. This body is responsible for the ultimate approval of the financial position of FEIF from the past year, any changes to the rules of FEIF, election of the Board of FEIF, and the budget for the coming year. According to the rules of FEIF, each association nominates one person to be their official delegate. This person is empowered with a number of votes proportional to the size of the association and the annual membership fees paid to FEIF. The United States, as one of the smaller associations, has two votes.

DELEGATES ASSEMBLY:

The Delegates Assembly unanimously approved all issues presented by the Board of FEIF. Included were the routine matters of approval of the Board's Annual Report for 2011, including the audited financial statements and approval of the 2012 budget. The Assembly also reelected FEIF Board members Marlise Grimm (Breeding Leader) and Anne Svanteson (Youth Leader). Ian Pugh, the third member whose term expired, opted not to stand for reelection. The Board presented Gundula Sharman of Great Britain to fill Ian's seat. Gundula was unopposed and elected by the assembly to the Board as Education Leader.

The Board presented a request to the delegates to disband the FEIF Welfare and Veterinary Committee which has not been functioning as intended and



Dinner hosted by the Swedish Icelandic Horse Association at Malmöhus, the famous castle in Malmö.

placed a small administrative burden on the organization with no appreciable return on the investment. At the same time, the Board proposed adding a new department and corresponding seat on the Board. Effective immediately, there is a Pleasure Riding Leader in FEIF. The first person to hold this position is Lone Hoegholt of Denmark. Lone has been extremely active over the past ten to 15 years in Denmark working to reclaim access to open space for horse riders.

The Delegates were asked to approve a number of proposals from the Board and the Sport Department. All of the following proposals were unanimously adopted to take immediate effect:

The annual FEIF membership fee paid by each member association increases by 10 percent.

FEIF will take part in a hoof health study being conducted by the University of Zurich. Over the course of 2012, 60 sport and breeding horses will be selected at random to have their hooves measured, photographed, and x-rayed. The data collected will be evaluated by a team of farriers and veterinarians to determine the state of hoof health in the breed.

The results and recommendations will be

brought back to the member associations at the conclusion of the study.

2012 is formally designated **The Year of Good and Harmonious Riding**. The various departments will develop methods of selecting and publicizing individuals who demonstrate good riding throughout the year.

Disqualification in pace races. The rules for pace races have been updated to make it clear that a disqualification applies to all heats regardless of the timing of the disqualification.

The requirement for oval tracks to have banked corners has been removed. The rules will be updated to allow for sufficient grading to allow water to drain to the inside of the track but extra banking is to be eliminated. It will still be legal to use banked tracks but the banking should be excluded from future tracks and removed in the course of the routine maintenance of existing tracks.

PP2 (the "entry level" pace test) is redesigned. The rules will be updated to create a slightly easier test for riders starting to ride pace tests at sport competitions. The complete details will be available in the 2012 updates to FIPO and USIHC Competition Rule documents.

New protective material is now allowed in sport competitions. Horses may compete with rubber bands in the mane as long as they are used to split the mane but not to decorate the horse. It is also permissible to use cotton ear plugs with horses sensitive to noise and snow grips during icy times of year. The last two changes will likely not have much use in the United States. Nevertheless, they are now legal.

More Young Riders at World Championships. Starting with Berlin 2013, each association may send 5 young riders (instead of the previous 3) as part of the team. Additionally, the young riders will have the option of competing in the open group, as before, or in their own division.

In addition to the work of the Delegates Assembly, the association chairpersons and the main departments of FEIF met to discuss their ongoing work and plans for implementing the Year of Good and Harmonious Riding.

FROM BREEDING:

The track standards for Breeding Shows are being standardized.

A new system for evaluating foals and young horses was presented by a working group led by U.S. Icelandic Horse Congress Board members Katrin Sheehan, Barbara Frische, and Doug Smith. This is the formalization of the Young Horse Evaluation work developed by Barbara and used in her "foal tours" in the United States. This new system is now the international gold standard for evaluating young horses.

The equipment portion of FIZO (the international Breeding Show rules) will be revised to reflect research conducted by Icelandic veterinarian Systa Björnsdóttir and Breeding Leader Gudlaugur Antonsson.

FROM EDUCATION:

The committee will focus on improvement of standards and basic training in light of the veterinary studies of mouth injuries from Iceland and the hoof and shoeing work approved by the Delegates Assembly.

Good teaching and good riding should come from a sound understanding

of the processes at work, and the education group will open a FaceBook page in order to widen access to the discussion of good practice.

The current instructor matrix will expand to include a definition of young horse trainer competencies.

FROM SPORT:

There was a long discussion about the need to better describe what is meant by "fast" in "fast tölt." The consensus is that action must be taken to discourage the idea of a "tölt race" when "fast" is called for in a test such as T1.

The formula by which International Sport Judges renew their licenses was discussed. There will be a proposal brought forward next year to change from a number of events judged to a number of

days judged. This new formula will also be used to determine eligibility to judge at World Championships.

Event organizers will be asked to highlight F1 / F2 finals by having them as the last final of their event. The committee hopes this will emphasize the uniqueness of a five-gaited breed.

FROM THE CHAIRPERSONS:

The newly created Pleasure Riding Department was introduced to the assembly.

A discussion was held on the topic of the work of the FEIF Task Force to consolidate the various rule books into a single, cohesive document.

The member associations will be strongly encouraged to incorporate the FEIF logo in their association logos.



The famous Icelandic rider and trainer Sigurbjörn Bárðarson presenting at the conference.



Anne Levandar, the FEIF Youth Leader, presenting the 2011 Youth Award to the Netherlands.

REGIONAL UPDATES

ALASKA

Pernilla E. Rypka writes: Winter is slowly leaving us up here after a winter season that almost broke the record for total snowfall in the Anchorage area. Many of our members in the Alaska Icelandic Horse Association take the winters off from riding since we deal with subzero degrees, lots of snow, and not a lot of available indoor riding arenas. However, a few brave souls still keep on riding the whole winter through just skipping those days when it is too cold to even go out. With winter boots or shoes on our horses, winter riding up here creates a lot of fun experiences. Our trail system expands during winter because of the snow machines—they pack nice trails that we can use for riding. But as break-up approaches, and the snow loses the battle with the sun, wind, and warmer temperatures, we are all getting excited about the coming riding season. For now we have a few clinics and trail rides planned for the summer, so there is quite a lot to look forward to as we are getting ourselves and our horses back in shape for the season.

FLUGNIR

Wade Elmlblad writes: The Flugnir Icelandic Horse Association of the Midwest has an impressive line-up of clinics and special



Winter lasts a long time for members of the Alaska Icelandic Riding Club.

events planned for 2012. We started off in April with the Midwest Horse Fair held in Madison, WI, April 20-22. Assuming everything went as planned, the following Flugnir members participated in the breed demonstration: Nick Cook, Amber Parry, Kevin Draeger, Lori Cretney, Elizabeth Everson, and Jessica Elmlblad. For the fair's 2012 theme "Horse Heritage," our team donned Viking costumes, incorporated a drill, and concluded the demonstration with the infamous Beer Tölt.

Next was the Horse Expo in St. Paul,

MN, April 26-29, with fifteen members involved in the demonstration and parade of breeds: Nick Cook, Kydee Sheetz, Laura Benson, Ayla Green, Sharon Johnson, Kathy Love, Terri Ingram, Deb Cook, Kevin Draeger, Eve and Dave Loftness, Cindy Nadler, Kristin Sjolie, Jackie Alschuler, and Shannon Pelosi. I look forward to having photos and exciting videos posted to our Facebook page, www.facebook.com/flugnir.

On April 24-25, Kydee Sheetz coordinated a two-day "Polish Your Ride" clinic at the St. Croix Training Center in Hudson, WI.



At the 2012 Midwest Horse Fair in Madison, WI, the Flugnir Club used this photo as one of seven in their booth display to support the theme "Horse Heritage."



Let the Woodside Ranch team do the heavy lifting during your stay, November 2-4, 2012. Visit www.Flugnir.org for more information.

The primary goal of this clinic with trainer Laura Benson was to enhance communication between horse and rider, improving the responsiveness of both as it pertains to optimizing the gaits.

May 18-20, Barbara Frische will give a clinic at the spectacular Tolthaven Ranch in Pelican Rapids, MN. We are thrilled to have Barbara back. Last year she engaged us with an amazing clinic emphasizing the impact of equine conformation on riding abilities. This helped riders maximize their horses' strengths while minimizing their weaknesses. These concepts will undoubtedly be part of this year's clinic, but Barbara promises to bring new information and ideas to this event.

July 20-22, a "Promote Partnership with Your Icelandic Horse" clinic is planned for Duluth, MN. This new clinic is for everyone from pleasure riders to hard-core competitors. July 20 is an optional trail day in which Icelandic horse riders will guide you and your horse along some of the spectacular trails Minnesota has to offer. Work with the clinicians will begin July 21 and promises to be filled with learning opportunities. Barbara Frische will work with each participant in the arena and/or on the trail, with the goals of improving each horse's way of moving forward. Eve Loftness and Cindy Nadler, nationally ranked competitive trail riders, will introduce the exciting sport of competitive trail riding by setting up natural and artificial obstacles around the hundred acres of Aslan's Country Icelandic Horse Farm.

Following that clinic, on July 23-24 we will hold the "Icelandic Horse University" in Duluth, MN. This clinic is directed at professional horse trainers and riding instructors from around the country who want to learn more about the Icelandic horse. This will be a fun learning opportunity that can help these already skilled horse people expand their knowledge and business by learning more about the Icelandic breed. At a recent Flugnir brainstorming session, it became clear that there simply are not enough Icelandic-specific horse trainers in the U.S. to serve our growing Icelandic horse community. As a way to address this concern, Flugnir is sponsoring this first "Icelandic Horse University." We plan to offer this two-day clinic for a minimal fee to professional dress-



The Frida Icelandic Riding Club's drill team waves to the audience after its performance at the Warren County 4-H Expo. Shown are Curt Pierce, Susan Milloy, Mitch Martin, Sverrir Bjartmarz, Rich Moore, and Marsha Korose. Photo by Susan Milloy.

sage, hunter-jumper, equitation, and other varieties of trainers and instructors who are interested in expanding their horizons to include the Icelandic breed.

On August 23-26, Gudmar Petursson will join us at Tolthaven Ranch in Pelican Rapids, MN for a three-day clinic followed by a schooling show. Gudmar is a certified FT competition trainer, and as a B instructor he has earned the highest degree awarded by Holar University in Iceland. He is gifted in teaching riders and horses of virtually any ability and interest, and his kind and enthusiastic approach makes learning a delight. Please contact Sharon Johnson at sharon-hilljohn@hotmail.com or 763-458-5277 for information on this clinic.

November 2-4 we close out the season. Barb Riva is happy to report that Flugnir members will again be able to enjoy the wonderful facilities of Woodside Ranch in Mauston, WI. This is our third year and the fun times never disappoint. Since it is the off-season, the ranch allows us to bring in our Icelandic horses for this weekend excursion. There will also be a special guest clinician at the ranch for 2012.

These clinics and events for 2012 are filling up quickly, so wait-listing has been established for our Flugnir members. Kydee Sheetz will be happy to answer questions and confirm clinic availability via email: aslans-countryicelandics@yahoo.com, or visit our website at www.flugnir.org.

FRIDA ICELANDIC RIDING CLUB (FIRC)

Rich Moore writes: The FIRC kept busy over the winter months and made lots of plans for the spring season. In January a new board of directors took office: Tony Colicchio, president; Laura Colicchio, vice president; Rich Moore, secretary; and Marcia Newman, treasurer. Sam Castleman was appointed USIHC rep, Suzi McGraw the webmaster, and Charlotte Reilly to handle club clothing sales.

The club started off the year with a post-holiday party in January at the home of Barbara Sollner-Webb in Laurel, MD. A good time was had by all. In March, club members met at the ThorpeWood lodge in Thurmont, MD courtesy of Sally Thorpe and Sam Castleman to discuss the coming year. Certificates were presented to Suzi McGraw for her service as the club president and to Sverrir Bjartmarz, Maureen Henry, and Sandy Newkirk for their service on the board. Sverrir Bjartmarz received a jacket as the winner of the FIRC 2011 Pleasure Riding Competition. The event was well attended.

In January, Rich Moore organized a club drill team. The drill team met once a month (thanks to a mild winter) to practice formation riding under Rich's direction at Rich and Pat Moore's Kilmurray Farm near Manassas, VA. Members of the team are Sverrir Bjartmarz, Laura and Tony Colicchio, Marsha Korose, Mitch



A drill team made up of members of the Frida Icelandic Riding Club performed at the Warren County 4-H Expo near Front Royal, VA on April 15. Shown passing are Curt Pierce, Rich Moore, Susan Milloy, Mitch Martin, Sverrir Bjartmarz, and Marsha Korose. Photo by Susan Milloy.

Martin, Susan Milloy, Rich Moore, and Curt Pierce. The team performed at a 4-H Expo in Front Royal, VA on April 15.

On April 21, Laura and Tony Colicchio planned to host a trail ride near their home in Upper Marlboro, MD in the Rosaryville State Park. In early May, eight members of the FIRC planned to travel to Louisville, KY for a week-long clinic at Gudmar Petursson's farm. The trip was organized by Laura Colicchio. The riders were Tony and Laura Colicchio, Susan Milloy, Rich Moore, Barb Noble, Curt Pierce, and Jo Ann Trostle; Pat Moore took private lessons.

From May 18 to 20 the club was scheduled to host a sanctioned show at Frying Pan Farm Park in Hendon, VA, not far from Dulles International Airport. It was the club's first venture at conducting a sanctioned show. Pat Moore was the show manager, assisted by show committee members Sverrir Bjartmarz, Kim Davis, and Sali Peterson.

KRAFTUR

Bert Bates writes: We beg your forgiveness as we catch up for the last two quarters. In October 2011, an enormous flotilla of Kraftur trucks, trailers, horses, riders, and tack steamed to the Flying C ranch in Santa Ynez, CA for a special, three-day, world-ranking show. We all felt inspired and daunted to ride for five international judges. Thanks to Will, Asta, and Anne-Marie for building such a wonderful track and hosting this memorable event.

In December, the Kraftur club rode

in the annual Los Gatos holiday parade, showing off our handsome horses to thousands of spectators. All USIHC clubs should figure out a way to ride in parades like this.

Throughout the fall and winter, Steinar gave several ad hoc clinics to Kraftur horses (and their riders), and in

March, Laura Benson and Heidi Green brought Gudmar Petursson to Santa Cruz, CA for an extended weekend clinic. We're not sure, but it seemed like Gudmar gave about 87 lessons each day.

We're very proud to announce that Kraftur members Ayla Green and Madison Prestine have been invited to the 2012



NEIHC members (left to right) Carrie Croton on Aria, Anne Owen on Gna, Andrea Melliadis on Freyr, and Marilyn Tully on Glaeta practice for their upcoming demonstration at the Warren County Fair in Harmony, NJ, September 8-9. Photo by David Owen

NEIHC member Arsenio Paez rides his gelding Prins, along with Nicki Esdorn aboard Tiya, on a spirited romp on the trails at Thor Icelandics in March. Photo by Lisa Keller.

FEIF youth cup in Verden, Germany. You go girls!

Although we had a very mild and dry winter, the weather gods were able to kibosh several scheduled Kraftur events. That said, in 2012 Kraftur will continue to plan monthly "destination day" trail rides for its members. In addition, Annette Coulon will host another track day to allow members to prepare for the spring show at Flying C. Thanks Annette! This spring and summer Kraftur members will ride in several multi-breed gaited horse shows. These shows are always relaxed, and they're an extra-fun way to promote the breed.

On a personal note, this winter I lost my favorite horse Andi, who was only 11, to a freak accident. I was fortunate to have Andi in my life for almost eight years. In that time we spent thousands of hours together, and true to his name, he had the best spirit of any horse I've ever known. Andi, we miss you.

NORTHEAST ICELANDIC HORSE CLUB (NEIHC)

Amy Goddard writes: We've had a very mild winter here in the northeast. And so far, spring has sprung about a month early! On February 18, NEIHC sponsored an educational seminar for its members as well as for local riding clubs and nearby college equestrians. Kara Noble organized the seminar, "Equine Emergencies," which was held on the Smith College Campus, in Northampton, MA. Dr. Lauren Greene and Dr. Chad McGee of McGee Equine in Townsend, MA gave the attendees great explanations and information about types of common horse emergencies, how to be prepared for problems, how to recognize signs of pain, illness or injury, what to do until the vet comes, and what to expect when the vet arrives. After their presentation, they answered questions from participants to help them better understand their specific situations. We all learned a lot, and everyone who attended is now a little better prepared to take good care of their horses.

Our Seventh Annual Thorrablot was held on March 3, preceded by a Board of Directors meeting and Annual Meeting earlier in the afternoon, where our new

officers and chairpersons were chosen: Martina Gates, president; Susan Peters, vice-president; Leslie Chambers, treasurer; Amy Goddard, secretary; Arsenio Paez and Cyd Groff, advertising/promotion; and Heleen Heyning, youth.

Anne Owen writes: "Once again we are practicing for the Warren County Fair demonstration, to be held in Harmony, NJ, September 8-9. There will be six horses in all when show time rolls around. Two of our riders, Regina and Anne rode in the show last year, which was televised on cable. Everyone likes to



Riders at the NEIHC Bunny Hop taking a rest (left to right): Tom Mc Donald with Mattur, George Gates with Dagfari ("Cookie"), and Dennis Vetrano with Lukka.

see the Icelandics and we will show them what they can really do this year!"

The annual Bunny Hop ride was held on April 1. Nicki Esdorn reports that ten riders enjoyed a brisk romp on the Rockefeller Park Trails and the rain held off until the ride was over. Nicki has also been busy working with her friend and neighbor Martha Stewart on an upcoming Martha Stewart Show featuring Iceland and the Icelandic horse. See "Icelandics in the News" in this issue of the *Quarterly!*

The NEIHC will be hosting FEIF breeding evaluations on June 1-3 at Thor Icelandics in Claverack, NY. In addition to the evaluations, we look forward to the following events scheduled this summer:

June 4-7: Horse Camp for Grownups, Silver Maple Icelandic Horse Farm, Tunbridge, VT

June 8-10: World Ranking Triple Header, Silver Maple Icelandic Horse Farm, Tunbridge, VT

July 20-22: Clinic and Schooling Show with Steinar Sigurbjornsson, Thor Icelandics, Claverack, NY

July 29-Aug 4: Icelandic Horse Youth Camp, West Wind Farm, Delhi, NY

Aug 10-12: Young Horse Evaluations and Educational Conformation Clinic with Barbara Frische and Kristjan Kristjansson, Thor Icelandics, Claverack, NY

Aug 24-26: Clinic with Steinar Sigurbjornsson, Thor Icelandics, Claverack, NY

NEIHC members are encouraged to join the NEIHC Yahoo mail group, check our website, neihc.com and our Facebook page for news and upcoming events.

ST SKUTLA CLUB

Andrea Barber writes: Usually the members of the Saint Skutla Club spend much of our winter inside cleaning tack getting ready for the spring thaw when we can be out riding again. However, this winter was so incredibly mild the riding season never really ended. Typically in Western, NY we see over 100 inches of snow. This winter we only saw a fraction of that, and most of the time we had no snow cover at all. Club member Stephanie Sher only had to feed a total of five bales of hay all winter to her herd of six horses with her lush vast pastures devoid of



Some of the Outlet Trail riders of the St Skutla Club: Deb Callaway on Mosa, Steven Barber on Hrokur, JoAnne Davis on Flygill, and Susan Verberg on Greni. Photo by Andrea Barber.

snow. While the lack of white stuff was bad for snapping photos of winter scenes for Christmas cards it was great for riding.

On January 7, several club members were able to take a snow-free ride in Mendon Ponds Park. Usually in winter the park belongs to cross-country skiers, but this winter they were completely out of luck. Instead we were able to tolt through the still grassy meadows and gallop over the rolling hills enjoying a stunning view of the unfrozen Quaker Pond. On this ride we had Stephanie Sher on Ögri frá Sauðárkróki, young rider Kestrel Wilder on Kraftur frá Hrólfsstöðum, Steven Barber on Hrókur frá Hlemmiskeiði 1A, Deb Callaway on Flygill from Vesturbaer, and me riding my favorite gelding Víkingur frá Götu.

On March 18, Steve and I did our part for breed promotion by manning the USIHC booth at the Western New York Equifest. This second annual event was held at the Erie County Fairgrounds in Buffalo, NY. It's a nice event, as it draws horse lovers not only from New York, but from Ontario, Canada, as well, which is just a short distance away. The turnout was strong and the interest in the Icelandic horse was high, despite the fact that it was a balmy 70 degrees out that day. This was record-breaking warmth for March in Buffalo and really too nice to stay inside at a trade show. I know I was thinking that I would have rather been out on the trails! But nevertheless it was a great event and provided good exposure for the breed.

With the warmth of spring coming so early, the club was able to hold its first real spring ride at the Keuka Outlet Trail in Dresden, NY on March 25. It was a big group, as our club continues to grow. The riders were: Susan Verberg on Greni

from Blasted Rock, Stephanie Sher on Ögri frá Sauðárkróki, Deb Callaway on Mósa frá Hólmahjáleigu, Cordy Sullivan on Lýsingur frá Eyjólfstöðum, Steven Barber on Hrókur frá Hlemmiskeiði 1A, JoAnne Davis on Flygill from Vesturbaer, Gail Ingram on Sleipnir frá Forsæti, Elisa Dann on Tinna frá Árbakka, and me on Víkingur frá Götu. The horses felt right at home as the weather and surrounding environment really made it feel like Iceland. The skies were grey and it was drizzling lightly. The cinder surface of the trail appeared a lot like the volcanic soil of Iceland. We rode alongside, and at times through, a brisk stream, and we even stopped to take a break beside a breathtaking waterfall. The iffy weather meant the usually popular trail was pretty much deserted of other uses and the group tolted away to our hearts' content. Unfortunately nobody remembered the Brennivín. Next time!



January in Western, NY and no snow means more trail riding for the St Skutla Club! Here are Andrea Barber on Vikingur, Stephanie Sher on Ogri, Kestrel Wilder on Kraftur, and Deb Callaway on Flygill. Photo by Steven Barber.

2011 PLEASURE RIDING WINNERS

BY ELLEN WILSON

Here we are at the end of another exciting year in the USIHC Pleasure Riding Program. In 2011 the number of members signed up for the PRP grew to the highest number yet, with over 30 completing the year and turning in their final logs. Members were riding in every corner of the country from east to west and even Alaska. The competition was pretty strong in some areas of the country (mostly where the best weather was!) with the West Coast leading the way for the highest number of participants. This year we also saw a few changes in sponsors, and welcomed aboard ToltTack for their sponsoring of the All-Stars and 2500 points competitions.

Over the past year I've had the opportunity to get to know many of the PRP members, share their stories, and see great pictures of their wonderful Icelandic horses and the landscapes they ride them in. By far the most memorable moments for me have been in talking to new members and those enrolling in the PRP for the first time, as their excitement and enthusiasm is contagious! Everyone who participates is important, for every time they are out on the trails, in parades, or involved in clinics they serve as ambassadors of these wonder-



PRP chair Ellen Wilson and Freydis enjoying a trailride through the New Jersey Pine Barrens.

ful horses to the public and other horse folk that they meet along the way.

The USIHC Pleasure Rider Program rewards members for doing what most of us are already doing with our horses! It's also a great reason to get together with other Icelandic horse enthusiasts and promote the Icelandic horse. The more you do, the more points you earn. What could be better than winning prizes for having fun with your horse?

Beginning in 2012, there is no cost

to participate in the Pleasure Rider Program! Members "compete" against each other within their group, determined by age: adult or junior/youth. The adult PRP members are divided into three regions: Western (Pacific time zone), Central/Mountain (Central and Mountain zones combined), and Eastern. Yearly prizes are awarded to first, second, and third-place members in each group. Adults who have won the yearly Gold Medal and jacket twice advance to the All-Star Division.

To be eligible to participate in the program:

1. Your USIHC membership dues have been paid. Hours can only be counted while your membership is active.

2. Participating horses have been registered with the USIHC. You do not need to own the horse(s).

In this edition of the *Quarterly* we'd now like to introduce you to some of the 2011 winners so you can put the faces to the names, share their stories, and meet the horses they ride. 2012 is shaping up to be another great year with more new members signing up, and if you haven't already started in the fun I encourage you to do so. It is never too late to start recording your logs!

Have fun on the trails!



Photos from the trail by Ellen Wilson.



FIRST PLACE • ALL STARS

Nancy Wines-Dewan: This was a year of change and new beginnings! After many years on our small farm, we moved to a larger farm with more fields and a more spacious barn in February. The horses seem to be just as happy as I am with the new surroundings. Of course, all of this extra space meant that I was able to take advantage of the opportunity to purchase a two-year-old filly, Brenna from Ice Follies, just before Christmas.

I have been participating in the Pleasure Riding Program since 2005. Why do I keep enrolling in the PRP? Certainly it's interesting to keep track of and look back on the fun things I've done with my horses over the year, but it's also an important element in my training program. Below are some of the ways I use my journal (or log):

Enables me to look back and assess progress.

Allows me to compare training between horses—especially helpful now that I have a new filly.

Allows me to gain perspective. Training is a process, not an event. One skill builds on another constantly.

Gives me a record of when I work with each horse. With four Icelandics in the barn, it's easy to lose track!

Reminds me to look at a continuum, rather than just an individual day. Progress is not always forward; sometimes it's



Thanks to ToltTack for donating the prizes—the stirrups and T-shirt shown here, modeled by Nancy Wines-Dewan of Maine—for the PRP All-Stars and 2500 points competitions.

“two steps forward, one step back.”

Provides me with yet one more incentive to get out to the barn and work with my horses (even when it's cold, or windy, or buggy). And I always feel better afterwards.

Reminds me to stop when I've accomplished a training goal (or mini goal). Knowing when to stop is the key to success in training.

Gives me a dose of reality. I tend to remember the progress, and forget the journey getting there. Writing and read-

ing a daily account allows me to concentrate on the positives, but to remember there are ups and downs on any individual day.

Sometimes it helps me to see patterns that might influence my horses' behavior or their receptiveness to training on a particular day.

Helps me to establish goals for each horse.

I'm looking forward to more journaling as I chronicle the next year of working and playing with my horses in 2012.

FIRST PLACE • JUNIOR EAST

Caleigh Anderson: I'm Caleigh and I'm 13. My horse, Prins, is 16. Prins and I had a great year's-worth of riding. Of course we had fantastic adventures on the trails. Oh, and don't forget about all those times we rocked the show arena! Prins and I make a great pair because of how well we understand each other. If I don't feel well, he acts down in the dumps. If I am full of energy, he is too.

We recently went to our state 4-H show and showed in pony trail, saddle seat pleasure non-trotting, and saddle seat equitation Jr. Making it to states this year in trail was a big accomplishment. We have tried for a multitude of times to make it into that class. I always wanted to show that a gaited horse doesn't have to be highstrung. Prins is most definitely not highstrung. He is very calm and patient, most of the time. This year we made it and Prins was awesome! We placed elev-



Nancy Wines-Dewan, shown here with her new project, two-year-old Brenna from Ice Follies, won first place in the All-Stars division.

enth out of 25. I could have never done it without my older sister Constance helping me every step of the way.

When we weren't showing, I enjoyed taking trail rides with Prins, Constance, and her horse Owen. I enjoyed always beating them at a trotting/tolting race. I also enjoyed riding with Constance and her Icelandic, Elding. Riding is my passion. When I'm not riding Prins I'm riding one of our three paint horses. In the end I am so extremely happy and proud of Prins, Constance, my mom, my dad, and my grandma. I look forward to an even better year of riding next year, and hopefully adding to my five regional titles! (In my picture you can see all of my patches and medals.)

FIRST PLACE • ADULT EAST

Kathy Haulbrook: I love my Icelandic horse! He is both comfortable and fearless. After I had him well-started under saddle, we went to several ACTHA trail challenges last spring. Hrimi quickly adapted to camping overnight and riding unfamiliar trails. Then, as the temperature cooled down last fall, we tried some AERC endurance rides. Hrimi finished his first 25-miler at the Lost Posse Ride in Wacissa, FL. He covered the distance is just over four hours.

SECOND PLACE • ADULT EAST

Ellen Wilson, PRP Chair: Julia frá Gimli aka "Freydis" and I ride almost exclusively at Wharton State Forest in the pine barrens of NJ. We've spent many hours riding down the old stage coach roads that weave through the forest to towns and forge sites that were built in the 1700-1800s but no longer exist except as foundations or ruins. The terrain is quite diverse including sand, cranberry bogs, pine, and oak trees. Sometimes a trail runs out and we need to bushwhack our way through the brush. Riding year round we also get to enjoy the different seasons. During the hot summer months we often stop halfway through a ride and let the horses wade out into the Mullica River to cool off while we sit on their backs and talk and laugh. During the winter we bundle up with battery-heated socks and gloves and ride off through the snow. I take a lot of photographs on the trail too and have about 50 online albums, so I've gotten pretty good at riding one-handed with the camera in the other!



Kathy Haulbrook and Hrimi won first place in the Adult East division of the 2011 Pleasure Riding Program. Photo by Becky Pearman.



Caleigh Anderson and Prins won first place in the Junior East division of the 2011 Pleasure Riding Program.

NEW PLEASURE RIDER PROGRAM DEADLINES AND FORMS

Good news! The Pleasure Rider Program is now free to all USIHC members. No fees. Just sign up and win prizes.

A few more changes:

As president Anne Elwell explains, "The Congress has found it difficult to retain a volunteer to manage the Pleasure Rider Program, as evidenced by a high turnover rate over the past few years. In consultation with the current program chair (Ellen Wilson), the Board has come to understand that a significant part of the problem is the stress of having to compile the results on short notice at the end of the year."

To make the program chair's life easier, PRP members from now on need to submit quarterly logs.

"This will spread some of the volunteer workload across the year," Anne explains.

Effective immediately, quarterly logs are due April 10, July 10, October 10, and January 10 in each program year. For the first quarter, for example, this means you log your pleasure-riding time from January 1 through March 30, then you have 10 days to get your log to the PRP chair.

Given that you are reading about this change in June, a one-time exception will be made for the first quarter of 2012. First-quarter 2012 hours may be logged with the second-quarter hours, which are due on July 10. Moving forward, all hours must be logged in their respective quarters to be counted. Hours for past quarters will not count.

Also, remember to use the standard PRP log forms, found on the website.

Explains Anne, "The forms have not always been used in recent years. In some cases, hour logs were literally submitted on the back of napkins. Trying to decipher such submissions is an intolerable burden on the program volunteers. Therefore, the program chair will from now on return any logs which are not submitted on the forms provided on the Congress website (www.icelandics.org/prp)." Forms she can't read she'll return as well.

So enjoy your horses, log your hours—and brush up on your record-keeping skills in the PRP.

2011 PRP SCOREBOARD

DIVISION AWARDS: HOURS

ALLSTARS

1. NANCY WINES-DEWAN 451

YOUTH

1. CALEIGH ANDERSON 624

CENTRAL MOUNTAIN

1. KYDEE SHEETZ 656

2. CINDY NADLER 538

3. AMBER PARRY 395

EAST

1. KATHY HAULBROOK 309

2. ELLEN WILSON 253

3. WALTER DAVIS 134

WESTERN PACIFIC

1. ALYSCULHANE 1092

2. JAN GRAY 491

3. MORGAN VENABLE 472

REGIONAL CLUB AWARD FLUGNIR

HOUR AWARDS:

2500 HOUR

CINDY NADLER

1000 HOUR

LINDA MCLAUGHLIN

JAN GRAY

JUDY SLAYTON

LORI BIRGE

500 HOUR

ELLEN WILSON

100 HOUR

ANNE VERVAET

JACKIE ALSCHULER

KATHY HAULBROOK

LORI LESSLEY

HELEN LESSLEY

LINDA EDDY

SANDIE WEAVER



Alys Culhane (right) won first place in the Adult Western Pacific division with the highest number of hours of anyone in the program: 1092. Most of her hours were accumulated in one 500-mile ride through Colorado. Photo by Andrea Brodie.



Alexandra Venable won first place in the Youth West division. Photo by Heidi Benson.

PRINCIPLES OF CONFORMATION ANALYSIS

BOOK REVIEW BY BERNIE WILLIS

A few years back I was riding with my friend and horse mentor Bill Burke. I asked him, “Why do you think the horse I’m riding has so much trouble showing tölt when compared to the horse you are riding?” Without a moment’s hesitation he said, “It’s the triangle between the LS joint and the hip bones.” I asked, “How do you know that?” On the way home he introduced me to *Principles of Conformation Analysis*, by Deb Bennett, Ph.D. Later that evening he gave me his copies of the three 96-page books.

Bennett stands in a position of authority when it comes to bones: She is a vertebrate paleontologist and former natural-history researcher at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. who now is a serious student of dressage. On my first trip to Holar College in Iceland to study horse conformation, I asked if they were aware of Bennett and her work. I learned that they were not. I left my three-volume set on conformation with the librarian. A couple of years later, on my next visit, I learned that Bennett had just been to Holar to give a lecture series. I read with great interest the articles in the Icelandic horse magazine *Eidfaxi* about her opinions on the Icelandic horse.

THE WHOLE HORSE

I will limit this review to Volume One. This book takes a look at the horse as a whole. Chapter One emphasizes that it is what is inside the horse that counts. One of Bennett’s pet peeves is the “stuffed toy” perspective, where fat can cover a multitude of faults. She asks, “Who stops to ask whether the bones inside a ‘long, elegant neck’ can grow normally and stay in alignment?” She states her purpose, “to help you learn not merely structure, but how the particular structure of an individual horse predisposes or ‘suits’ him for certain athletic activities.”

Chapter Two deals with unity, balance, and bascule. We humans obviously have a center of balance or center of gravity. The horse does too. What is the relationship between our two separate balance points? Ben-

nett claims the implications are huge for bending, riding up and down hills, and jumping. We can draw from this discussion valuable points that apply to gait changes.

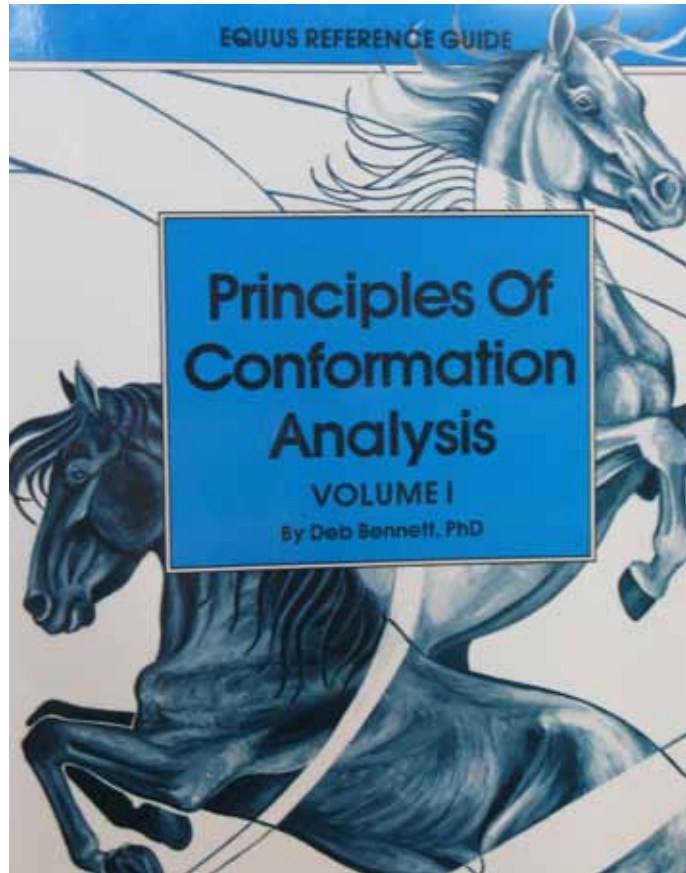
The third chapter deals with the “ring of muscles.” Would you believe that the muscles in the back are not the main support of the rider’s weight? If it’s not the back that supports the weight then what is it? Hint, the area of these muscles starts with the same letter, “b.” Learn how this works.

The next chapters deal with the horse in a holistic way, that is to say in a way that includes the genetic possibilities. In contrast, she writes about how an airplane is put together with individually manufactured parts, but a horse is grown seamlessly, with all the parts functioning together, perhaps compensating for each other. Unlike a factory-built machine, a horse’s form predicts its function.

She uses four P’s for a general description of a horse: perfect, primitive, pathological, and pathogenic. While warning about being too nitpicky on a horse’s faults, she sees trends in individuals that predict their usefulness or—the way she sees it—the costliness of keeping a particular horse.

This first volume of *Principles of Conformation Analysis* ends with a chapter about breeding. It answers the question, “What constitutes a valuable horse?” At only 96 pages, this book is packed full of information. It’s a book you don’t read but study. It’s small enough to take with you anywhere (even to Iceland!) and keep reviewing until you can put together the details in a valuable and meaningful way.

Sometimes it’s advertised in *Equus* magazine and, last I checked, was sold on Amazon.com.



THE PERFORMANCE PYRAMID

BY ANDREA BARBER

A few years ago I was lucky enough to take one of Marlise Grimm's sport judging seminars out in California. Marlise is a terrific teacher who has an excellent way of breaking down the horse's complex performance into easily measurable elements for proper judging. It was a great course, not only as the first step in becoming a sport judge, but full of great educational content to apply to one's own riding. I took many notes during the event to refer to later.

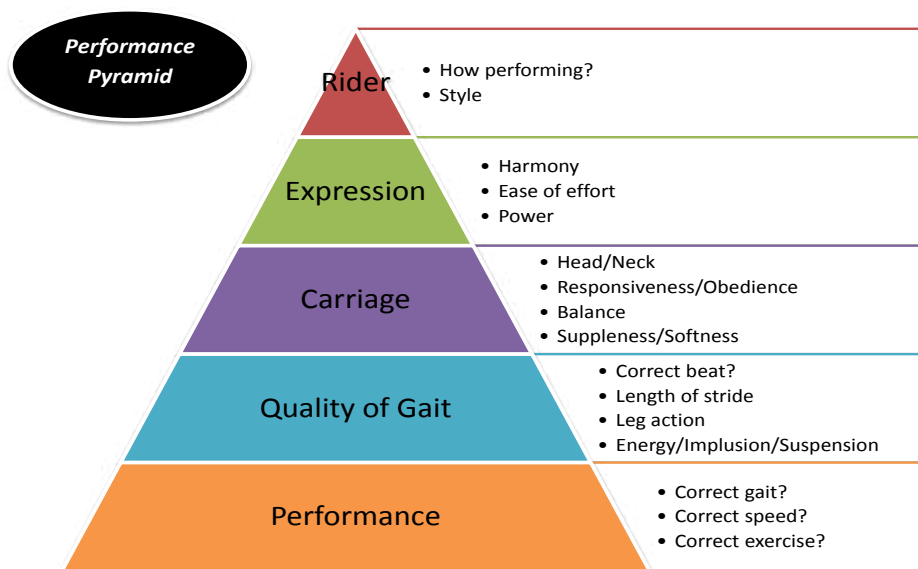
This winter I was cleaning out my office and came upon my notes from the sport judging seminar. After reviewing them I got to thinking that, although I haven't ridden in a show in a long time (and didn't plan to anytime soon), my goals for trail riding were largely the same. I figured I could use the elements of performance that were sought after in the show ring as a guide for my horse's performance out on the trail. However, if I wanted to keep all these elements in my head, I needed to distill my notes into a more manageable format. Perhaps something I could hang in my barn for easy reference before I saddled up. Thus, the Performance Pyramid was born.

The idea of the Performance Pyramid is quite simple: take all the elements judged in sport and condense them into an easy to understand, visual format for trail riding. At the base of the pyramid are the most basic elements of any performance. With each level up, the amount of refinement increases and builds on the ones below. By following this visual as a guide it makes breaking down the elements of an exceptional trail performance easy to evaluate and manage for continued improvement.

I: PERFORMANCE

At the foundation of the pyramid are the most basic elements of any horse's performance.

Correct gait? This may seem obvious, but is the horse doing the gait the rider asks for, when the rider asks for it? If the rider asks



for trot, the horse should trot – not do a mishmash of all the other gaits. Being out on the trail can even make this somewhat more challenging than in the show ring due to uneven terrain. However, ideally, the horse should do any gait the rider requests exactly when requested for it and stay in that gait until the rider asks for something else.

Correct speed? Ideally, the Icelandic horse should have a broad range of speed in all gaits. But is the horse moving at the speed the rider requested and then staying at that speed until the rider asks for a change? If the rider asks for slow tölt, does the horse stay in a nice, even slow tölt, or does it feel like the accelerator is pinned to the floor? Conversely, if the rider asks for a brisk trot does the horse continue to plug along needing constant encouragement? Speed control can even become more challenging when riding with a group. Yet, good control of speed is an important element of a safe and pleasant trail ride. Ideally, the horse should be instantly obedient to the rider's instructions as to speed and stay at a consistent speed unless the rider asks for a change.

Correct exercise? In the show ring this refers to performing the correct program,

doing the correct thing at the correct moment (such as a speed change), etc. However, this element can also be applied to trail riding. Is the horse going in the direction that the rider wants? When the rider cues a right turn does the horse try to go left? If the rider's plan is to head out the driveway, does the horse instead try to high-tail it back to the barn? Maybe the rider wants to stand around and chat, but the horse instead jigs in place because he wants to motor down the trail. Doing the correct exercise means the rider and the horse are on the same page and doing what the rider requests together. Ideally, the horse should be obedient, compliant, and cheerful about following the rider's plan, whatever that plan may be.

II: GAIT

In the next level simply performing the correct gait is not enough. Now quality becomes important.

Correct beat? Each gait has a correct beat. But is the horse doing that correct beat? If the horse is tölting is it doing a clear, four-beat gait, or is it pace-beated, or perhaps, trot-beated? If the rider asks for canter, is the horse actually doing a proper three-beat canter, or is it more of a four-beat

gallop? Of course, not every horse has perfectly clean gaits, but as riders it's up to us to know what any individual horse is capable of and to help the horse perform to the best of its ability. For example, many trail riders have no idea that their horses are pacing instead of tölting and think things are just grand because the ride for them is smooth. That simple act of ignoring incorrect beat can cause the horse to become extremely stiff and lead to discomfort for both horse and rider, not to mention additional performance issues. Also, knowing well what is a correct beat in all gaits for a particular horse can give a greater awareness to spot a lameness problem should one arise. Incorrect beat in any gait can often be a symptom of a larger issue. Ideally, the horse should consistently have correct beat in all gaits.

Length of stride: Stiff, short, and choppy strides are uncomfortable for the rider and probably signal stiffness issues in the horse. It can also be a sign of discomfort caused by hoof pain, poor saddle fit, and a variety of other issues. Again, the rider should have some concept of the natural abilities of the horse and seek to bring out the best in the horse. Ideally, the horse should take long, loose, ground-covering strides out on the trail.

Leg Action: Now I know many will read this and say the only place where this criteria counts is in the show ring. Not so! A horse



The farther up the performance pyramid horse and rider climb, the bigger the smiles. Left, Komma frá Langhúsum ridden by Sarah Jones; right, Sómi frá Dýrfinnstöðum ridden by Stan Hirson. Photo by Andrea Barber.

that shuffles around, too lazy to pick up its feet, is miserable to ride on the trail and can also lead to tripping, falling, etc. In addition, in a horse that has the natural ability for high leg action, yet lacks it at any point in time, should be examined for a potential problem. Again, this is a case of knowing the abilities of the individual horse. If the horse is moving properly, those horses that have the natural ability will show high leg action even out on the trail.

Energy/Impulsion/Suspension: This element

is critical for the trail. A horse that is just plodding along with no energy is little more than a nag out on the trail. The Icelandic horse is bred to be a spirited mount and that's exactly what should be displayed out on the trail. Ideally, the horse should move forward energetically with strong impulsion, and if it has the ability, good suspension in the gaits where it exists.

III: CARRIAGE

To get to this level the horse is doing everything it should be doing, but here we look at how well the horse is actually doing it.

Head/Neck: How is the horse holding its head and neck? Is it loose and flexed in the poll, or stiff, tight, and stargazing? Is the jaw soft and supple, ready to respond to cues from the bit, or braced and locked? Ideally, the horse should have a soft and natural head-carriage appropriate for the gait and speed that it's performing.

Responsiveness/Obedience: It's hard to imagine an element more important for the average trail rider. Is the horse responsive and obedient to requests? When the rider asks for a halt does the horse stop immediately and softly? Or does the horse grind to a stop, hanging on the bit? Will the horse move over with a light touch of the rider's leg, or does the horse completely ignore the rider's request? When



How is the rider doing? Ideally, the rider should give almost invisible cues. Here, Steven Barber rides Brynja from Rhythmill. Photo by Andrea Barber.



Even if your horse is “just” a trail horse, help him perform to the best of his natural ability. It will make for a more enjoyable ride for both of you. Here, Steven Barber rides Kvistur from Blasted Rock. Photo by Andrea Barber.

horse and rider come across something scary on the trail does the horse follow the rider’s leadership or decide what to do on its own? Ideally, the horse should be light and extremely responsive, obedient, and cheerfully meeting the rider’s every request.

Balance: Balance is also critically important for any trail rider. An out of balance horse can be prone to tripping or falling, do damage to its joints, be unable to balance its rider, and be simply unpleasant to ride. On the other hand, a horse in good balance gives a fun, light feeling and finds it easy to navigate the most difficult terrain safely and efficiently. Transitions come naturally for the balanced horse and its body is perfectly poised to meet all the rider’s requests. Ideally, the horse should be able to keep good balance and self-carriage without constant support from the rider.

Suppleness/Softness: This refers to the overall flow of the horse. A horse that is stiff will have trouble responding to rider requests and will even find it difficult to bend around the simplest of turns. Eventually, stiffness can cause stress, strain, and even discomfort and pain to the horse which may also spread to the rider. If allowed to progress, long term damage can result. In contrast, a horse that is soft and supple is able to bend easily through its whole body, readily adapting to changing

terrain and responding to rider’s wishes. A supple, soft horse gives the rider an excellent seat and feel and is that “magic carpet” type ride that pleasure riders adore. The softness and relaxation spreads through the horse and to the rider as well. Horse and rider are able to meld together.

IV: EXPRESSION

Now the horse is meeting all the rider’s requests, is performing correctly at all gaits in all speeds, is in balance, and is soft and supple through its whole body. For many trail riders this may be enough. But for those looking for more—“the ultimate ride”—we look to expression.

Harmony: Do horse and rider give a harmonious appearance together? Does the horse look happy and willing? Here we don’t want a horse just going through the motions. We want a true partner in sync with his rider and working together as a team. Horse and rider should look made for one another.

Ease of effort: Does the horse make it all look easy? If the horse is doing everything right, but is drenched with sweat, wide-eyed, and looking distressed, obviously the horse is being asked to do too much too soon or is being pushed way out of its comfort zone. Properly prepared, the horse

should find doing what the rider asks reasonable and thus should be able to do it without extreme effort. Ideally, the feel and appearance should be of a fine dance with the horse being light and happy, ears forward, and willing to perform.

Power: The Icelandic horse is a performance horse for adults, not a mere children’s pony. The horse should be a powerful volcano of perfectly controlled energy. If the horse is built up properly with correct training and conditioning, it should give the appearance and feeling of extreme power—like a coiled spring. Ideally, the rider should feel like the horse is powerful enough to do whatever is asked of it whether it be dancing in slow tölt or ripping in a blistering pace.

V: RIDER

At this stage the horse is performing at 100% of its natural ability. But what about the rider? Such a horse deserves more than a rider sitting like a sack of potatoes in a chair seat. The rider needs to polish up and complete the beautiful picture.

How performing? How is the rider doing? Maybe the horse is just a bundle of natural talent and the rider is being a complete passenger—or worse, being a drag on the horse with poor form, inconsistent cues, etc. Ideally, the rider needs to sit correctly and in balance, give clear, soft, and almost invisible cues. The rider should be working with the horse, not against him.

Style: Some riders are able to get incredible performance from their horses, but their style is rather ugly. Even the best performing horse will not look so great with a rider that has his hands up by the horse’s ears and his feet stuck out in front of his horse’s shoulders. Ideally, the rider should be so good as to be almost invisible, taking nothing away from the appearance of the horse.

Now, I understand that many out there “just want to trail ride” and see no need to look to the show ring for what is “good.” But the fact of the matter is that when you look at all the elements that are praised in the show ring, they are exactly what almost all riders desire on the trail: an obedient horse that performs all gaits correctly in any speed while in excellent carriage and in perfect harmony with its rider to the best of its natural ability. Now, who wouldn’t want that?

RIDING GUIDELINES

DOUG SMITH & WILL COVERT

As Icelandic horse riders, most of us strive for the same goal: to ride and enjoy a really nice tölt. Of course, there is pace and the three gaits the “other” horses have as well. Most in our community would agree that a really nice tölt is beautiful to watch and ride. The question is, what is a really nice tölt?

FEIF publishes a document that outlines “really nice tölt” in a way that is easy for anyone to understand: *The FEIF Sport Judges Guidelines*. Don’t be put off by the “sport” in the title. This document is useful for all riders as the best place to find descriptions of well-ridden gaits. Using tölt as an example, you will find no less than five sections, nearly one-third of the document, describing the various tölts that we ride: slow, fast, speed changes, loose rein, and any speed.

HARMONIOUS

Each section begins with a description of the general faults and strong points for the gait. In the case of any-speed tölt we are all reminded to strive for harmonious riding. We are also reminded of a number of faults very clearly applicable to everyday riding:

- poor riding (e.g. a rider with fixed or stiff hands, poor balance, bad timing, using too much pressure, horse frequently fighting the bit)
- rough aids
- a horse that is slightly behind the bit
- a horse that is predominantly going on more than two tracks
- a horse that is predominantly bent when going in a straight line
- a horse that is predominantly swaying or tilting its head

For a rider who never plans to be in a competition, these points are all well worth keeping in mind, as they promote a healthy horse and a good riding style.

“AVERAGE”

Each section provides more anecdotal detail for what is a well-ridden gait, organized according to the sport scoring scale from the ideal (score of 10) down toward the faulty (score of 1). Competition riders know the scores they typically receive, so they can just skim to the section that applies to their current riding skill and look a little higher on the scale to understand what needs to change to improve their riding. For the rest of us, the “average” section (score of 5) is a good place to start reading.

The key element to keep in mind is that an “average” gait is really quite exceptional. Using the T1 World Ranking as a measure, only the top 200 riders in the world have managed to demonstrate performances that are numerically better than “average,” according to the sport scale.

The *Guidelines*, as written, give examples of the type of riding that is typical within each section. For instance, there are many different ways to ride an “average” tölt, as the following lists illustrate. The first group of examples score between 5.0 and 5.5 in Sport competition:

- more or less correct beat with no constant major faults in carriage
- correct beat, just average action and strides, nice riding
- good action and strides, but with some clear faults (such as beat or carriage)
- generally correct beat, high action with long strides, but tense and looking pacy
- constant slight tendency to trottness in beat with very good action with long strides

This next group of examples are at the midpoint of the “average” section. In Sport competition, these examples score in the 6.0 to 6.5 range:

- correct beat, medium action and strides, acceptable carriage
- correct beat, nearly medium action and strides, lots of energy, very good carriage
- correct beat, good action and strides, with slight faults in carriage



Doug Smith riding Stormur frá Efri-Rauðalæk in Iceland in “pretty nice” tölt. Photo by Sveinn Heiðar Jóhannesson.



Ayla Green practicing “pretty nice” tölt with Gandalfur from Wellington. Photo by Heidi Benson.

The *Guidelines* provide similar descriptions for all five gaits and the variants used in competition. Of course, most of us in the United States don’t ride in competition. Nevertheless, this document can help all of us better understand what is internationally accepted as a well-ridden gait. From that understanding, we can set training goals for ourselves and our horses, even if all we plan to do is enjoy a ride in the forest.

The most current version of the *Guidelines* can be found on the USIHC’s website at www.icelandics.org/guidelines and may be downloaded as a free PDF.

- very good action and strides, but occasional clear mistakes (in beat and/or carriage)
- correct beat, good action and strides, but stiff in the back
- correct beat, good action and strides, but clearly too short steps from behind

IMPROVING

For those of us who don’t have aspirations to compete in the World Championships, these tölt traits are excellent goals. Reading a bit further in the *Guidelines* we find suggestions for aspects of the tölt we might consider improving:

- constant minor beat faults (e.g. pacey, trotty, or rolling) with acceptable carriage
- correct beat, medium action and strides, but poor carriage
- correct beat, very little action and short strides, acceptable carriage
- medium action and strides with occasional major faults (e.g. beat or carriage)



Allison Moerer and Punktur fra Stekkjarholti give another example of “pretty nice tölt.” Photo by Heidi Benson.

WHY DO YOU RIDE?

BY STEPHANIE SHER

A friend of mine, whose profession is teaching young students to ride and show in children's hunter classes, asked me a surprising question today: "Why do you ride?" When she asked me this question, I was taken aback and couldn't immediately find a good answer. Because the horses are there? Because I like horses? Because it's not reasonable to have six equids and not use them for anything?

So I put the question to the international Icelandic horse mailing list (icehorseworldwide at Yahoo.com). If there's no financial reason to ride—like selling horses or showing and breeding horses—and especially if it causes you pain (as it does me), why do you ride?

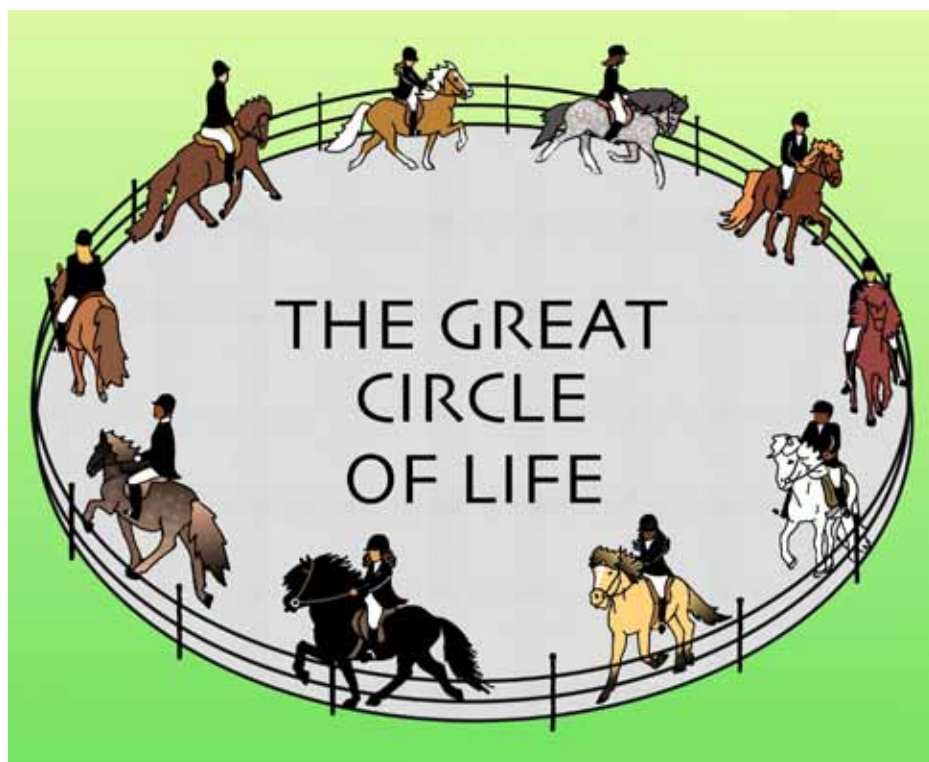
The answers were passionate and poetic. Here, with permission from the authors, is what they said.

IT IS LIKE A DRUG

Yvonne Benzian: "Because it is like a drug and the best thing I ever do. The feeling when everything works, when the horse dances under you, when you can communicate with small signals—when you get a conversation going with the horse—is better than anything else!"

A SPANKY PONY

Nancy Ross: "One thing I have always said is that if I ever got to the point where I could no longer ride I would get me a spanky pony and a cart so I could still pursue my love of the horse. So after checking a few want ads, I got the number of a guy who had an Icelandic pony that he said was just about as broke as I could hope for. Off we went on a frosty morning to see the 'pony.' Well, out comes this boy. My friend and coach says, He is so ugly he has got to be good. We hook him up to a sleigh and, Oh lordy, I know I am caught—hook, line, and sinker. The man says he wants \$2,000 for him with no papers. Before the ride is over I say, Consider him sold. Maybe some time down the road I will ride him, but I really don't feel like I have anything to prove. I am the proud owner of an Icelandic horse who just happens to have all those gaits I have been reading about."



Cartoonist Chris Romano's answer to the question, "Why do you ride?"

THE WORLD LOOKS BETTER

Lois d'Annunzio: "The world looks better from atop a horse! Life is good riding through the woods or fields!"

QUIET RAMBLING

Kathy Whittington: "For me, it's the quiet rambling down the trails, now and then adding the gaits and 'shifting gears' smoothly and effortlessly. I'm always striving to be light and smooth with my special horse. I have always loved horses, since I was a little girl. That virus can't be cured."

SUPERPOWER

Kathy Sierra: "Riding a horse is as close to a true superpower as we will ever get (in my lifetime, anyway). Riding, we are suddenly far more powerful and far faster than on our own two little legs. Surfing has a somewhat similar effect for me, as does riding a motorcycle, but when it is a living, breathing creature ... the effect of extending your own physical capabilities is like nothing else."

"In the end, we all want to be a little

more bad-ass, and horses make us more powerful. Not to mention that it is one of the very best exercises for keeping the back and hips fluid. There are precious few exercises that give the pelvis this much range of motion, or allow the spine to move in this way. But in the end, for me, the challenge and ultimate reward of coming to an 'agreement' with such a noble and proud creature is the most life-enhancing experience I can think of. And this would be true even if I were not able to ride and were doing something else with my horses."

HAPPINESS

Robyn Schulze: "Because it makes me happy."

MAGNIFICENCE

Pat Grimmer: "As long as I can remember, I have been enamored of the magnificence of horses. The fact that this powerful animal is willing to allow me to climb up on its back and carry me when and where I ask it to never ceases to amaze



Illustration by Nancy Wines-Dewan.

me. When I am on a horse's back, everything is right with the world. If I am stiff in the joints, or have sore muscles before riding, it is not long before they loosen up and I feel comfortable and happy to be out in the fresh air enjoying nature and my time with a wonderful, willing beautiful creature."

I FEEL LIKE ME

Karen Harvey: "Riding or working around or with a horse, I feel like *me*. The positions, smells, and sounds are comfortable, safe, and right. I feel competent and content with horses. How many things in life give you that?"

TOTALLY IN THE PRESENT

Cindy Dunne: "I ride for the connection and companionship with the horse, and for that feeling of being totally in the present. All pain, anxiety, or worry vanishes."

A CALM CENTER

Danya Miller: "Horses are somehow central to my being. They help define me. They are a calm center and a refuge from all the hectic activities of daily life. I ride because they are there and that is what you do with horses. But when Sky was recovering from an abscess for three

months, I didn't miss riding. I was just as happy grooming, doing massage, ground-work, just sitting in a chair watching the horses where she lives, talking to folks who think like I do. I recently read an article about how it is okay to have horses and not ride, as long as they are properly taken care of. All you have to do is look at all the unwanted horses to understand that. Of course, the benefit of riding and all the associated work is when you look around at others in your age group: We are usually in better shape. We are also typically a resourceful, competent group of people, and I enjoy that."

HORSINESS

Meg F.: "I like horsiness in life, so if I couldn't ride then I'd still want horses. What I like is getting out in nature, as well as just hanging out with my horses. I found that just being around them will lower my blood pressure. We go on horse walks and sometimes I'll not do much other than stand around in the woods while they graze on patches of grass. Riding lets me cover more ground on a trail, but otherwise isn't much more fun than hiking with them. When hiking I can look them in the eye and interact in a different way than I can when up on their backs. I like hiking part of the way and riding part of the way. Unfortunately it is harder to find others who enjoy hiking as much as riding; folks want to jump on right away and only ride. I don't need to ride to enjoy my horses."

JOY

Sandie Weaver: "My daughter and I had this very conversation a couple of months ago. I blabbed on and on about the camaraderie I felt with fellow riders and how I loved being part of the horse community. Then it was her turn, and she said that at that moment when the horse understands your ever-so-subtle cue and responds as if it were one with you, that is the joy of riding for her. I started looking at our horses differently that day. The horses noticed and now they respond to me differently when I come to the stables"

IT'S MY DRUG

Raven Flores: "It's my drug. It's my therapy. It's my addiction. It's my passion. It's my way of life."

THE EXTREMES OF EXTREME FARM

BY PAMELA NOLF

In November 2010, a clarion call went out over the Internet: “62 Icelandics on Feedlot Awaiting Shipment to Slaughter.” The owner of these horses had given them to what he thought was a charity for re-homing, only to have them show up on a feedlot. Equine-related discussion groups were abuzz with the news. Individuals and groups rallied together to find funds to adopt these horses at meat prices. Subsequently, the owner of Extreme Farms in Washington State gave away approximately 100 more Icelandic horses. Most of the horses were untouched, unhandled, unregistered—raised in wide open pastures. So over a year and half later, what is happening with all these Extreme Farm horses?

To set the stage for discussion, let’s define some terminology. A rescue horse is usually an animal that needs to be re-homed due to poor upkeep and/or the inability of the owner to continue to support the horse. At the time of the “give-away,” the Extreme Farm horses were in good weight and condition. A better term for these horses was “unhandled”—many of these horses had reverted to a semi-wild state in which humans were regarded as predators. I can’t really say that I understood the challenges faced by the adopters of these horses until I got to visit some up close and personal.

Several months ago, I visited a farm that had several of the Extreme Farm horses. Since adoption, these horses have been owned by the same person and received basically the same introduction to domestic life. When the owner first got the horses, none of them were approachable by humans—they just wanted to run away. A single misjudgment of pressure or unconsidered movement would result in the horse desperately trying to get away—a scenario rife with potential for injury. In fact the owner did make such a mistake and the Extreme Farm horse knocked him to the ground. Knowing that he could get seriously hurt when dealing with feral horses, the owner had a professional trainer experienced with Icelandic horses



The classic Icelandic look in the herd at Extreme Farms. Photo by Amanda Barber.

start them with ground manners and, if old enough, under saddle. Following is an introduction to three of these horses approximately one year after adoption—Sweetie Pie, the Athlete, and the Beauty. (Note that the owner of these horses has approved these descriptions.)

SWEETIE PIE

Sweetie Pie is adorable. As soon as I stroll into sight, both she and her pasture mate leave their hay to come up for scratches and a possible treat. Sweetie Pie just can’t get enough attention—she loves being petted and hugged and hearing kind words. The owner halts the horse and we go into the indoor arena. Sweetie Pie calmly steps over the hose lying across the doorway. I play lead line exercises with Sweetie Pie, who has great ground manners but is too young to go under saddle. When we take her back to the pasture, Sweetie Pie hangs around the gate hoping that we will come back. Over the past months, this horse continues to make great progress by dealing with crowds of people and learning how to drive and pull a cart.

THE ATHLETE

The Athlete is a gorgeous young gelding with good gaits—you can definitely visualize this horse on the tolt track. The experienced Icelandic horse trainer fetches him from the pasture and tacks him up for a ride. The Athlete is alert, a bit cautious, but trusts his trainer. The trainer demos some of his lateral work and gaits under saddle—really a nice exhibit. Six of us are in a corner of the arena and the trainer can ride the Athlete up to us at a walk—a step that would have been too much for him a month ago. At the end of the ride, I walk over to give scratches and pets. The Athlete is appreciative but still just a bit wary. But as the months go by, the Athlete is becoming more and more certain that people are good things.

THE BEAUTY

And then, there’s the Beauty. She has the best conformation and gaits of the three horses. As we walk toward her pasture, I see a stunning horse, standing tall and alert—just breathtaking. But on second glance, this horse is more like a gazelle

watching a pride of lions approach. The Beauty is just waiting for these “lions” to eat her. (Before sending the Beauty to a trainer, the owner spent hours just sitting in the pasture with a bucket of grain waiting for the Beauty to approach him. It was many days before the horse would even take a nibble of grain.)

The trainer goes into Beauty’s pasture and slowly and deliberately puts on her halter. The trainer can lead the Beauty around the pasture, but any ill-considered movement is still a source of big concern. When the “lion pride” leaves, I approach the gate to Beauty’s pasture with a handful of fresh grass. She really wants that grass, she seems to want to trust me, she inches closer to the fence and very cautiously takes a nibble of grass from my hand, then backs away. This is good sign, and over the past few months, the owner and trainer report that the Beauty continues to take those small but significant steps to building trust with humans.

THE EXTREMES

The above vignettes represent the extremes of the Extreme Farm horses. Reports from owners of the larger population of Extreme Farm horses vary wildly as to progress made. Some of these horses were under saddle and on the trail in six months. And some horses have been rehomed several times because of the challenges of working with them. Results vary based on the age of the horse, the sire (and dam of course), and whether or not the horse had some sort of exposure to humans early in its life. And some of the Extreme Farm horses have great potential. A filly named Alfradis was evaluated by Barbara Frische, International Icelandic Horse Breeding judge, who awarded the filly a first prize status for conformation, commenting that she was a sparkling young filly in excellent condition to be



The herd at Extreme Farms as the “rescue” was in progress in November 2010. Photo by Amanda Barber.

evaluated as a two-year-old.

The Inland Icelandic Facebook group is an excellent source to exchange information with current owners of Extreme Farm horses. And a shout-out goes to Darick Sanderson, the caretaker at Extreme Farms, who has been tireless in his support of trying to find the right match-ups for the horses and helping new owners with their horses and registration.

REGISTERED

The good news is that many owners are trying to get these horses registered. As of the researching of this article, 49 Extreme Farm horses are registered. Since the owner had previously registered some of his horses, approximately 35 of these “rescue” horses have been registered by their new owners. Extreme Farms has now filed all the stallion reports so that as people get more of the dams registered, more adopters of the resulting offspring will be able to register their horses. Some of the Extreme Farm horses can never be registered, since a progenitor may have died with no DNA on record. If you own an Extreme Farms horse, the Inland Icelandic group has a list of dams and their registration numbers and can provide advice on registration. The USIHC can also

help you with the registration process.

Some of these horses required the attention of a professional trainer just to get the horses to the point that they could be safely handled on the ground. Several adopters of Extreme Farm horses have reported negative results from the more extreme “cowboy” methods of breaking a horse, such as intensive round penning. These methods just seemed to confirm to the Icelandic horse that people are predators; it is important to build trust with these horses first before moving on to any kind of training. And although people are to be commended for opening their hearts and wallets to save these horses, many have found the additional amount of money required to train a free but unhandled horse equals or exceeds the price of a trained Icelandic horse bought from a breeder. Adopting an unhandled horse is a chancy proposition—you may win the giveaway lottery and find your heart horse or you may end up with a horse that may never be safely ridden.



The herd in motion. Many of the horses considered humans to be predators. Photo by Amanda Barber.

TRAINING AN EXTREME HORSE

BY ALEX PREGITZER

I have been working with one of the Extreme Farms horses and thought you might be interested in hearing how it is going. I am an IPZV Trainer C, certified in Germany, and have been working with Icelandics in the U.S. for ten years.

When my clients Kris and Debbie rescued two of the Extreme Farm horses and brought them home to their farm, neither of the mares, Elska (estimated to be three years old) and Lagsi (estimated to be seven), could be easily touched or handled, just like the horse Pamela describes in the previous article. Yet both mares were willing to go into a trailer without a second thought, even though they had no trailer training.

Both have now learned to be loved and Lagsi, the mare I have been working with, is probably the most snuggly, patient horse I have come across since I began training young horses. She was like that right from the get-go when she arrived for training, which I contribute to the loving care and handling by her new owners. But it took a long time for her to learn to trust.

This horse certainly is not only from Extreme Farms, she is a horse of many extremes. She was extremely difficult in some ways and extremely good and easy in other ways.

DON'T TOUCH

At first, Lagsi had huge issues and could not be touched, without warning, anywhere she could not see well. If anything touched her, especially on her sides or her rear, she was off: bolting and bucking without a chance of holding her. Kris and Debbie eventually learned that she had a small cataract in one eye and a blocked drainage tube in the other eye, which they had corrected. That was part of the problem.

The mare had two months of training with a Parelli-style Walking Horse trainer while I was recovering from an injury. This trainer was the one gaited horse trainer who lived nearest to the mare's owners. It sounded like a good idea but it was not.



Debbie Duvall with her mother's mare Lagsi.

Hours of round penning and lunging freaked her out, and she became very nervous and angry. The decision was made to take Lagsi home, and she got some time off before her owners decided to give it a try with me.

I was leery, as I was still not fully recovered from my injury and not sure I was ready to pick up training again. I was

not sure about this horse either. I asked my good friend Sally, who is a TTEAM instructor, to help me restart Lagsi from the beginning. Together, with much love and patience, we made huge progress. Just when I thought she was okay to be trail-ridden without ponying, I had an accident with her. We went back to kindergarten.

It's now been seven months of training, adjusted to Lagsi's pace. I worked with her alone in an enclosed space, but always had Sally and a small number of rock-solid horses for company on the trails. This is just another example of the value of having an experienced helper and experienced trail horses when it comes to training young horses. While trying to expose Lagsi to a variety of horses and situations on the trail, I was extremely conservative with regard to who we went out with. I used three or four different horses and basically the same group of two or three riders.

Some time last winter, I started to include Debbie in the training. At first, we



Kris Mellen rescued and owns Lagsi. Debbie Duvall, Kris' daughter (shown here with Lagsi), rescued and owns a second Extreme Farms horse, Elska, who is not yet trained.

just met once a week and worked together on ground work. Since then, the mare has bonded strongly with her owners, and I have slowly weaned myself off from training and am now only helping Debbie, for example going out with her on trail rides. However, Lagsi has not yet cantered on the trail, nor have I started her gait training. It was seven months just of gaining trust and working on basics. That is a lot of time and money.

ON THE TRAIL

Any wrong touch, when I first started working with her, and she went out of her mind. Now, if Lagsi is not sure about something, she doesn't run off but instead stops and turns and looks at me or her owner for advice on what to do. I have never seen a horse that is so trusting and so completely in love with her people. It is amazing!

Some things she does more perfectly than most other horses I know. From the start, Lagsi would ground tie and hang out wherever you put her. We could have put her anywhere for hours, and she would have never done a thing. She is so patient. You can start the gator next to her and she won't even flinch. I can examine her mouth—her canine teeth are erupting now—without even thinking she would bite me by accident. I literally have had my arm in her mouth, and she just stood there quietly. I don't think I would even do that with my own horse.

Kris and Debbie like to go camping with their horses and trailride often. Mud, water, deer, turkey, steep hills, traffic—none of that is an issue for Lagsi and never was. We did not have to teach her, she did all this naturally. It seemed the only thing that ever scared Lagsi was Lagsi herself.

This horse will be a phenomenal trail horse. Already she is a phenomenal friend. Lagsi is the Icelandic word for Buddy. Technically it's a name for geldings, but it's a great name for this horse nonetheless. She has nice gaits and is easy going. I am just happy that this good horse has found a wonderful home. I am thankful that her owners never gave up on her, even though she required much more training than hoped for. I guess the only reason none of us, Kris and Debbie, Sally and me, gave up on her is her loving disposition. This is a horse that wanted to be good so badly and tried as hard as any horse possibly could to overcome her anxieties, and it worked!

THE FERAL HORSE

BY ANNE ELWELL

As a person who has spent a lot of time in Iceland, beginning in 1986, I find it so interesting to see the culture clash of “feral horses” and horse owners whose expectation of horses comes from their experience solely with horses raised from birth with intimate contact with people. In Iceland almost all horses are feral horses at the time they come in for training. This may have changed somewhat in recent years but I would hazard that most are still essentially “feral.” The farms raising horses in this way have developed the training methods needed to prepare these horses to be good riding horses.

At Wiesenhof in Germany, a farm that produces exquisitely trained horses for all kinds of riders, the horses are raised essentially “feral.” When the foals are brought in from their foaling pastures at weaning time they are haltered, wormed, vaccinated, and tied in rows to iron rings at the front of the barn for hours at a time while the chaos of the farm goes on around them. For three weeks they experience having their feet touched, their bodies examined in any ways that are necessary. They are not coddled or fed treats. They are simply dealt with in a consistent manner with an expectation that they are smart enough to figure out what life with humans is about. They don't behave stupidly in their horse herd; they will figure out how not to behave stupidly in this new herd which includes another species.

At the end of three weeks they are put out in big pastures with other youngsters and left alone for a year except for periodic visual checks. If a youngster is injured people go out with a trailer, capture it, and bring it to the barn for treatment but that's it. Once a year they are brought in for another three weeks of experiencing things they are expected to learn about living in a barn setting with humans learning things they will need to know. Depending on the amount of “temperament” in the horse they behave exactly like the three horses Pamela writes about, each of which would be seen as developing quite appropriately.

The problem with dealing with feral horses is that we aren't familiar with their culture and therefore we see these horses as having “something wrong with them.” There's nothing wrong with them, just something missing from their learning curve. It is very important to remember, however, that there are vast differences between groups of feral horses. Feral mustangs are not the same as feral Icelandics. Icelandics missing the “stop-and-think-it-over” gene got weeded out of the gene pool pretty fast in a country with landslides, quicksand, etc. And horses missing the “willing-to-cooperate-with-the-two-legged-things” got eaten. So feral Icelandics come equipped with a pretty favorable genetic heritage for becoming a terrific riding horse.



A herd in Iceland, where young horses are often allowed to grow up with minimal handling and can be nearly feral. Photo by Jessica Haynsworth.

TO CLIP OR NOT TO CLIP?

BY NICKI ESDORN

Icelandic horses are perfectly suited to their icy, windy homeland. Over a thousand years their main enemies were the bad weather and lack of food. Only the hardiest horses with the best coats survived. An Icelandic horse grows several different kinds of hair: The fuzzy, wooly “underwear” keeps the horse warm. The sleek, shiny “outerwear” keeps the underwear dry. Interspersed are much longer hairs that form a lead for water drops to run off the outer coat. The “feathers” are the thick, long hairs on the back of the legs to protect them and also let water run off. Some Icelandics grow a long beard along the underside of their jaw in winter and some sport a very debonair moustache to help with wiggling coarse little bits of grass out of the ground. They grow long “feeler” hairs around their eyes and muzzle to warn them if there is the slightest contact. To crown it all off they have the most beautiful thick manes and tails!

HEALTH AND COMFORT

It seems like sacrilege to mess with this masterpiece, and it would occur to no



A minimal bib clip on both horses. Photo by Julie Testwuide.

one in Iceland. However, we are bringing these arctic horses into vastly different climates, most of them warmer, drier, or more humid than their home. And then we insist on riding them on a spring or fall day that is much warmer than a

hot summer day in Iceland (55 degrees and windy), so they sweat miserably in their winter coat and often cannot dry off before it gets cold at night. Another consideration is summer excema. Those horses with SE do much better when kept clean and cool. The only good reason for clipping is the health and comfort of the horse. Here are some suggestions:

MINIMAL CLIP

To help riding horses cool off faster and not get overheated, clip a “bib” on their chests, right where they sweat the most. This does not affect their ability to stay outside and keep their body warm. It can be a good option for a fall clip.

BODY CLIP

You clip the entire body of the horse and leave the leg hair long, following the contour of the muscle for a line. Clip the cheek and under the jaw line. This line follows where the bridle straps go and looks better than just stopping at the head.

FULL CLIP

The entire body of the horse gets clipped. The legs are clipped, but the feathers are



Alfrun watches her haircut. An experienced groom uses a big, professional clipper and is calm, skillful, and fast. Photo by Nicki Esdorn.



A “naked” chestnut mare with a full clip. Note the “Zorro” look around the eyes.

always left on. If you decide to clip the head, leave the feeler hairs around eye and muzzle and the hair inside the ears.

BLANKETS

It can be quite a shock to see your fuzzy horse suddenly “naked”! The color of the underwear is often different from the outerwear and looks strange, especially the “Zorro” look on the head. It usually takes a few weeks for the summer coat to grow in. If you decide to clip, you must provide the protection you just took away: a waterproof and breathable turnout sheet and a fleece cooler. You can combine fleece and turnout into a warm blanket, or you may choose an additional waterproof and breathable turnout blanket for cold and rainy weather. Be prepared for a much friskier horse: They are often very happy to run without a thick fur coat!

HOW-TO

So you have decided to clip. You have blankets and a cooler. First step is a full bath and good scrub. Your clipper blade will go through clean hair like butter and leave far fewer marks. It also will last much longer. Do this on a warm afternoon and leave the horse with a fleece cooler in a stall overnight. In the morning, you have a clean and dry horse and are ready to go.

Most of our horses have very limited

experience with clipping, maybe only once a year. Have someone hold the horse and reassure it rather than putting it in cross ties. I like to use a big, powerful professional clipper for the body and a small, quiet one for the face and more delicate areas. Once they are used to the steady loud noise of the big body clipper, the horses don’t seem to mind.

Watch someone experienced before you try yourself: They do long, smooth strokes along the body against the direction of hair growth and they are calm, skillful, and fast. If the horse feels like the clipper knows what he or she is doing, it will relax. Even so, it can take a couple of hours for a full clipping of winter coat. It is a good idea to give the horse a break now and then—and to take one yourself.

This year, the spring in New York,

where I live, was exceptionally warm. I wanted to train my young mare and get my older horse fit for the first group ride, so I decided to clip. The baby was clipped for the first time with me holding her and an experienced groom clipping her. She actually loved it, no kidding! I turned her out afterwards and she was skipping in the pasture.



After clipping, the horses relax—after first romping—in the pasture. They are much friskier without a heavy fur coat. Both photos by Nicki Esdorn.

YOUTH: THE SUNRISE CHASE

BY MADISON PRESTINE

Picture yourself in a fairy tale: A trail surrounded by green grass leads you up to a small cottage that overlooks rolling, green hills. To the left sit the stables, home to countless horses. To the right lies a pasture that stretches to the horizon. The sky has shades of orange and pink from the sunset that seems to last for hours. Dusk never ends in this story. Welcome to Iceland.

Iceland is located at an incredible 66 degrees north, about 2300 miles above Maine. This country is remarkable: In the summer residents enjoy 24 hours of sunlight, from the bright midday sun to dusk that melts into sunrise in a matter of hours with no darkness in between. This unique daylight schedule allows for people to enjoy their favorite outdoor activities at all hours. One of the most magical experiences is racing on horseback through a never-ending green field at 2:00 in the morning, chasing the sunrise with your friends. Another common activity for the children working the stables in the summer is 24-hour rides, exploring the extensive fields and discovering the best view or hidden creek.

Not interested in night rides? Reykjavik, the Icelandic capital, offers city life Icelandic-style. The typical nightclub gets busy at around midnight and lets out at 7:00 in the morning. Before you venture into the crazy bars I suggest dinner. In downtown some of the local favorites are Argentina, a high class steakhouse perfect for date night, and Vegamot, a place that boasts good dinner dishes and a hip atmosphere and music. Reykjavik is a common destination for New York bachelor parties celebrating those hotshot grooms, don't be afraid to follow their lead and party like a local in Iceland.

Another country special is the geysers. Iceland is home to many hot springs that are exciting to visit. The Blue Lagoon, a spa and hot springs resort, has been built allowing visitors to be pampered and swim in the luxurious hot

spring. "The Blue Lagoon is an innovative company in health, wellness, and skin care powered by geothermal energy. Its operation is powered one hundred percent by Iceland's clean geothermal energy." (Blue Lagoon Ltd). The geysers provide more than a relaxing afternoon—half of the population in Iceland heats their homes with pipes carrying hot water from the springs. In this cold climate this eco-friendly process for heating their homes helps protect the environment.

Iceland is home to 317, 398 people and an impressive 80,000 horses. But even

more interesting, there are more than twice as many sheep than people living in Iceland.

If you're interested in traveling to Iceland, Icelandair and Delta will fly you to this beautiful nation. But beware, there's lots of false information available regarding the country, so educate yourself prior to your trip. Or even more exciting, just wing it!

Editor's note: With this issue, we're beginning a regular feature of a youth essay. To submit your writing, contact the Youth Committee (youth@icelandics.org).



Imagine yourself in a fairy tale... Imagine yourself in Iceland, riding here with Laura Benson. Photo by Madison Prestine.

CORNELL STUDIES SUMMER ECZEMA

BY CARLY E. HODES

For horses, Iceland is a safe haven from disease. Several pathogens never made it to the island, whose native horses evolved for almost 1,000 years in isolation. Without facing diseases common outside, such as equine herpesvirus type 1 (EHV-1) and insect-induced allergies (called sweet itch or summer eczema), Icelandic horses never had to develop immunity to them. But immunological ignorance comes at a price: When they leave the country, these horses are unusually vulnerable.

In a discrepancy that has long puzzled immunologists, expatriate Icelandic horses give birth to far hardier foals. Born outside Iceland, these foals are up to fifteen times less likely than their parents to develop allergies. In all breeds, foal and adult immune systems work very differently. Learning how and why could help prevent allergies earlier and enable better vaccines protecting foals from early-developing diseases like EHV-1.

15 PREGNANT MARES

Bettina Wagner, Ph.D., an equine immunologist in the College of Veterinary Medicine at Cornell University in Ithaca, NY, is working with collaborators at Cornell and in Iceland and elsewhere to unravel the mystery of neonatal immune development. Their research is funded by the Harry M. Zweig Memorial Fund for Equine Research at Cornell University.

In February 2012, 15 pregnant mares traveled from their native Iceland to Cornell, meticulously protected from exposure to several common pathogens. With the help of Sigurbjörg Torsteinsdóttir, Vilhjálmur Svansson, and Sigríður Björnsdóttir, collaborators at the University of Iceland's Institute for Experimental Pathology, Wagner's group receives regular samples from the mares' first foals, which were born in Iceland last summer. Comparing foals born in Iceland to their forthcoming U.S.-born siblings will reveal how separate factors (environmental and maternal) affect immune development.



One of the mares imported from Iceland for Cornell University's summer eczema research. Her foal, from last year, remains in Iceland to be compared with her foal born in 2012 in the U.S.

Clinical collaborators at Cornell assisting with the project include Gillian Perkins and Dorothy Ainsworth. Klaus Osterrieder in Berlin will help in the study of EHV-1, while Mandi deMestre of the United Kingdom will collaborate on the immune regulation analysis. Cornell professor Hollis Erb will help with statistical analysis of the data.

A MARE'S MILK

"We want to know why foals born outside Iceland have better protection than those born in Iceland," said Wagner. "It could be due to time of exposure, environment, or some combination of these, but the evidence points more to what the mother passes on."

Wagner thinks that the protective power may lie in a mare's milk. Some mammals, including humans, start absorbing antibodies and other maternal immune factors while in the uterus, but horses receive all

immunities after birth. To absorb immune protection, newborn foals must quickly drink the colostrum, the very first milk, which is packed with immune components.

Mares encountering new allergens may become hypersensitive and produce antibodies in response. But when they pass these antibodies on through their milk, Wagner thinks that the foals' budding immune systems may learn to use those same antibodies more constructively.

ANTIBODIES

Wagner's group investigates specific antibodies called immunoglobulin-E (IgE), which can go astray in allergic diseases, reacting to harmless stimuli and causing inflammation. Building our understanding of early immune development in horses and humans could help doctors treat allergies and early-striking diseases in both species.

"If we know how allergic diseases start early in life, we can interfere before they develop," said Wagner. "Horses are a valuable model for human allergies, for which regulatory mechanisms develop very early. It's difficult to investigate human neonatal immunity, because most maternal immune transfer happens before birth. The horse system is more controllable, especially in Icelandic horses, and can reveal the separate effects of maternal transfer and environmental exposure."

The study may improve protection from EHV-1, which often strikes before current vaccines designed for adult immune systems can protect foals.

"If we can learn how immune responses in foals differ from those in adults, we can use specific immune reactions that foals can mount early in life to develop better neonatal vaccines for earlier protection from a wide array of infectious diseases."

Editor's note: USIHC member Andrea Barber is following the research closely, and will be contributing updates to the Quarterly as the study progresses.

SPOTS IN THE EYES

BY PAMELA NOLF

Humans seem to have always been fascinated by horse color. As early as 25,000 years ago, prehistoric people painted spotted or dappled horses on cave walls near Pech-Merle in southern France. Until recently, scientists believed that horses only came in black or bay colors prior to domestication, and that the variety of modern horse colors was created by deliberate breeding. They assumed the dapple or spotted horses painted on cave walls were due to the artistic imagination, or perhaps magical beliefs, of Stone Age man. However, recent DNA studies of the remains of prehistoric horses in Siberia and Europe have confirmed that some of these horses did have spots (Saey, 2011).

In fact, leopard-spotted horses carrying the LP gene, which is associated with the Appaloosa breed, were probably common in prehistoric times. “As for why the spotted phenotype became more rare after 14,000 years ago, the team points out that some modern horse breeds with two copies of the LP gene suffer from night blindness, which would have made prehistoric horses more vulnerable to predators. The researchers speculate that the gene might have been beneficial during the Ice Age, when a white spotted coat could serve as camouflage in snowy conditions, but later became rare and disadvantageous until rediscovered by modern horse breeders” (Balter, 2011).

EYE PROBLEMS AND COLOR

Leopard-spotted patterning in horses is not the only color associated with genetic eye problems in horses. The silver dapple color is known to be associated with a genetic eye disorder called Multiple Congenital Ocular Anomalies (MCOA). Due to the concentrated breeding for this color with a limited number of foundation sires, occurrence of MCOA is as high as 50 percent in the Rocky Mountain and Kentucky Mountain breeds. The occurrence of this disorder in Icelandic horses has only recently been confirmed.



Silver dapple is a popular color in Icelandic horses as well as in other breeds. This horse illustrates the color but does not exhibit MCOA. Photo by Heidi Benson.

The purpose of this article is to investigate how common are equine eye problems, outline the genetics of silver dapple color, explain what is MCOA and its relationship to the silver dapple color, discuss how the disease is inherited, explain how the desire for a rare color has created a prevalent genetic disorder in other horses breeds, and discuss how breeders and sellers can deal with this genetic defect in the Icelandic horse.

HOW COMMON?

Among younger horses, vision problems are fairly uncommon, accounting for less than five percent of the congenital disorders reported in horses (Andersson, et al., 2008). Hurn and Turner (2006) examined the eyes of 204 thoroughbred race horses in Australia. The horses ranged in age from two to nine and consisted of both males and females. “Potential vision-threatening eye disease was present in 15 (7.4%) different horses,” they found. Like humans, older horses are more likely to develop more vision problems. Chandler, et al. (2003) studied horses and ponies

aged 15 and older and found that 67 out of 83 (80.7%) had ophthalmic lesions, even though the owner noticed little or no impact on the horse’s vision. Scanning the literature on genetic vision problems in horses indicates that such problems can be influenced by color, age, sex, breed, lineage, and many other variables.

SILVER DAPPLE

The silver dapple color is fairly common in the following breeds: Icelandic, American Miniature, Kentucky Mountain, and Rocky Mountain. The color has also been observed in the following breeds: Ardenne, Morgan, American Paint, Quarter Horse, American Saddlebred, Shetland, and Norwegian Nordland. The silver dapple color is found less frequently in Welsh Pony, Arabian, and Swedish Warmblood breeds.

The silver dapple gene (Z) is responsible for a dilution effect. It is a dominant gene—meaning only one copy of the gene needs to be present for it to have an effect. On a black base coat, it results in a brown or chocolate color—often with



A silver dapple with the milder form of MCOA, cyst-phenotype, can easily participate in competitions and trail riding. (Note: this horse illustrates only the color, not MCOA). Photo by Heidi Benson.

dapples. The effect on a bay coat is known as silver bay. The silver dapple gene typically causes the long hair in the mane and tail to dilute to white and silver. Horses with red-based coats such as chestnuts (or chestnuts affected by other dilution factors such as cremello and palomino) will not express a dilution factor; however, they can carry the silver dapple gene and pass it on to their offspring. A foal with the silver dapple color has a very pale body with a white mane and tail. It often displays striped hooves and has white eyelashes. These characteristics often disappear as the foal matures. (Lord, n.d.)

If a horse inherits a copy of the silver dapple gene (*Z*) from both parents, the horse is *homozygous* for the color. If the horse inherits a copy from only one parent, it is *heterozygous*. Labs can now test to determine if a horse is homozygous or heterozygous for silver dapple. Homozygous silver dapple is especially prized since all offspring except chestnut and red dilutions will have a silver dilution.

Recently scientists have localized the silver dapple color to the gene *PMEL17*

on horse chromosome 6. Brunberg, et al. (2006) found that the silver dapple color is caused by a mutation on the gene *PMEL17* in which one amino acid is changed from arginine to cysteine: “This mutation showed complete association with the Silver phenotype across multiple horse breeds.”

WHAT IS MCOA?

In 1999, researchers studying Rocky Mountain horses discovered a wide variety of inherited eye defects. This cluster of defects was originally described as Anterior Segment Dysgenesis (ASD) syndrome but has more recently been renamed Multiple Congenital Ocular Anomalies (MCOA). In 2008, research by Andersson, et al. (2008) speculated that there was a link between MCOA and *PMEL17*, the gene responsible for silver dapple color. In 2011, Andersson, Axelsson, et al. (2011) confirmed the existence of MCOA in the Icelandic horse breed. There is currently no genetic test for MCOA, although scientists continue to work on the gene sequencing of the condition in

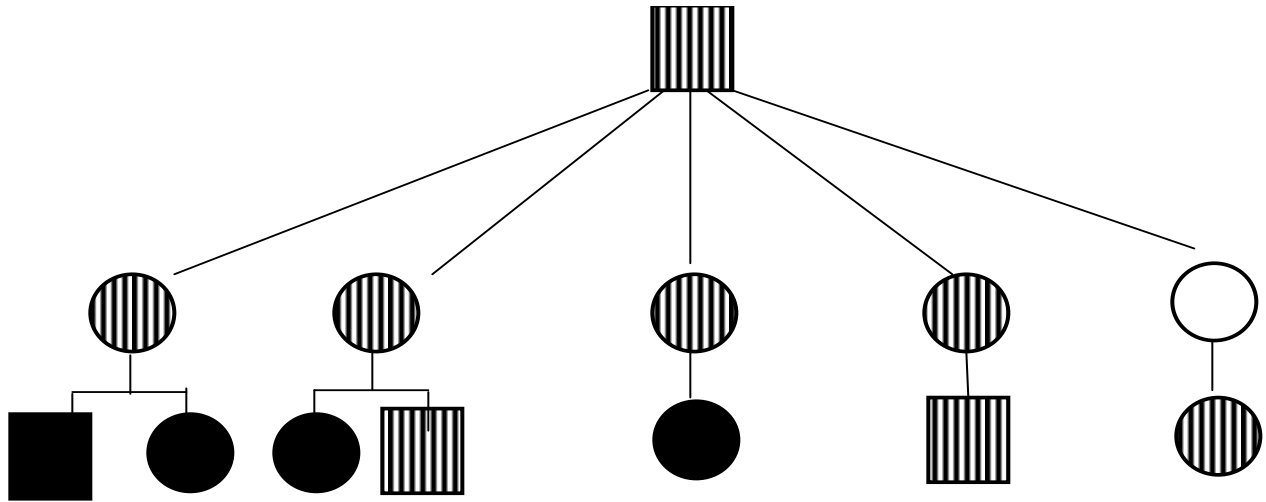
order to develop a test.

Veterinary ophthalmologist N. Trumble, DVM, wrote an excellent article titled “Equine Anterior Segment Dysgenesis.” Since ASD was renamed MCOA, I will use MCOA for the rest of this explanation based on Trumble’s article. MCOA usually affects the front parts of the eye—the cornea, the iris, the ciliary body (tissue behind the iris), and the lens. The retina, which lies in the back of the eyeball, can also be affected. Retinal abnormalities can consist of cysts, pigment streaks, retinal scarring, or even retinal detachment. In MCOA, the above-listed tissues do not develop properly—usually during fetal development. Generally the condition is not painful and seldom compromises vision. However, advanced cases of MCOA can severely affect the vision of the horse. Detecting signs of MCOA can be very difficult and almost always require the services of a veterinary ophthalmologist (Trumble, n.d.).

The genetic inheritance of MCOA is interesting in that it is co-dominant. Horses can be separated into two groups depending on the severity of eye defects they have: the Cyst phenotype and the MCOA phenotype. *Phenotype* is defined as the physical characteristics determined by both genetics and environment. An *allele* is an alternative form of a gene, located at a specific position on a specific chromosome, which determines which traits can be passed on from parents to offspring.

“Horses referred to as having the Cyst phenotype are presumed to be heterozygous for the mutant allele and have a minor form of ocular abnormalities compared with horses carrying two copies. The presumed heterozygous horses have cysts that originate from the temporal ciliary body, peripheral retina, and/or iris. A smaller number of these horses also have moderate retinal dysplasia [abnormal development] or retinal detachment that appears to be an extension of these cysts. The predicted homozygous horses have multiple abnormalities, primarily affecting the anterior [front] segment of the eye. They encompass all clinical signs included in the Cyst phenotype concurrent with iris hypoplasia [incomplete development of a tissue or organ], iridocorneal angle abnormalities, miosis [constriction of the pupil], congenital cataracts, cornea globosa [rounded or protruding cornea],

Partial pedigree of the silver dapple Rocky Mountain stallion used in research by Andersson, Juras, et al (2008). Empty figures represent horses unaffected by MCOA. Half filled figures represent horses with the Cyst-phenotype. Solid figures are offspring with the more severe symptoms of MCOA phenotype. Circles are females; squares are males. The pedigree represents “the near perfect correlation between phenotype and genotype of the three markers in our interval that show complete linkage with the MCOA locus.”



Sire	Dam	Offspring	Expected Percentage
AA	AA	AA	100% unaffected
AA	AB	AA AB	50% unaffected 50% cysts
AA	BB	AB	100% cysts
AB	AA	AA AB	50% unaffected 50% cysts
AB	AB	AA AB BB	25% unaffected 50% cysts 25% MCOA
AB	BB	AB BB	50% cysts 50% MCOA
BB	AA	AB	100% cysts
BB	AB	AB BB	50% cysts 50% MCOA
BB	BB	BB	100% MCOA

Phenotypes: AA = unaffected, AB = cysts, BB = MCOA

Based on their study of Rocky Mountain horses, Ewart, Ramsey, et al (2000) predicted the percentage of offspring that will have MCOA-phenotype versus Cyst-phenotype when crossing horses that are heterozygous or homozygous for MCOA. These calculated percentages do not take into account that for some horses MCOA is non-penetrative—meaning the horse carries the mutation but there is no physical effect.

iridocorneal adhesions and opacification [cloudiness], nuclear cataract as well as pupils with a decreased or absent light response and that do not dilate when administered mydriatic drugs” (Andersson, Juras, et al., 2011).

In summary, the severity of the disease is determined by whether the horse is heterozygous or homozygous for MCOA. If the horse is heterozygous for MCOA, the ocular defects are less serious and the condition is called the Cyst phenotype. If the horse is homozygous for MCOA, the ocular defects are more serious and the condition is called MCOA phenotype.

The relationship between silver dapple and MCOA is very complex and is still being researched. The inheritance of MCOA is further complicated in that a silver dapple horse can be a carrier of the disease and exhibit no ocular problems at all; this is known as “non-penetrance of the mutation.” In a study of Rocky Mountain horses, Ewart, et al. (2000) found that offspring of certain sires were particularly predisposed to non-penetrance: They carry both the silver dapple allele and MCOA, but the visual defect does not show up in their offspring. The researchers hypothesize the presence of a modifier gene that alters the expression of MCOA.

On the other hand, some sires



If you notice cysts or other abnormalities in your silver dapple eyes, you will probably want to consult a veterinarian. (Note: this horse illustrates only the color, not MCOA). Photo by Heidi Benson.

with the silver dapple allele and MCOA produce almost exclusively offspring with MCOA phenotypes and Cyst phenotypes with only an occasional offspring exhibiting non-penetrance. Sometimes the sire or dam is confirmed to be a MCOA carrier only when the horse’s offspring exhibit the characteristic eye problems (Andersson, Juras, et al., 2011; Andersson, Axelsson, et al., 2011).

Certain chestnuts and red dilutions such as cremello and palomino can have the silver dapple allele and exhibit the Cyst phenotype. In fact, since the silver dapple gene is camouflaged by the red color, a cross of two chestnuts which are heterozygous silver dapple could result in a silver dapple offspring with the more serious version of MCOA. And some silver dapples horses may not carry the allele for MCOA or may carry the allele and pass along the condition of non-penetrance. As the recent study by Andersson, Axelsson, et al. (2011) concludes: “It is still unclear if the *MCOA* locus and *Silver* locus are two separate but closely linked loci, or if only one mutation is present with pleiotropic [multiple] effects, influencing both coat color dilution and ocular development.”

MCOA IN OTHER BREEDS

Among Rocky Mountain and Kentucky Mountain horses, MCOA occurs at a 50-percent rate in all horses (Andersson, et al., 2008; Grahn, et al., 2008). Visual anomalies of varying severity are associated with the silver dapple color, including the colors silver black and silver bay. As Andersson, et al. (2008) state: “The high incidence of ocular abnormalities in this breed is most likely due to a founder effect. Pedigree examination has revealed that a large proportion of the affected horses have a common ancestor, a stallion that is one of the few founders of the Rocky Mountain horse breed. The fact that five out of seven of the ancestral stallion’s first-generation offspring had ocular abnormalities suggests that this individual did indeed carry the mutant allele.” A similar cause is found for the presence of MCOA in Kentucky Mountain horses. Hence breeding for the popular silver dapple or chocolate brown color has resulted in a prevalence of MCOA in these breeds.

MCOA AND ICELANDICS

For many years, it was thought that MCOA was caused by a recent mutation restricted to horse breeds related to the Rocky Mountain horse. However, a new study by Andersson, Axelsson, et al. (2011) has confirmed that MCOA is present in the Icelandic horse population despite these horses being genetically isolated for almost 1000 years.

Andersson, Axelsson, et al. (2011) studied 24 purebred, registered Icelandic horses. Nineteen of the horses were female; five were male. Ages ranged from one to 23, with a median age of three. The researchers found that four horses which were homozygous for silver dapple had the MCOA phenotype, the most severe form of the syndrome; these horses did not exhibit normal light reflexes of the pupil. Fourteen horses which were heterozygous for silver dapple were diagnosed with the Cyst phenotype, the less severe form of syndrome, and had normal light reflexes. Three additional horses were identified as heterozygous for silver dapple and were diagnosed as having no vision problems. However, as the researchers caution, “To date, we do not know if this was caused by limitations in our detection method or if it was due to non-penetrance of the mutation. However, horses without detectable cysts, that carry the *PMEL17* mutation, still produce affected offspring.” Used as controls, three non-silver dapple Icelandic horses were examined but displayed no signs of the Cyst or MCOA phenotypes.

As Andersson, Axelsson, et al., (2011) conclude, “Horses with the MCOA phenotype are at particular risk of having impaired vision, and difficulties in adapting to changing light conditions are probably a common phenomenon in these horses. Some individuals have more severe impairment of their vision, causing abnormal behavior and an inability to perform. MCOA and *PMEL17* are tightly linked, so breeding *PMEL17* mutation carriers only to known non-carriers would practically eliminate the risk of producing horses with vision threatening abnormalities caused by this syndrome.”

IMPLICATIONS

Remember that MCOA has not been recognized as a common problem among Icelandics horses. However, it has been

identified in the breed. If you are thinking about buying a silver dapple Icelandic or an Icelandic with a silver dapple dilution, and are concerned about visual problems in a potential purchase, discuss the topic with your veterinarian during a pre-purchase exam.

“Equine MCOA is generally not detectable for the untrained eye, especially in its heterozygous state, which leaves the breeders unaware of the problem,” note Andersson, Juras, et al. (2008). Lens opacities and other problems are frequently found during eye examinations of the horse but even experts often find it difficult to predict “the potential progression and consequences on visual function of these opacities” (McKenzie, et al., 2000). Only an equine eye specialist can help you determine the possible severity and long term consequences of any vision problem that may be discovered.

For breeders, Trumble, the veterinary ophthalmologist with the University of Minnesota College of Veterinary Medicine, notes that the Equine Eye Registry Foundation (EERF) has created guidelines based on what is known about the mode of inheritance of MCOA and the potential for eye problems. “For example, EERF recommends that horses with cataracts are not bred, but would say it is the ‘breeder’s option’ to breed a horse with either ciliary body cysts or retinal dysplasia.... Simply put, we are always trying to maximize the health and the quality of life of our horses. Through careful screening for ASD [MCOA] and responsible breeding, it may be possible to decrease the number of horses affected with ASD [MCOA] over time. This will in turn decrease the worry that any horse (to be bred or purchased) may be compromised by this condition.”

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The silver dilution does not have an effect on chestnut or red-based horses. Therefore, some chestnut horses with a camouflaged silver dapple gene may be both a carrier and have the milder form of MCOA. Photo by Pamela Nolf.

ICELANDICS IN THE NEWS

Icelandic horses made a big splash in the news the first months of 2012, with appearances on the Martha Stewart Show and in *Apassionata*. The Chronicle of the Horse featured Icelandics, as did the skiing magazine *Eastern Slopes*. One we missed in our 2011 roundup was a cover photo on *The Trailhead News*. If you know of Icelandics in the news, please write us at quarterly@icelandics.org

THE MARTHA STEWART SHOW

Icelandic horses were the stars of a special edition of the Martha Stewart Show on Iceland, thanks to several USIHC members. Nicki Esdorn, a neighbor of Martha in Katonah, NY was interviewed, and lots of great video footage of tölting and pacing horses was shown. The videos, filmed by Lisa Keller, featured Nicki, Martina Gates, and Kristjan Kristjansson of Thor Icelandics.

You can find beautiful photos and commentary of Nicki's and Martina's ride with Martha on the Martha Blog: [http://www.themarthablog.com/2012/03/i-](http://www.themarthablog.com/2012/03/i-rode-an-icelandic-horse.html)



Nicki Esdorn holds Stigandi and Martha Stewart presents Dagfari (known as "Cookie"), the stars of Martha's TV episode on Iceland. Photo courtesy Martha Stewart Show.

[rode-an-icelandic-horse.html](http://www.themarthablog.com/2012/03/i-rode-an-icelandic-horse.html). Martha and "Cookie" got along great and were tölting three abreast within minutes!

Nicki and Martina brought the fantastic black stallion Stigandi and the gor-

geous palomino Dagfari (Cookie) to the studio in Manhattan two weeks later. The horses appeared throughout the show: first for a grand entrance for Martha, riding Dagfari, and the first lady of Iceland, Dorrit Moussaieff, riding Stigandi. Dagfari became a good luck charm bringing in lottery tickets for a member of the audience to win a trip to Iceland! The horses stood patiently waiting for hours in a big, carpeted freight elevator between their appearances.

Stigandi and Dagfari were perfect ambassadors for their breed: They showed their spirit and enthusiasm and great tölt on a wonderful ride in Bedford, NY and on Martha's farm, and then were perfectly behaved in the studio with bright lights, cameras, and loud applause and cheering from the audience!

The show will be broadcast on the Hallmark Channel, May 9 at 10 am.

APASSIONATA

The European equine production, *Apassionata*, will be kicking off its 18-month U.S. tour at Freedom Hall in Louisville, KY April 27-29. The Gudmar Peturs-



While not on the set, the Icelandics stayed in their "stall," actually a large freight elevator. Photo by Joerg Esdorn.



Members of "The Knights of Iceland," the Gudmar Petursson Show team, will be touring 66 cities with Apassionata. Here they perform at World Equestrian Games in 2010. Photo by Astrid Harrison.

son Show Team, "The Knights of Iceland," will be joining the tour in its entirety. This will be the first time Icelandics have been involved in such a major touring production in the U.S., and it will be a wonderful promotion for the horses.

According to the organizers, "Apassionata has been Europe's most popular live arena show for nearly a decade, thrilling more than five million fans across 15 countries with a breathtaking display of the beauty and the bond between horse and rider. Now Apassionata comes to North America to take audiences through a magical adventure featuring more than 40 horses, with exhilarating equine stunts by the world's best performers." A reporter from a Louisville TV station called it "part passion for the horse and part classical sonata."

Some of those "world's best performers" are USIHC members Gudmar Pétursson, Laura Benson, and Caeli Cavanaugh. (Caeli will be featured in every performance, while Gudmar and Laura are rotating riders). Other riders on the tour are Leó Hauksson, Anka Margrét Aradóttir, and Terral Hill.

In an interview with an Icelandic newspaper, reported on icelandreview.com, Gudmar said, "There have been Icelandic horses in the shows in Europe. When they decided to tour America, they sought to have Icelandic horses perform there too, and I was mentioned in that connection. I have traveled with a show team to large horse

festivals in America a few times a year for around ten years."

Added Gudmar, "We will reach a lot of people. It includes 66 cities, three to six shows in each city and a few thousand spectators in each show." There are 45 horses of 13 breeds in Apassionata, four of which will be Icelandic.

For more information on tickets and dates, check the Apassionata website, www.apassionata.com/usa. You can also follow the tour on Facebook and Twitter, and Laura has promised to blog about her experience and let the Quarterly reprint some of her posts.

CHRONICLE OF THE HORSE

Chronicle reporter Megan Blackburn came back from a trip to Iceland in April declaring herself the U.S.'s "newest Icelandic horse ambassador." As she wrote on her blog, www.chronofhorse.com/article/chronicle-iceland, "The Icelandic horse and the culture behind it charmed me. I have sung their praises to friends and family and have fellow horse lovers interested in finding out exactly what a tölt is."

She adds, "There are a lot of perks to my job—front row seats at some of the world's top equestrian competitions, getting to know the best and brightest in the sport, sharing an office with a group of other horse-crazy females—but my recent trip to Iceland for the Icelandic Horse Festival holds the No. 1 spot."

EASTERN SLOPES

Writer Barbara Thomke called her April 7 article in Eastern Slopes "A Love Story on Four Feet." Describing her trail ride at Karen Winhold's Vermont Icelandic Horse Farm in Fayston, VT she said: "One thing we noted right away was how easily managed these horses are compared to others we have ridden. The Icelandics ambled along amiably. ... We rode single file, in any order, in every mix of ones, twos, threes, or fours, all quietly and with no fuss—like bumper ponies bouncing off each other harmlessly! By no fuss I mean the horses exhibited no irritation in relation to each other. They didn't pin their ears back or attempt to nip, there was no tail swishing as a warning to stay away, and no staring and baring teeth."

Not only were they well-behaved, they could tölt: "Suddenly, I was tölting for the first time, and I just started to laugh out loud. The pace was speedy and your butt jiggles a bit with the motion, but otherwise there is no riding technique needed—you are just flying forward, free and easy! ... When we slowed back to the walk, I was still smiling inside."

For the rest of the story, see www.easternslopes.com/2012/04/07/ride-an-icelandic-horse-for-family-fun-a-love-story-on-four-feet/



Minning, owned by Celeste Eversole, appeared on the cover of the January/February 2011 issue of The Trailhead News, a magazine published by the Back Country Horsemen of Washington. "I wasn't riding her that day," says Celeste, "but she received a lot of attention from that cover shot."



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Congress memberships are for one year. Your membership is active on receipt of payment and expires one year later.

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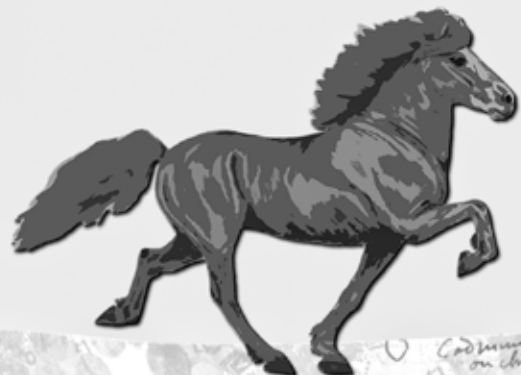
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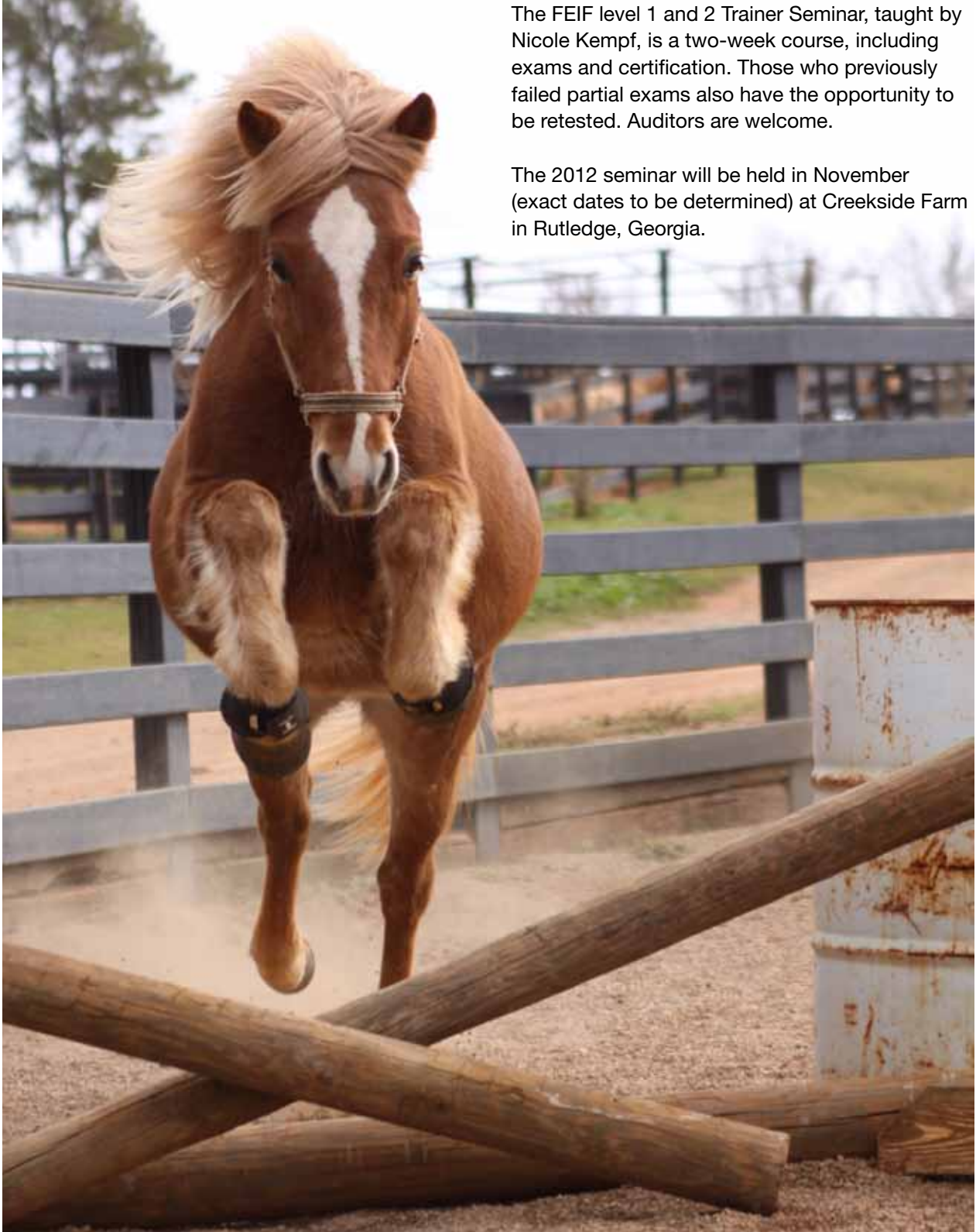
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