

ISSUE FOUR

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)



# How to Expand your Empire.

Step 1. **Drink**  
Step 2. **Conquer**



AdvoCare® Slam™ is a powerful, portable liquid energy supplement that's pre-mixed so it's ready to drink.\* Only two fluid ounces for a quick, convenient shot of energy to help you go out and conquer the world!\* Available in great-tasting Octane Orange and Power Punch.

Just in time for summer, try Lemonade or our new flavor -- Strawberry Blast!!

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

**Order your Slam now!**

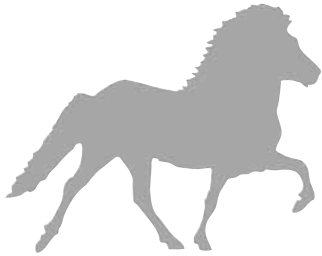
**Call Sara at (828) 712-8658**

**Email: [Advocaresl@me.com](mailto:Advocaresl@me.com)**

**Order online: [www.advocare.com/07051931](http://www.advocare.com/07051931)**



**AdvoCare® Slam™**  
Powerful, Portable Energy®



THE  
ICELANDIC  
HORSE  
QUARTERLY  
Issue Four 2012

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

©2012 All rights reserved.

*The Icelandic Horse Quarterly* is published in March, June, September, and December by the USIHC as a benefit of membership. Renew online at [www.icelandics.org](http://www.icelandics.org).

Deadlines are January 1 (for the March issue), April 1, July 1, and October 1. See the instructions online at [www.icelandics.org](http://www.icelandics.org) or email the editorial committee at [quarterly@icelandics.org](mailto:quarterly@icelandics.org). We reserve the right to edit submissions. All articles represent the opinions of their authors alone; publication in the Quarterly does not imply an endorsement of any kind by the USIHC.

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

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

*Quarterly Committee:*  
Carol Andrew, Heidi Benson, Andrea Brodie, Nancy Marie Brown (co-editor), Juli Cole, Alys Culhane, Anne Elwell, Nicki Esdorn, Eileen Gunipero, Maike Liekweg, Pamela Nolf, Alex Pregitzer, Chris Romano, Judy Strehler (co-editor), Helga Thordarson, Nancy Wines-Dewan

*Graphic Design:* James Collins

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

# ICELANDIC HORSE

Q U A R T E R L Y

## 5 NEWS

- 5 USIHC News
- 7 Regional Club Updates

## 13 FEATURES

- 13 Is Your Horse Your Type? *By Nicki Esdorn*
- 16 The Pace Gene *By Nancy Marie Brown*
- 18 Detecting Icelandic Horse Origins *By Pamela S. Nolf*
- 24 The Bald Mountain Butt Buster *By Alys Culhane*
- 28 A Texas Trail Ride *By MaryAshley McGibbon*
- 30 The Helmet Issue *By Alex Pregitzer*
- 32 Youth: Competing *By Quinn Thomashow & Katherine Monsef*
- 34 Apassionata *By Laura Benson*
- 37 Book Review: Song of the Vikings *By Christina Romano*
- 39 Where in the World? *By Susan Verberg & Lisa Keller*

## 44 MARKETPLACE

**On the cover:** Bruce Goddard and Baldur from Four Winds Farm enjoy the first snowfall of the season at Vindbrekka Farm in Franklin, New York. Photo by Jean Arledge.



## FEIF AND THE USIHC

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

The United States Icelandic Horse Congress was formed in 1987 by representatives of the U.S. Icelandic Horse Federation and the International Icelandic Horse Association to meet the FEIF rule that only one association from each country is allowed to represent the breed. As a FEIF member organization, the Congress maintains the Registry of Icelandic Horses in the United States, sponsors U.S. participation in international competition, and regulates breeding and competition activities in the United States in accordance with FEIF rules. USIHC also sponsors activities, events, and educational programs in the United States which are beneficial to the overall interests of the breed. Yearly membership is \$45 (\$35 for youth members); family membership, \$65; foreign friends, \$70. For more information, see the Congress website at [www.icelandics.org/join](http://www.icelandics.org/join).

## MAIN OFFICE

United States Icelandic Horse Congress  
c/o Kari Pietsch-Wangard  
300 South Sawyer Road  
Oconomowoc, WI 53066

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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

## REGISTRY

The Congress maintains the Registry of Icelandic Horses in the United States in accordance with FEIF rules. The Registry Rules and all forms needed to register an Icelandic Horse in the United States are available on the Congress website at [www.icelandics.org](http://www.icelandics.org). Contact Ásta Covert: P.O. Box 1724, Santa Ynez, CA 93460; 866-929-0009; [registry@icelandics.org](mailto:registry@icelandics.org)

## WEBSITE

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

## QUESTIONS?

Toll-free 866-929-0009  
Email: [info@icelandics.org](mailto:info@icelandics.org)

## COMMITTEES

### Breeding

Barbara Frische (706-347-0900)  
[breeding@icelandics.org](mailto:breeding@icelandics.org)

### Constitution Review

Kari Pietsch-Wangard (414-322-3214)  
[constitutional\\_review@icelandics.org](mailto:constitutional_review@icelandics.org)

### Education

Katrin Sheehan (706-997-9011)  
[education@icelandics.org](mailto:education@icelandics.org)

### Pleasure Riding

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

### Promotion

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

### Quarterly

Judy Strehler (763-498-8432)  
Nancy Brown—co-chair (802-626-4220)  
[quarterly@icelandics.org](mailto:quarterly@icelandics.org)

### Regional Clubs

Martina Gates (631-662-7755)  
[regional\\_clubs@icelandics.org](mailto:regional_clubs@icelandics.org)

### Sport Competition

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

### Website

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

### Youth

Laurie Prestine (408-354-2828)  
[youth@icelandics.org](mailto:youth@icelandics.org)



## BREEDING NOTES

Breeding leader Barbara Frische reports that the only International FEIF Breeding Show in the U.S. in 2012 took place in June at Thor Icelandics in Claverack, NY; it was organized by the North East Icelandic Horse Club (NEIHC). "It was in many ways a very successful event," Barbara says, "especially since many American-born horses were shown. The judges thought at least one of them, if not more, were talented enough to be sent to the World Championships in Germany in August 2013 to represent the work of American breeders. Breeders who think they may have a horse who can qualify for this huge event need to present their horse at a FEIF Breeding Show in the spring of 2013. A date and place will be announced as soon as possible."

The Foal Tour 2012 is in full swing right now, often combined with interesting clinics and private lessons for the breeders with their adult horses. "As soon as the judging of the youngsters is complete," says Barbara, "we will announce the highest judged horses and their breeders."

Finally, at the end of October Barbara will attend a meeting in Malmö, Sweden, of the Committee of International Breeding Judges and also a meeting of breeders. Barbara will share information about the topics discussed, especially those of interest to the American breeder, in the next issue of the *Quarterly*.



Herdís Reynisdóttir (left) and Barbara Frische judging the NEIHC breeding show at Thor Icelandics in New York last June. Photo by Lisa Keller.

## ELECTION SUSPENDED

Lynn LaPointe Wiese, 2012 Election Committee Chair, has informed the Board that there were only three candidates for this year's USIHC Board of Directors' election. The two incumbent members, Anne Elwell and Sara Lyter, were joined by a nominee from the membership, Lori Cretney. In accordance with Article IV Section 3 of the USIHC Constitution, the Board suspended the election process since the number of candidates matched exactly the number of available seats. Anne, Sara, and Lori will begin their terms on January 1, 2013. The Board thanks the election committee, Lynn LaPointe Wiese, Hannah Hoffman, and Summer Singleton, for their service.

## LORI CRETNEY BIO

The newest member of the USIHC Board of Directors, Lori Cretney, first saw the Icelandic horse at the Midwest Horse Fair in Madison, WI in the spring of 2007, she wrote in her nomination letter. "Shortly after the fair, I had my first lesson on an Icelandic at Winterhorse Park in Eagle, WI. I enjoyed the experience so much I purchased my first Icelandic horse later that fall. My first Icelandic horse taught me a lot and gave me the fun that I did not realize I was missing. Therefore, I

purchased a second Icelandic, which has given me even more joy in my life. I currently own two Icelandics and co-own five more with my mother. Each horse has taught me something different and has helped me find solutions to improve my riding. I find tremendous pleasure in working my horses and listening to the sound of their hoofbeats thundering up and down the trail."

At the time of her nomination, Lori was treasurer of the Flugnir Icelandic Horse Association of the Midwest. "I have enjoyed participating in clinics to learn more about the Icelandic horse. I had the opportunity to participate in the Midwest Horse Fair breed demo and spoke with other horse breeders and spectators about the breed. I took part in my first USIHC educational seminar two years ago to learn about the conformation of the Icelandic horse in correlation with its training, riding, and performance. I have also taken several lessons with various trainers learning more about the conformation of the Icelandic horse and how it can affect the gaits of the horse. Lastly, I have enjoyed entering competitions. In each competition, I learn something new about my horses and myself, which has led to me challenging myself and horse in harder classes."

Lori concludes, "The Icelandic Horse has given me such a fantastic experience." We welcome her to the Board.

## TWO NEW CLUBS

Two new USIHC Regional Clubs were formed this year: The Katla Club in Vermont and the Central Washington Icelandic Horse Club in Central Washington. To join the Katla Club, contact Jason Brickner at [thekidbrickner@yahoo.com](mailto:thekidbrickner@yahoo.com) or phone 802-889-9472. To join the Central Washington Icelandic Horse Club, contact Debby Dillard at [dbydill@gmail.com](mailto:dbydill@gmail.com) or phone 253-677-2946. For more information about the USIHC Regional Clubs program, see the USIHC website, [www.icelandics.org](http://www.icelandics.org), under "Membership."

## FIRC SHOW

The Frida Icelandic Riding Club is planning to hold the Second Annual Sanctioned FIRC Horse Show in Virginia on May 18-19, 2013. The venue will again be Frying Pan Farm Park in Herndon, VA. The park has two arenas (one indoor and one outdoor), a warm-up ring, a new 100-stall barn complex, a cross country course, and trails. It is located less than 10 minutes from I-66, hotels, motels, restaurants, and shopping areas, and close to the White House, Capitol Mall, Monuments and the Smithsonian. Show packets will be available in February. For questions, comments, or ruminations, contact a show committee member: Sverrir Bjartmarz ([sverrirbjartmarz@hotmail.com](mailto:sverrirbjartmarz@hotmail.com)), Kim Davis ([cottongrassfarms@cox.net](mailto:cottongrassfarms@cox.net)), Pat Moore, chair ([pat.moore81@verizon.net](mailto:pat.moore81@verizon.net)), or Sali Peterson ([sagasayer@cox.net](mailto:sagasayer@cox.net)). FIRC, the Mid-Atlantic Regional Club of the USIHC, is a member of the Northern Virginia Coalition of Equine Organizations (NVCEO) and keeper of the tenants of Friends of Sound Horses (FOSH).

## IN THE NEWS

USIHC president Anne Elwell and past president Andrea Barber were quoted in a lengthy article on the Icelandic horse published in the September/October 2012 issue of *Sound Advocate*, the magazine of the Friends of Sound Horses, Inc.



New USIHC Board member Lori Cretney with Leikur from LoneStar (black) and Mosi frá Hvoli (blue dun).

The article, which was featured on the magazine's cover, called the Icelandic horse "the standard of excellence for gaited horses." Wrote Pamela Brand, FOSH Executive Advisory Committee Member, "Probably the most amazing thing about the Icelandic horse is the longstanding effort that has been in place to ensure the purity of the breed." She noted that "the requirements for registration of an Icelandic horse are likely one of the strictest if not the strictest of any breed of horse. The quality of the breed improves all the time due to the very rigid adherence to the rules without exception." The current Icelandic horse is "a testament to the benefits of applying worldwide standards for breeding and competition," FOSH concludes. "What a great selling point to potential owners to know that the horse they are getting will be true to the breed's well-known characteristics of being small sized but powerful, thickly maned and tailed, energetic and athletic, hardy, friendly and willing to please, and with five naturally smooth gaits!" The article was accompanied by Andrea Barber's stunning photographs.

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

*Robin Schulze writes:* "I've been reading the latest *Quarterly* about bits, their action, sizing, etc. One part suggests using a string to measure the mouth for the horse's bit size. Glenna wasn't really keen on the string in her mouth, and I had a hard time getting a measurement. So I cut the long section from a plastic coat hanger and used that. I marked some measurements on the middle of it with a Sharpie, and it worked very well!"





# REGIONAL CLUB UPDATES

## **FIRC** BY RICH MOORE

During the summer, the Frida Icelandic Riding Club (FIRC) drill team continued with its monthly practices. Four riders, Marsha Korose, Mitch Martin, Rich Moore, and Curt Pierce, put on a breed drill team demonstration at Homestead Farm in Catlett, VA on September 23. The audience appreciated the drill team's performance and had a lot of questions about Icelandic horses. The visit was set up by Jo Ann Brown, who boarded her horse there. Photos can be seen on the Frida Icelandic Riding Club site on Facebook. The team planned to enter a drill team competition in Front Royal, VA in early November.



Rich Moore and Mitch Martin leading the FIRC drill team. Photo by Tammy Martin.



The Frida Icelandic Riding Club (FIRC) drill team giving a demonstration at Homestead Farm in Catlett, VA in September. Rich Moore and Mitch Martin are followed by Marsha Korose. Photo by Tammy Martin.



Susan Moore Milloy on *Glaður frá Vallholti* with Gudmar Petursson at the recent FIRC clinic.

On September 9, Sverrir Bjartmarz and Mitch Martin organized a club trail ride at the Manassas National Battlefield Park. The ride divided into three groups depending on the speed the riders wanted to go. After the ride, the group got together for lunch in the picnic pavilion near the horse trailer parking area. It was a beautiful day, and everyone had a great time.

Tony and Laura Colicchio hosted a trail ride in Rosaryville State Park, Upper Marlboro, MD in November. The club directors approved a request

from the show committee to conduct the Second Annual FIRC sanctioned show on May 18-19, 2013. The show will be held at the same location as the first show, Frying Pan Farm Park in Herndon, VA in the Washington, DC area. Given the success of the first show, the club is anticipating another great event.

## **FLUGNIR** BY KYDEE SHEETZ

For 2012, Flugnir committed to including riders of all interests and abilities in various activities and welcoming new Icelandic horse owners from around the



Flugnir members learned about competitive trail and obstacle course riding at a clinic in July. Photo by Susy Oliver.

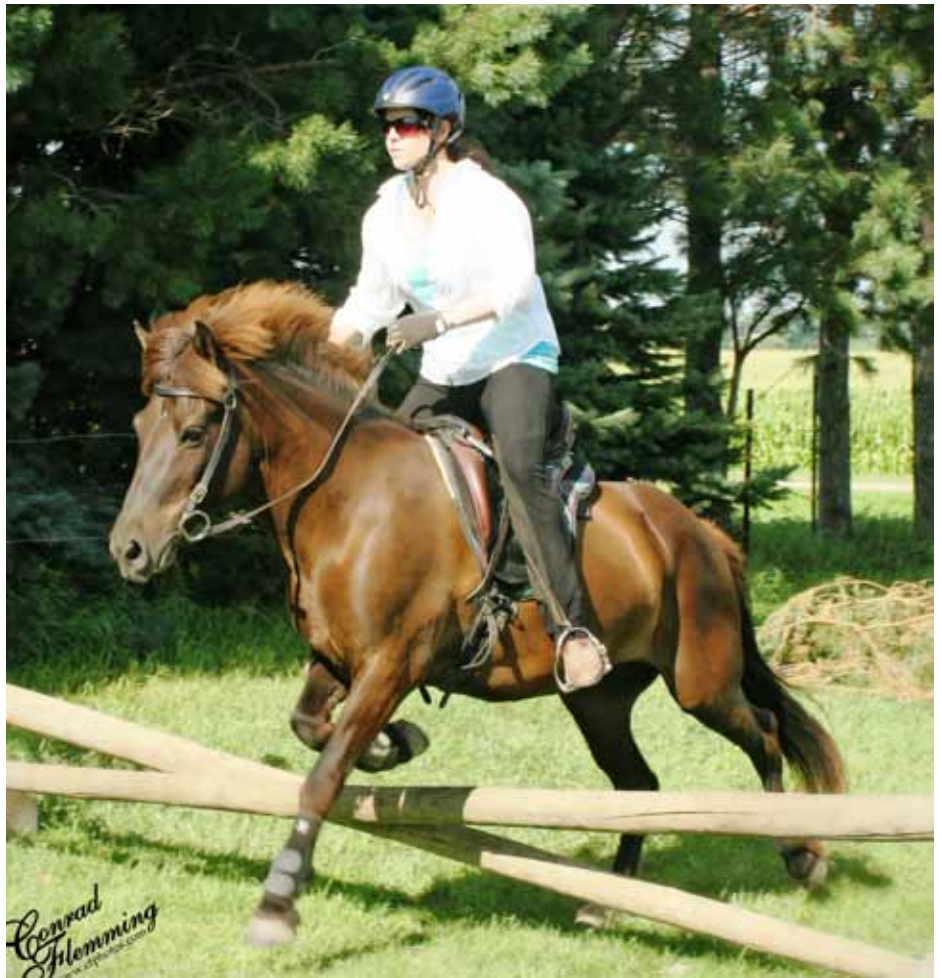




Flugnir member Jerry Oliver and Holdur resting at a Flugnir clinic. Photo by Susy Oliver.

region. The “Promote Partnership” clinic series is a new horsemanship concept embraced by many riders. In fact, the initial clinic offering filled up so fast, a second clinic to accommodate more participants was created.

In July, people from around the upper Midwest gathered at Aslan’s Country Icelandic Horse farm near Duluth, MN to escape the bugs and record-breaking heat. While Duluthians considered the days that hit 80 degrees miserable, most of the attendees were relieved to spend a few days on the windy hillside above Lake



Nationally ranked competitive trail rider Eve Loftness, shown jumping with Spyrna, led Flugnir club members in obstacle course work at a recent clinic.



USIHC breeding leader Barbara Frische gave two clinics at Aslan’s Country Icelandic Horse farm near Duluth, MN. Here she and Flugnir club member Kydee Sheetz enjoy a donkey cart. Photo by Susy Oliver.

Superior. Competition riders enjoyed receiving individual instruction from Barbara Frische in the indoor arena, as well as working on fast trot and pace on one of the local gravel roads. Barbara, riding side-by-side with these riders, helped to bring out the competitive fire in the student’s horses and improved these high-speed gaits.

Riders with more interest in pleasure riding and trail activities enjoyed having their lessons on the hilly, wooded, and open trails around the farm. Barbara stressed that the use of natural obstacles (hills, valleys, logs, etc.) can help to improve a horse from general fitness to sport horse competition.

Competition and pleasure riders alike took advantage of the opportunity to learn more about competitive trail events



and obstacle course work from Flugnir members Eve Loftness and Cindy Nadler. These gifted riders are nationally ranked competitive trail riders who instructed riders in everything from crossing tarps to dragging objects behind their horses.

Throughout the day, people could audit lessons with Barbara, work on the obstacle course with Eve and Cindy, take on the challenges of the trail course set up around the property, or simply hang out and relax in the sun. It certainly wasn't all work, as many participants enjoyed a relaxing massage from a local massage therapist who visited the farm one day, and the evenings were filled with trail rides, campfire chats, and lesson reviews.

"Icelandic University" was a hit with the regional horse community. Also held at Aslan's Country Icelandics, it was sponsored by Flugnir and Katrin Sheehan's Creekside Farm and designed by Barbara Frische to reach out to professional trainers and instructors from the fields of dressage and hunter jumper as well as gaited horse judges. There is a tremendous shortage of trainers with Icelandic horse knowledge in the upper Midwest, and Icelandic owners are receiving instruction from teachers in virtually every field of horsemanship. We committed to teaching these riding instructors and trainers as much as possible in two days.

The first day was devoted to teaching these professionals things unique to the Icelandic horse, such as the special history, conformation, attitude, and gaits, as well as the differences between four-gaited and five-gaited horses. In addition, sport horse competition and breed evaluation basics were included, so that the professionals could help develop this knowledge in their horse and human trainees.

The second day involved being on horseback and learning from various four-gaited and five-gaited horses at different levels of training. Many Flugnir members really got into the spirit of the event and volunteered their horses for these students. Students were able to ride everything from early stage horses in training to international level competition horses. Our goal is to write a feature article on the topic of Icelandic University and to



Kraftur member Barbara Downs visits with a pair of foals in Iceland during an America2Iceland tour. Photo by Heidi Benson.

elaborate on this exciting program.

In closing, 2012 has been an eventful year for Flugnir Icelandics, with many events and fun opportunities for getting involved and learning with our horses. Winding down 2012, Flugnir hosted a clinic and schooling show by Guðmar Pétursson at Tolthaven Ranch, participated in the Minnesota Equifest, and finally held the "Flugnir at Woodside Ranch" weekend in Mauston, WI. Now with 2013 right around the corner, the Flugnir Board has already started the planning process for exciting clinic options as well as a Flugnirkeppni competition.

#### **KRAFTUR** BY COLLEEN MONSEF

Kraftur, the Northern California Regional Club, started their busy summer just after the California Icelandic Association (CIA) World Ranking Show in May, and boy was it a great summer! There was so much, I hope I don't forget anyone. Barbara Downs and her daughter Clara made the trip to Iceland for an America2Iceland adventure. They were accompanied by Heidi Benson and Ayla Green. The pictures were amazing and the memories priceless. Not to mention a couple of four-legged souvenirs.

Fresh from Iceland, Ayla Green



Several Kraftur members took part in an America2Iceland tour. They stayed here, at Hestheimar, and went trekking with Gudmar Petursson. Photo by Heidi Benson.



Laurie Prestine, Madison Prestine, and Scott Prestine at the FEIF Youth Cup in Germany. Madison was one of three youth riders who represented the USIHC. Photo by Jasmine Ho.

turned around and headed to Verden, Germany, for the FEIF Youth Cup with fellow Kraftur member Madison Prestine. Laurie and Scott Prestine along with Kelly, Marvin, Jessica, and Jamie Blough were there to cheer them on. Madison was able to bring home a bronze medal for the U.S. We are so proud of both of them and what a great job they are doing representing the U.S. Not to mention the great job they are doing helping with our up-and-coming youth riders.

And yes, Kraftur has lots of youth riders. We believe we may have had the largest youth class in the United States at the Kraftur Sanctioned Show at Mountain Icelandic Farm in Watsonville, CA, hosted by Annette Coulon and Bruce Edwards. There were

about 13 youth who rode. They were all trained by Heidi Benson, Laura Benson, and Lucy Nold, with lots of help from Ayla Green and Madison Prestine. Youth horse camps were available every week through the summer at Heidi Benson's Centaur City Riding school. The Kraftur event also showcased a judged dressage class as part of the show. We had 31 horses at the competition. It was a great opportunity to see our members and catch up with all that we did this summer.

Laura Benson toured with the show *Apassionata* (see her article in this issue). As team leader for the Knights of Iceland, she helped promote our great breed. We heard Landsmót adventures from Doug Smith, Annette Coulon, Bruce Edwards, and Lucy Nold. Bert Bates and Kathy Sierra shared video and information about their Icelandic clinics with Steinar Sigurbjörnsson and dressage clinics with Jec Ballou. Laura Benson hosted two show prep clinics. She also recently coordinated a dressage clinic with Carlos Carneira, a well-known trainer from the Portuguese Riding School who specializes in classical dressage. Laura is going to the Portuguese Riding School in Portugal to visit and ride soon.

As this update is being written, many of us are coordinating rides and practicing for the CIA Fall Show hosted by Will and Ásta Covert at Flying C Icelandics in Santa Ynez, CA. Looking forward to seeing everyone there!

### **NEIHC BY AMY GODDARD**

The Northeast Icelandic Horse Club's board of directors has been meeting via telephone conference on the second



NEIHC member Anne Owen on Gna at a recent hunter pace. Photo by Lisa Hall.

Tuesday of every month. NEIHC members are welcome to sit in on these calls. Contact Amy Goddard for the conference call number and passcode.

Cyd Groff has decided to resign from the NEIHC board due to family commitments. Cindy Wescott, nominated last February, will serve out Cyd's term ending March 2014.

The NEIHC has submitted its 1024 application to the IRS to request non-profit status. Many thanks to Kara Noble and Leslie Chambers for their countless hours of work on this project.

A clinic and schooling show with Steinar Sigurbjörnsson was held at Thor Icelandics in Claverack, NY, July 19–22.

Heleen Heyning hosted a youth camp, July 29–Aug. 4. Heleen writes: "It was a first for West Winds Farm in Delhi,



At the Kraftur Show (L to R): Lucy Nold, Ayla Green, Madison Prestine, Kajsa Johnson, Elizabeth Robertson, Emma Erickson, Allison Moerer, Julia Hasenaue, Katherine Monsef, Jessica Blough, Clara Chilton, Madeline Pollock, Cameron Scott, Jamie Blough, Elizabeth Monsef, Gabrielle Pollock, Laura Benson, Heidi Benson, and Judge Halldor Victorsson (not pictured: Madeline Clawson). Photo by Lidia Hasanuer.



NY to host a youth camp this summer. The idea was to have kids get acquainted with and have a lot of fun around Icelandic horses. Elin Hulda Harðarsdóttir, who happened to be visiting the U.S., came to help out with the horse-related aspects of camp and did a wonderful job. Lessons took place in the arena every morning, followed by a trail ride each afternoon. All girls were already riders, but it was amazing to see how their confidence grew day by day—especially on the trails. As this was an overnight camp, there was plenty of time for swimming, playing on the trampoline, and blueberry picking. Judged by the requests for a repeat next year, the camp could be considered a great success!”

Anne Owen writes: “Marilyn Weiner on Freyr, Sandy Perkins on Aría, and myself on Gná have won the two hunter paces we have been in so far. The first one was held at Lord Stirling and the second at Readington Trail. We formed the team in the spring of this year and we won the two paces we rode in then. For Sandy Perkins it was very exciting, as it was her first hunter pace ever and winning four in a row was amazing. It is nice to see the people on the huge hunter-jumpers giving the Icelandics, or ‘pretty ponies’ as they call them, the respect they deserve for speed and agility. I have had a lot of people visiting my farm to see the Icelandics and wanting more information on this special breed. It is nice to talk about the breed, give them lessons on riding the Icelandics and recommend places for riding holidays in the U.S., Canada and Iceland.”

Martina Gates writes: “The NEIHC hosted a conformation clinic with Barbara Frische and Kristján Kristjánsson for the second year at Thor Icelandics in Claverack, NY, Aug. 10–12. In addition, young horse evaluations were held on Friday morning and judged by Barbara Frische. A total of four horses were judged, age five weeks to four years. The conformation clinic was attended by 20 participants, some of them from as far away as Ohio and Vermont. The horses were judged for conformation by Barbara Frische and then by the participants



NEIHC member Krista Wescott, far right, and some of her campers at Boulder Ridge Farm in Maine. Photo by Cindy Wescott.

themselves. We were trapped by torrential rains and heavy thunderstorms all throughout Saturday, which did not deter the riders or trainers. The clinic went on in spite of the second worst weather the NEIHC has ever experienced. (The worst being the 2005 breeding show in Rhinebeck!) Both Barbara Frische and Kristján

Kristjánsson rode the participants’ horses and then helped put together a training plan for each individual horse and rider. All in all it was a very educational and fun weekend, truly showcasing the great spirit of the club! There were talks with Barbara Frische of trying to coordinate a NEIHC young horse evaluation for next year,



Elin Hulda Hardarsdottir, left, and campers pause for a view during a trail ride at West Winds Farm youth camp in Delhi, NY run by NEIHC member Heleen Heyning. Photo by Alexis DeBoschnek.

where Barbara would travel from farm to farm so that more horses could be judged and breeders get feedback.”

Cindy Wescott writes: “Krista Wescott hosted four weeks of camp this summer at Boulder Ridge Icelandics in Limington, ME, one week being just boys. She even had a waiting list!”

Jenny Tuthill writes: “Ellen Reidy and her horse Palmi, and myself, along with my three horses (Stella from Haylyn, Oðinn from Far and Away, and Gyðja from Mill Farm) have been riding sections of the New Hampshire Northern Rail Trail, a 59-mile section of trail on the old Boston and Maine Railroad now preserved for bicycling, horseback riding, walking, and snowmobiling. We are planning a through-ride in October from the start at Webster Place, to the end point, Lebanon, NH, with stopovers each night. On September 21–22 we covered 30 miles of trail in advance of our long ride. Riding one section from Danbury, NH to Canaan, NH on Friday, and a second section further south from Potter Place to Webster Lake, we found the trail varied and quite beautiful. Potter Place is most appealing because of the huge paved parking lot for access, and the wonderful job volunteers have done remodeling and fixing up the Potter Place Depot, a caboose, and post office, which are now a local museum. The trail is safe with no motorized traffic and ever-changing scenery; sometimes passing through hardwood forests, lakes and bogs, and other times past houses and parks. It is all scenic and peaceful. Both sections provided occasional trail challenges for the horses, including bicyclists, large galvanized metal tunnels, a variety of bridges as well as houses, playgrounds, and soccer fields. There are many of the trail sections that feature good parking opportunities for horse trailers, and the trail system provides excellent opportunities for group rides. There are a number of rail trails throughout the state, and we have plans to explore others in the future. If any other riders would like to join us, please contact me (jenthuthill@gmail.com) or Ellen.”

The Silver Maple Farm drill team

will perform breed demonstrations at the Springfield, MA Equine Affaire in November. The annual Turkey Tolt ride is tentatively scheduled for Saturday, November 24.

Upcoming events for 2013 include:  
March 2: Annual Meeting and Thorrablot  
April 6: Bunny Hop group ride  
May 18: World Championship Tryouts  
June 15: NEIHC Youth Day

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. Or contact club president, Martina Gates: martinagates@mac.com.

### ST. SKUTLA BY ANDREA BARBER

Two of our club members, Susan Verberg and Cordy Sullivan, traveled to Europe this summer and were able to indulge their passion for Icelandic horses during the travels. See Susan’s article in this issue.

Cordy Sullivan writes: “On a recent trip to Denmark I had the opportunity to visit an Icelandic horse owner near the town of Herning. Unfortunately I didn’t get to ride, but I did get to visit their local Icelandic club facility. The facility included a large barn with enclosed arena, many stalls, and a multi-purpose room. That day the barn was filled with kids of all ages grooming, tacking, and riding. Another younger group was busy learning the parts of the horse. It was exciting to see the extent of involvement of club members with the kids. What a great experience. Oh, to be a kid again, learning to ride in such a nurturing and fun situation!”

Back in the U.S., club member Andrea Barber was busy writing a feature about Icelandic horses for the new iPad magazine *Saddle and Stirrups*. The feature included not only an article on the breed, but many full color photos. It was very well received, and plans are in the works for Andrea to contribute to future issues. In fact, Andrea and Steve’s stallion Kalman frá Lækjamóti will be the featured horse in the Christmas (November 2012) issue. The magazine itself is a beautiful publication with many interesting articles



Víkingur frá Götu and Kalman frá Lækjamóti, owned by St. Skutla club members Andrea and Steve Barber, are on the cover of the November 2012 issue of *Saddle and Stirrups* magazine, with an article on Kalman inside. Photo by Andrea Barber.

and stunning photos. The publication has offered a free issue to all USIHC members. Just go to <http://saddleandstirrups.com/1-month-voucher/> and enter the code “icelandic” as instructed. Enjoy!



Several St. Skutla members participated in a trail challenge to benefit Robin Brege at Fat Chance Farm in Canandaigua, NY on October 7. Here, Kestrel Wilder rides Kraftur frá Hrólfstöðum. Photo by Andrea Barber.



# IS YOUR HORSE YOUR TYPE?

BY NICKI ESDORN

Barbara Frische has conducted the by-now famous “Conformation and Riding” clinic, together with several excellent Icelandic horse trainers, several times over the last few years. In this clinic, riders learn how to judge their horse’s conformation and how it influences their horses’ gaits, rideability, and character. A fascinating part of the clinic is learning about the Icelandic Horse Gait Distribution Scale, which was first developed by the late Bruno Podlech of Wiesenhof in Germany. Barbara Frische, who is an international breeding judge and the USIHC breeding leader, has slightly modified and expanded this scale according to the latest developments in breeding.

Bruno Podlech was one of the legendary horsemen who brought the Icelandic horse to great popularity in Germany, starting in the late 1950s. As a successful importer, breeder, trainer, and rider of Icelandic horses, he was very interested in how the breeding and conformation of his horses affected their gait distribution, rideability, and temperament. The result of all his experience with hundreds, if not thousands, of horses was the Gait Distribution Scale. It shows a genetic increase in lateral ability from four-gaited all the way to pacer, which the discovery of the pace gene this year (*see the next article*) proves to be correct!

## GAIT DISTRIBUTION

According to the scale, the Icelandic horse breed shows three main states of natural energy: diagonally tense, flowing, or laterally tense. Tension in this context is not bad: Diagonal tension is necessary for good suspension in trot and canter, and flying pace is not possible without lateral tension. Tolt is a gait without suspension or any airborne phase. The movement ideally “flows” through the horse in an even rhythm. The scale also shows that the horse’s carrying power increases with diagonally tense energy and that its pushing power increases with laterally tense energy, while flowing energy decreases in both directions. The gaits canter and walk



Fengur frá Litlu-Asgeirsa, a natural tolt, showing clear beat in loose rein tolt. Photo Lisa Keller.

are present in all types of Icelandic horse, but the suspension in canter depends on the horse’s type.

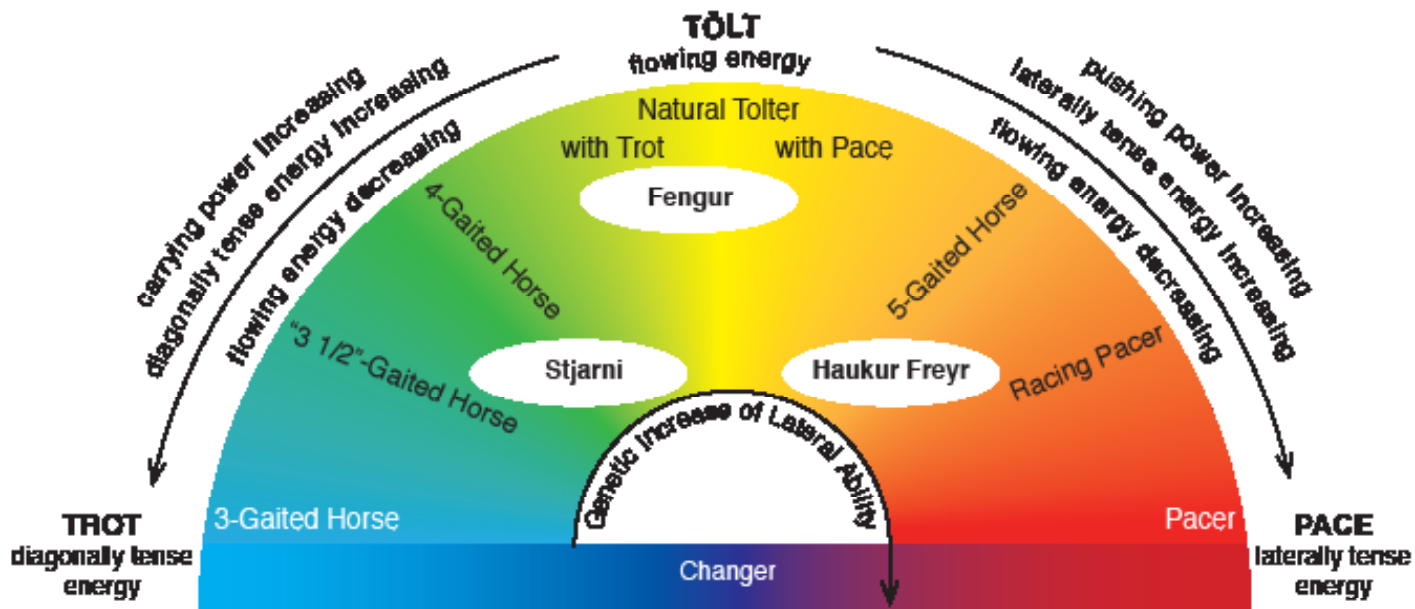
While it is fun and interesting to try to figure out where exactly on this scale your horse fits—and if he is, indeed, your type—it is vital for understanding how to ride and train him to know conformationally what he can and cannot do. Different breeders have different goals. Some want to breed expressive four-gaiters, some the easy-going natural tolters, and many the jewel in the crown: the talented, fast, five-gaiters who can show all gaits beautifully and in natural balance. It is easy to see on this scale how difficult it is to breed a horse with both carrying power

for collection and agility, but also pushing power for speed, while keeping the horse relaxed and friendly, easy to train, but still forward-thinking.

## THE SPECTRUM

In the middle of the scale is the natural tolt. This horse will prefer tolt and will have a clear gait in perfect balance and at various speeds without having to be trained to it. His trot and canter do not have much suspension, but still can have high action, and they can be improved by adding diagonal tension through collection. He does not have flying pace: He lacks the necessary lateral tension.

The four-gaited horse is in the



The Gait Distribution Scale of the Icelandic Horse according to Bruno Podlech and Barbara Frische. The transitions between clear types are fluid. The horses you see in the photos in this article are placed into the spectrum. Where does your horse fit?

middle between the three-gaiter and the natural tolt. This horse will need to learn how to tolt and may never be able to show loose-rein tolt. He needs support but his movements can be very high and expressive, and he can also tolt fast. His energy is balanced between flowing and diagonally tense. His trot has good suspension and his canter is rounded, springy, and three-beated. These horses have more carrying power and are agile and suited for dressage.

The five-gaited horse fits between the natural tolt and the pacer. This horse represents the breeding ideal of many Icelanders. He has a lot of pushing power for great speed, but still enough carrying power. He is well balanced between flowing and laterally tense energy. His five gaits are clear, balanced, and have expressive speed variations from slow to fast. He has true flying pace.

Between the five-gaiter and the pacer fits the pace-racer. He is a specialist in flying pace, with lots of pushing power. He therefore is more tense overall. His tolt, trot, and canter will be more running and not springy and often need to be learned and trained in order to be present at all.

On opposing ends of the spectrum are the Icelandic three-gaiter and the pacer. The three-gaited Icelandic lacks the necessary gene for tolt. This gene can

be lost when two horses, each carrying only one copy of the gene, are bred together. A horse without this gene (*again, see the next article*) cannot learn tolt, but the quality of his other gaits depends on his overall conformation. For the pacer it is very difficult to learn to trot, canter, or tolt. He has no true flying pace, but can often pace at decent speed. Since he lacks carrying power, he cannot develop big

movements.

Some extremely difficult horses were also observed by Bruno: for example, the over-tense “changer.” This horse goes from one tense extreme to the other, changing from pace to trot, and is unable to tolt or canter. Another one is the “broken trotter.” He is unable to bring his hind end under, and so gives the impression of being “broken” in the middle.



Haukur Freyr frá Hofnum, a five-gaiter in flying pace. Note the steeper croup for pushing power. Photo by Stan Hirson (taken from a video).



Barbara has also observed some “three-and-a-half” gaited horses who may, at the most, be able to learn to tolt at a very slow speed and have to be encouraged by the rider all the time to keep in the gait. These types of Icelandic horses are becoming rare thanks to good breeding practices.

## YOUR TYPE OF HORSE

The scale shows that the transitions from one type of Icelandic horse to the next are fluid. For example, you can find a four-gaiter with a lot of talent for tolt and lots of flowing energy, and also a natural toltter with the ability to pace who needs to be trained to trot.

Sometimes it is not obvious where a horse fits on the scale and what his abilities are. An easily recognizable clue is the build of the croup: A three-gaited horse has a more horizontal croup with a high-set tail, the pacer has a steep croup, while the long, sloping, well-muscled croup is considered ideal for four-gaiters, toltters, and five-gaiters. Experience and a good eye, like Barbara’s, can tell a horse’s place on the scale even in the case of a foal or free running horse.

But not only conformation is important. The horse’s training and even

shoeing can affect how he moves. Barbara has discovered five-gaited ability in horses who were believed to be four-gaiters in the Conformation and Riding clinics – and other surprises!

The Gait Distribution Scale is a great tool for deciding what type of horse you may want and need—and also what type you already have in the barn! When I was looking to buy my first Icelandic, after many years of riding dressage and hunter-jumpers, I was lucky to find a well-bred natural toltter, Fengur, with good trot and canter. We had lots of fun together riding anything from tolt demos to hunter paces. His tolt was just there: clear, effortless, slow or fast—no problem! At Landsmót I saw flying pace for the first time and was hooked. My future second horse had to be five-gaited! (Haukur Freyr is.) A friend of mine loves dressage and is looking for an Icelandic. She should buy a nice four-gaited horse with good suspension in trot and canter. However, she needs to know that her horse may need expert tolt training in order to develop this gait. Another person may be looking for a comfortable, easy horse to go trail riding. A natural toltter would be a great match.

The Icelandic horse’s gaits and temperament are endlessly varied and

interesting—for the rider and trainer, and for the breeder.

## REFERENCES

Bruno Podlech. “Natural Gait Distribution in Horses” DVD

“The life’s work of a legendary horseman: Bruno Podlech.” *Eidfaxi* 4/2009 English edition.

Martina Gates. “Gait Distributions of the Icelandic Horse. From a seminar given by Bruno Podlech.” *Tolt News* 2000. Barbara Frische, interviewed by Nicki Esdorn.



Stjarni frá Blönduosi, a four-gaited gelding, showing beautiful suspension in trot, ridden by Laura Benson. Photo by Ayla Green

# THE PACE GENE

BY NANCY MARIE BROWN

In the August 20, 2012 issue of the international journal *Nature*, a group of Swedish, Icelandic, and American scientists published an important scientific paper identifying the genetic mutation that causes Icelandic horses to tolt and pace.

Led by geneticist Leif Andersson of the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences and Uppsala University, the group first compared the genes of 30 four-gaited Icelandic horses to 40 five-gaited Icelandic horses. They found “a highly significant association between the ability to pace and a single nucleotide polymorphism” or SNP (pronounced “snip”) mutation on one chromosome in the horse genome.

They confirmed that association by testing an additional 352 Icelandic horses (both four-gaited and five-gaited), along with 808 horses of other breeds.

The SNP mutation occurred in a gene named *DMRT3*. Investigating this region in mice, the researchers discovered that it controls leg movement. The gene is expressed in the spinal cord, producing neurons that affect length of stride, swing time or flexion, and both front-back and left-right coordination.

To pace, an Icelandic horse must possess two copies of the mutant *DMRT3* gene. To tolt, a horse needs one copy.

## BASIC GENETICS

To understand what this means, we need to review some terminology.

The genome is the horse’s complete set of genes, packed into the chromosomes inside each of its cells. Genes are made of DNA, a long molecule that forms a double helix, looking like a twisted ladder. DNA itself is made up of four small molecules, the nucleotides adenine (known as A), cytosine (C), thymine (T), and guanine (G).

In the 1960s, scientists learned how to read the DNA code. Each sequence of three letters, each codon, such as GAG or GAA or AAA, stands for an amino acid—except for three codons, which instead mean “stop.” When the code is read, the cell’s machinery links the specified amino acids together into a chain, which is then folded up to become a functioning protein. Each protein made by the body has its corresponding DNA code—a gene.

There’s more than genes in a genome, if by gene we mean the DNA sequence that codes for a protein. Many DNA sequences don’t code for proteins.

Instead, they control when and where in the body certain proteins are made. Still other sequences are thought to be useless junk, though scientists keep finding uses for more and more of this junk.

But the mutation that allows Icelandic horses to tolt and pace is a relatively easy one to understand. A SNP mutation, or single nucleotide polymorphism, means that one nucleotide (one A, C, T, or G) in the DNA sequence of the *DMRT3* gene was wrong. The three-letter codon that this one nucleotide was part of should have coded for an amino acid. Instead, it said “stop.” The mutant form of the gene found in Icelandic horses is significantly shorter than the wild type found in three-gaited horses.

In fact, all gaited horse breeds tested, including the Icelandic horse, the Kentucky Mountain Saddle horse, the Missouri Fox Trotter, the Paso Fino, the Peruvian Paso, the Rocky Mountain horse, the Standardbred, and the Tennessee Walking horse, had the short, mutant type. All three-gaited breeds—Arabians, Gotland ponies, North-Swedish draft horses, Przewalski’s horses, Shetland ponies, Swedish Ardennes, Swedish Warmbloods, and Thoroughbreds—had the long, wild type.



Only horses with two copies of the gene can show flying pace. Photo from the 2012 Landsmót in Reykjavik by Lisa Keller.





Laura Benson riding Rimma frá Saurbae in flying pace at the 2011 Kentucky Show. Photo by Heidi Benson.

## HISTORY OF TOLT

Now the terms “wild type” and “mutant” are value-laden. Geneticists used to use “wild type” to refer to the typical form found in nature. But it’s now accepted that genes can come in many different forms in a single species without any one of them being more typical than another.

In this study, the researchers seem to have assumed that, since all horses can walk, trot, and canter/gallop, these gaits are more typical. The fact that the Przewalski’s horse—the closest wild relative of the domesticated horse—has only three gaits supports this conclusion. The researchers therefore assigned the label “wild type” to the long version of the gene, the one that produces three-gaitedness.

But the reverse could be true. Horse historians, especially those within the Icelandic horse community, have long argued that gaitedness was bred out of horses since medieval times, not bred in. And even if the Icelandic horse’s shorter DMRT3 gene is not the wild type, the mutation must have happened very early in the history of horse evolution: When anthropologist Mary Leakey uncovered the tracks of three 3.5-million-year-old equids in East Africa, she found their footfalls to match those of a tolted Icelandic horse traveling at ten miles an hour.

## NATURAL GAITS

Icelandic horse experts have long argued that the ability to tolt was genetic and that it depended on the pace. According to Kristinn Hugason, a former horse breeding adviser to the Icelandic government, “It is part of the quality of the trait, how easy it is to breed it. Well-bred Icelandic horses should therefore be almost self-trained to tolt.” Said Kári Arnórsson in *The Icelandic Horse: A Breed Apart*, “Not all horses have pace worth showing, but it is considered good for the tolt if the horse has some pace. It is thought that without breeding for pace, the tolt would be lost.”

The Nature study proves they were right. If you breed a mare and a stallion who each have only one copy of the short DMRT3 gene, you can get a foal that has no copies of it: This foal will be three-gaited. That’s why this study is so important to Icelandic horse lovers. It tells us exactly how to preserve what we love best about our breed: the gaits.

For breeders who want to know in advance of training and evaluation if a foal is five-gaited, a simple DNA test is already available from Capilet Genetics: <http://www.capiletgenetics.com/en/icelandic-horses-2>. The company notes, however, that “the quality of the pace is a quantitative trait that is determined by many genes working together and the

environment (training).”

In other words, the short DMRT3 gene is necessary, but not enough for true flying pace. The Swedish study found that 31 percent of the horses considered four-gaited were genetically five-gaited: They had two copies of the short DMRT3 gene. The classification was done by Thorvaldur Arnason of the Agricultural University of Iceland in Borgarnes, based on World-Fengur records. Their pace was simply not good enough for them to show it in competition.

The same caveat holds for the tolt. Without one copy of the gene, your horse cannot tolt. But genetics alone cannot explain how well your horse tolt.

## REFERENCES:

Lisa S. Andersson, et. al. “Mutations in DMRT3 affect locomotion in horses and spinal circuit function in mice.” *Nature* 488 (30 August 2012): 642-646.

<http://www.nature.com/nature/journal/v488/n7413/full/nature11399.html>

Mary Leakey, cited in Stephen Budiansky, *The Nature of Horses* (NY: Free Press, 1997), p. 36.

Kristinn Hugason, quoted by Sólveig Ólafsdóttir, *Eiðfaxi*, Vol. 3, 1996, p. 46.

Kári Arnórsson, *The Icelandic Horse: A Breed Apart* (Reykjavík: Iceland Review, 1997), p. 48.

# DETECTING ICELANDIC HORSE ORIGINS

BY PAMELA S. NOLF

When visiting web sites about the Icelandic horse, one frequently finds introductions like this:

*Vikings from Norway and the British Isles first settled in Iceland in the late 800s AD. They brought their horses and livestock with them on their ships. Since space was limited, only the finest stock was brought to Iceland. After the initial settlement of Iceland, there has been no known import of horses for almost 1000 years. These wonderful, charming, sensible horses are ideal riding horses for people of all ages.*

These bare statements beg some larger questions. Where did the Vikings obtain this fine stock? How were the horses kept in Iceland? What cultural and climatic conditions influenced the development of the horse in Iceland? Why are these horses so sensible and charming? Archeology, paleontology, history, art, and literature all combine to give fascinating insights into the bigger picture of the origin of the Icelandic horse. Recent advances in the analysis of mitochondrial



Today Icelandic horses no longer have to fend for themselves over the winter. But their adaptations to the Icelandic climate certainly enable them to enjoy a crisp winter day in Thingeyrar, Iceland. Photo by Helga Thoroddsen.

DNA (mtDNA) have further enabled scientists to explore the origins of people and animals—including the Icelandic horse.

This article investigates some of these recent findings. Caution: Due to the inherent complexity of the subject, I can only provide superficial answers based on the information I was able to access; there is still considerable debate among scientists about some of these topics.

## EQUID EVOLUTION

DNA is the hereditary material passed down from generation to generation. Most DNA is located in the nucleus of the cell. In the nuclear DNA of the horse, 32 chromosomes come from the sire and 32 from the dam. However, mtDNA is located in the mitochondria, which are the part of the cell that converts energy from food directly into a form the cell can use. MtDNA is highly mutable and evolves frequently over time. In almost all organisms, mtDNA is inherited from the mother only, so that researchers can study changes in a species over time and the evolutionary relationships between different species.

Both the study of skeletal remains



These Przewalski's Horses were photographed in a reserve in Czechoslovakia. No extant domesticated horse breed directly descends from this endangered wild horse subspecies, although they share a similar genetic heritage to the Fjord and Icelandic horse. Photo by Eric Andresen.



and mtDNA research agree that the branching of the modern equid evolutionary tree occurred in the following order: mountain zebras, followed by asses, followed by the remaining subspecies of zebras, followed by onagers or wild asses, followed by horses (Jansen, Forster, et al., 2002). The current thought is that the horse was descended from the now extinct Tarpan or European wild horse (McCue et al., 2012).

Certain breed descriptions have claimed the Przewalski's Horse, an endangered wild horse, as a direct ancestor. However mtDNA research published in 2011 by Ryder, Fisher, et al. indicates that the Przewalski's Horse diverged from the ancestor of the modern horse approximately 160,000 years ago—long before domestication and the development of modern horse breeds. Interestingly, mtDNA research by McCue, Bannasch, et al. in 2012 shows that the Przewalski's Horse is more closely related to Mongolian, Norwegian Fjord, Belgian, and Icelandic breeds than to other breeds such as Thoroughbreds.

Although the Przewalski's Horse and the domesticated horse differ in their number of chromosomes, the two species can interbreed. McCue, Bannasch, et al. (2012) propose that there was interbreeding of domesticated horses with Przewalski's Horses in the wild where the range of the two equine subspecies overlapped, especially in Mongolia. All existing Przewalski's Horses are the offspring of nine of these horses captured in 1945. Thus, the founding horses were not purebred but hybrids with domesticated horses. The above example serves to caution the reader about making quick assumptions about breed origination on the basis of mtDNA research.

## HORSE DOMESTICATION

A recent mtDNA study by Jansen, Forster, et al. (2002), suggests that horses were domesticated from several wild populations over time. Most likely the earliest domestication of the horse occurred between 9400 BC and 2000 BC. As these researchers explain, "The ease of domestic horse breeding today may be the genetic consequence of selections of particularly amenable beasts some thousands of years ago.... Burial, textual, and/or iconographic evidence shows that by 1250 BC,



Carol Burckhardt (left), who normally rides an Icelandic horse, about to start a riding trek on a Mongolian horse in Mongolia. The early Norse may have brought Mongolian stock back to Norway, hence the close relations shown by mtDNA studies with certain Norwegian breeds who were brought into Iceland by the early settlers. Photo by Linda Eddy.

chariots were widespread from Greece to China. Such an expansion may suggest a diffusion of the knowledge of horse breeding, and possibly a concomitant spread of horses themselves, originally localized both temporally and spatially. In this reading of the archaeological record, the knowledge and the initially domesticated horses themselves would have spread, with local mares incorporated *en route*, forming our regional mtDNA clusters, which individually had a lower genetic diversity."

Whether horses were domesticated once, with the knowledge spreading outward, or whether horses were domesticated in several different geographic areas at different times is still hotly debated. Achilli, Olivieri, et al. (2012) write that "the Ancestral Mare Mitogenome (AMM) from which all modern horse mtDNAs derive, was dated at  $\sim 153 \pm 30$  thousand years ago." Their study suggests that there were at least 17, possibly many more, founding mares for horse domestication.

Interestingly, Lindgren, Backström, et al. (2004), in their study of genetic markers associated with the male Y chromosome, showed that very few stallions contributed to the genetic composition of

the modern horse. "All stallions carried the same Y-chromosome haplotype. This contrasts sharply with the extensive mtDNA diversity and indicates very low levels of Y-chromosome variability in domestic horses." Their data suggests that the use of one stallion to breed multiple mares is a practice that dates to the earliest days of horse domestication.

So one can conclude that at the time of the Norse settlement of Iceland in the later part of the 800s AD, numerous domesticated breeds of horses were pocketed around Europe and Asia, with individual horses traded or stolen between these locations. To fully understand the Icelandic breed, one needs to know a little bit about the Viking explorations and expansions at this time.

## NORSE EXPANSION

English sources typically date the beginning of the Viking Age by the burning of the monastery at Lindisfarne in England in 793 AD, and the end at the Battle of Hastings in 1066 AD. Possibly due to population expansion with limited agricultural resources, or just to exploit a power gap after the collapse of Charlemagne's empire in the 830s, groups from Scandi-



Shetland ponies grazing at home in Grutness, Shetland Island. Early Icelandic settlers from the northern islands of England and Scotland would have brought similar stock, capable of surviving harsh weather conditions, with them. Photo by James Tait, Island Trails, Shetland, UK

navia began to expand across Europe.

Viking ships were capable of sailing across large expanses of open ocean and of navigating rivers. Establishing trade routes and both permanent and temporary settlements, the Vikings established outposts in pockets of coastline and rivers along current-day France, Spain, North Africa, and western Italy. Settlers headed to England, Scotland, Ireland, Iceland, the Shetlands, and the Faroe Islands. Other groups navigated the major riverways of Eastern Europe and Russia, eventually reaching the Black and Caspian Seas. Eirik the Red and similar adventurers sailed to North America and established settlements in L'Anse aux Meadows, Newfoundland, and Labrador.

Brown (2001) discusses some of the choices that the Vikings had to make about the horse stock included on their journeys. "Although the settlers used the deep-keeled knarr—not the dragon ship, the slim longship people usually associate with Vikings—their horses had to compete for space with cattle, sheep, timber, grain, weapons, jewelry, tools, clothing, rugs, tapestries, pots, and all other sorts of other household goods. Since most settlers were landed farmers or petty chieftains, the quality of their stock was already high, and of those they brought only their best" (p.147).

The *Landnámabók* or "Book of

Settlements," versions of which survive from late 1200s, was most likely written originally in the early 1100s. The book describes the founding and settlement of Iceland from the late 800s to the 1100s and includes 3000 individual names and 1400 places where they settled.

In 1905, Annandale published *Iceland and the Faroes: Studies in Iceland Life*. Almost 50 years before Watson and Crick discovered the structure of DNA,

Annandale used *Landnámabók* to try to deduce the origin of the Icelandic horse. Per *Landnámabók*, the earliest settlers in Iceland came from two major groups. The majority of the first settlers were Norsemen, originally from Norway, who had occupied pockets of modern Britain including the Shetlands and Faroe Islands. They brought in "Westman" slaves from those islands and settled mainly in the south of the island. About 20 years later, a second batch of settlers, mostly nobles and their households, arrived either directly from Norway or after short stays in the northern Scottish islands, and settled in the north of Iceland. Annandale speculated that both groups brought Shetland pony type stock and Norwegian pony stock into Iceland.

Annandale also mentions that after the conversion of Iceland to Christianity in the early 1000s, Icelanders made pilgrimages to Jerusalem and that ambitious young men took service in the Varangian Guard, the personal bodyguards of the Byzantine emperor from the 9th to the 14th century. He concluded, "In short, it is probable that the original breed of horses in Iceland and the Faroes was of mixed origin, in which the Hebridean and the Scandinavian predominated, though blood from South Europe or even from the African and Asiatic coasts of the Mediterranean may [emphasis added] have contributed to its formation" (p. 175).



Nordland horse. Trollvik Bjarke and Yrne are Nordland geldings from the northern part of Norway, the area of origin of this horse breed. Norse who settled Iceland directly from Norway would have brought similar horses with them. Photo by Wenche Offerdal.



Annandale also highlights the resemblance between native Norwegian stock and the Mongolian pony.

So let's review some of the clues in trying to determine the source of the Icelandic horse. A reading of the historical sources suggests that early settlers to Iceland would have brought the best of their native stock from Norway and the northern British Islands to Iceland. The native stock of Norway probably had some overlapping breeding with the Mongolian pony. And travelers to the East and Spain may have brought back the occasional horse from an Eastern breed. The *Landnámabók* (Brown, 2001) mentions Kinnskaer, or White Cheek, a horse from Eastern Europe or Central Asia that had to be fed grain both summer and winter. So before checking the results of the latest mtDNA research on the Icelandic horse, let's examine how Icelandic horse keeping practices in the challenging Icelandic environment would influence the types of horses brought by the settlers.

## ENVIRONMENTAL CONSTRAINTS

When the early settlers arrived in Iceland, they established most successful homesteads along the more hospitable coastline. Some of the island was uninhabitable—covered by glaciers (11%) and water (6%). The early settlers did find forests and arable land. However, Norse farming and husbandry practices had a devastating effect on the island's ecology. Between the time of settlement and today, almost all of the forest/brush (reduced from 25% to 1% of the surface area of Iceland) and most of the grasslands (reduced from 40% to 22%) were gone. Sterile wasteland increased from 18% to 58% of the island. Loss of topsoil, overgrazing, and too much grazing on the delicate highland fields led to even more ecological disasters (Byock, 2001).

In her investigation of historic Scandinavian horsekeeping practices from 500 BC to 1060 AD, A. Sunkvist discusses the practice common in many parts of Scandinavia, including Iceland, of maintaining free-roaming horse herds in which the majority of horses, when not under use, fend for themselves. Such practices led to "the survival of the fittest." As Sunkvist mentions, the Icelandic *Hrafnkel's Saga* and *The Saga of Gunnlaug*



Icelandic is crisscrossed with rushing glacier streams. Any sort of travel in Iceland until modern times required a rock steady, sensible horse capable of navigating these tricky crossings. Photo by F. Howell, Cornell University Library.



Icelandic horses have always provided transportation across demanding terrain. Circa 1900, these travelers are crossing the glacier Breiðamerkurjökull. Photo by F. Howell, Cornell University Library.

*Ormstungu* discuss how the mares are grouped with selected superior stallions in different valleys—a way of controlling breeding. She states that "the first law ever regulating horse-breeding in Iceland dates as late as 1891 and bans sexually mature colts [running] loose, which can

be interpreted as a way to control the breeding." Certainly these methods were in use in Iceland until fairly recently and, when combined with the great change in Icelandic climate, had a devastating impact on the native horse populations during many years.



Survival of any stock over winter in Iceland was dependent on how much hay could be harvested in the summer. Some of the better riding horses would have received additional care and forage. Haystacks were often roofed with sod to better preserve them. Photo by F. Howell, Cornell University Library.

From about 900 to 1200 AD, Iceland experienced a period of relative warm winters. From 1200 to 1920, the winters were much colder. Particularly bad winters during this time were given names such as “Horse Perishing Winter,” “White Winter,” and the “Great Snow Winter.” Icelandic horses were sometimes fed herring to help them survive the winters. During the 19th century, 30% of the livestock died for every drop in average winter temperature of 1° C. As Björnsson and Sveinsson (2006) explain, “Horses learned that standing motionless, while the worst of the storm passed, made them burn fewer calories and protected them” (38). In addition, volcanic eruptions took their toll. A volcanic eruption in 1783 reduced the Icelandic horse population by 75% and was almost responsible for the island being abandoned. Only the hardest and smartest Icelandic horses survived due to natural selection, and Icelandic farmers were often forced to cull the herds during catastrophic seasons.

When first settled, Iceland contained no large predators (other than the occasional polar bear that drifted onto the island and was quickly hunted down). The only native mammals were the small

Arctic fox and the field mouse. However the Norse settlers themselves could be considered predators. Horses were sacrificed in pagan ceremonies both as funeral offerings and as offerings to the gods. Benjamin’s (2008) comparison of Norse burial practices shows that “of the 316 known pagan graves from Iceland, 113 of them contained horses, which is an astonishing 36%. The ritual was probably introduced by Norwegian settlers, but the practice came to be more common in Iceland than it ever was in Norway (where a mere 7% of pagan graves contained horse burials)” (p. 8). Both men and women were buried with horses—although the practice was more common for men. In addition, horse meat was a staple for the early Icelanders until it was banned when Iceland converted to Christianity in 1000 AD (Brown, 2001). In modern Iceland, horse meat has returned to the dinner table.

Importation of additional livestock, including horses, was impacted by the scarcity of wood. After the initial settlement, Icelanders lacked the means to build many additional ships. Having harvested all trees, the Icelanders’ only source for wood was driftwood that floated up on shore. As Byock (2001) explains, “Even for a journey down the coast, characters in the sagas most frequently resort to long overland horseback rides. An extensive system of horse paths connected the whole island. These led to almost every part of the country, and formed a highly serviceable communications web” (p. 46). Certainly fine riding horses became important in the day-to-day existence of Icelanders. And the lack of extensive road system in Iceland until the mid 1900s resulted in Icelanders continuing to breed for a trotting or ambling horse long after the rest of Europe started breeding only trotting horses.

As Byock (2001) concludes, “The Icelanders were fortunate in their horses. The original settlers imported small Scandinavian horses with thick coats. While continental Europeans bred their horses with Arabian stock in the 13th century to produce larger animals, the Icelanders continued with their small, tough horses, which over the centuries proved well adapted to North Atlantic conditions and Iceland’s uneven terrain” (p. 28).

## ICELANDIC HORSE MTDNA RESEARCH

Now let’s examine how recent mtDNA research supports or contradicts what historical and saga references have suggested are the origins of the Icelandic horse. Jensen, Forster et al. (2002) extracted DNA from 318 unrelated horses representing 25 breeds from the U.S., Austria, Germany, Britain, Germany, Morocco, Spain, and Portugal. Each horse had to have documented ancestry for at least five generations. Additional mtDNA data was used from the GenBank or other publications, creating a total horse population of 652.

Using this data, the researchers were able to create 17 very frequent mtDNA types indicating relationship among breeds. As Jensen and Forster, et al., specify, “The clearest association between cluster and breed is evidenced by cluster C1 ( $n = 48$ ): in our sample, it is geographically restricted to central Europe, the British Isles, and Scandinavia, including Iceland. A total of 17 of 19 documented horses with C1 are northern European ponies (Exmoor, Fjord, Icelandic, and Scottish Highland). Additionally, 14 of 27 undocumented horses with C1 are ponies, including Connemara ponies. The cluster is younger than perhaps 8,000 y[ears], but definitely older than 1,500 y, because C1 was also found in two ancient Viking horses. Furthermore, mtDNA cluster E ( $n = 16$ ) consists entirely of Icelandic, Shetland, and Fjord ponies. Taken together, this suggests a common late glacial or postglacial origin for these pony breeds.”

McCue, Bannasch, et al. (2012) conducted additional mtDNA research on samples representing 14 domestic horse breeds and 18 related species. They found that the Norwegian Fjord, Icelandic, Mongolian, and Belgian clustered together in three dimensions, and Icelandic and Norwegian Fjord horses clustered tightly together in all six dimensions. This may reflect the suggested influence of Mongolian genes in the development of the Norwegian Fjord and subsequent development of the Icelandic horse from Scandinavian stock imported to Iceland. Note that the researchers caution against including the Belgian, a draft breed, as being closely related to the Norwegian Fjord, Icelandic, Mongolian horses, since its history shows that it could have little



relationship to the other breeds.

Björnsson and Sveinsson (2006) present research that the Nordland, a rare Norwegian breed, is also very closely related to the Icelandic. These horses exhibit a very similar conformation and colors to the Icelandic horse and are also gaited. Björnsson and Sveinsson (2006) argue against including the Norwegian Fjord as a direct ancestor of the Icelandic horse, since the conformation and singular coloring of the breed is so different from the conformation and multiple colors of the Icelandic breed.

In summary, recent mtDNA research confirms that the Icelandic horse is closely related to pony breeds such as the Exmoor, Scottish Highland, and Shetland from the northern British Isles, confirming that ancestors of these breeds were brought to Iceland by Norse settlers from these areas. In addition, solid evidence exists that ancestors of the Nordland and Norwegian Fjord were brought by the initial settlers of Iceland from Norway. Norse trading centers in modern-day Sweden had very close trading contacts with what is now Russia, which would help explain the influence of the Mongolian horse on the Norwegian breeds.

Current mtDNA studies show no relationship to the Spanish or Arabian breeds. Certainly, early horse-keeping practices in Iceland would not have supported the feeding of daily grain and hay required by these Eastern breeds for their survival in the harsh conditions of Iceland. Today the Icelandic horse is regarded as a national treasure. Hopefully this review of the history, cultural, and environment factors that led to the development of the Icelandic horse have helped to explain why “The horse is often called Iceland’s best ambassador, an appropriate title as foreigners have fallen in love with it so completely that there are now more Icelandic horses abroad than in Iceland” (Björnsson and Sveinsson, 2006, p. 286).

## REFERENCES:

Achilli, A., Olivieri, A., et al. (2012) Mitochondrial genomes from modern horses reveal the major haplogroups that underwent domestication. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*.

Annandale, N., and Marshall, F. (1905) *Iceland and the Faroes: Studies in Iceland Life*. Clarendon Press, Oxford.



Until modern times, horses in Iceland typically had to fend for themselves with minimal care over the winter. These horses are grazing near Stórálfshvol in Iceland around 1900. Photo by F. Howell, Cornell University Library.

Arabian Horse Association. (2011) Mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA) – What Is It and What Does It Tell Us. AHA Equine Stress, Research and Education Subcommittee on Genetic Disorders.

Benjamin, M. (2008) Horses as Status Symbols: Medieval Icelandic horses as symbols of masculine honor in a one-sexed world. Student paper.

Brown, N.M. (2001) *A Good Horse Has No Color: Searching Iceland for the Perfect Horse*. Stackpole Books, Mechanicsburg, PA.

Björnsson, G., & Sveinsson, H. (2006) *The Icelandic Horse*. Edda Publishing, Reykjavik.

Byock, J. (2001) *Viking Age Iceland*, Penguin Group, London & New York.

Ferguson, R. (2009) *The Vikings: A History*. Penguin Group, London & New York.

Jansen, T., Forster, P., et al. (2002) Mitochondrial DNA and the origins of the domestic horse. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*.

Lindgren, G., Backström, et al. (2004) Limited number of patrilineal lineages in horse domestication. *Nature Genetics*.

McCue, M., Bannasch, D., et al. (2012) A High Density SNP Array for the Domestic Horse and Extant Perissodactyla: Utility for Association Mapping, Genetic Diversity, and Phylogeny Studies. *PLOS Genetics*.

Sunkvist, A. (2002) Herding horses: a model of prehistoric horsemanship in Scandinavia—and elsewhere? *PECUS. Man and animal in antiquity*. Proceedings of the conference at the Swedish Institute in Rome, September 9-12, 2002.

Ryder, A., Fisher, S., et al. (2011). A massively parallel sequencing approach uncovers ancient origins and high genetic variability of endangered Przewalski’s horses. *Genome Biology and Evolution*.

# THE BALD MOUNTAIN BUTT BUSTER

BY ALYS CULHANE

Friday evening, July 20, I stood in the downpour, taking in the sight before me: 57 or so owners scurrying about, filling water jugs, setting up camp, tending to and lunging horses. My eyes were drawn to our campsite. Raudi and Sigg, who were tied up, watched the goings-on. Across the way, Tinni stood tied to another trailer. Hunar, our friend Vickie Talbot's horse, also stood quietly, leg cocked.

I was to ride Raudi, Pete was to ride Sigg, and 15-year-old Emily Wood was to ride Tinni in the weekend-long Bald Mountain Butt Buster Competitive Trail Ride, a bi-yearly, weekend-long event held outside of Wasilla, AK. This isn't an endurance ride; rather horse and rider are judged on their ability to work together in a harmonious fashion over a set distance on a marked trail. The day's rides average twenty miles. Emily was to ride Tinni in the one-day novice class, Pete and I were to ride Sigg and Raudi in the competitive pleasure class, and Vickie was to ride Hunar in the open division.

I suspected that we'd all have stories to tell by the weekend's end. I hoped mine would be good, but I was pessimistic. I'd signed up to do this event two years before, and had scratched a mile



Emily with Tinni. Photo by Alys Culhane.

into it. Riders are generally sent out in pairs, at 30-second intervals. Raudi, who'd been taken aback by the veritable sea of horses, bolted, happily passing one horse then another. She concluded our ride by tossing me into a manure pile. I told friends that I'd do it again, but I was bluffing. What repeatedly came back to mind was the image of me clinging to her back, yelling, "Whoa, easy, whoa-easy-whoa,

whoa, whoa!"

I sent in my registration form this past May, hoping that I'd find good reason to bow out. However, no reason materialized. I quelled my growing fears by reminding myself that things would be different the second time around. First of all, I'd be accompanied by five other Icelandic horse owners, one being my husband, and the other four being



Pete and Alys riding back into camp after the first day's ride. Photo by Cindy Miller.





Riding on the bottom land along the Little Su River, with Pete out front on Sigg, followed by Alys on Raudi and Chuck Miller on Drynfari. Photo by Cindy Miller.

good friends. And secondly, Raudi and I now had more trail experience under our belts. Last year Pete and I rode both her and Sigg from Southern to Northern Colorado, and this year we trained on trails that resembled those in this event. The one crucial difference was that Raudi and I had limited experience riding with larger groups.

### PROPER MANNERS

Pete interrupted my musings, saying that it was time to present our horses to the judges. A veterinarian's assessment would determine if our horses were fit for competition, and also provide her with a baseline for her final evaluation. A horsemanship judge's assessment would determine if our horses had proper trail manners. The veterinary check went better for Raudi and Sigg than did the horsemanship check. Both were ascertained to be sound, hydrated, and fit for the rigors that go hand-in hand with strenuous rides. However, Sigg moved a bit too slowly and Raudi moved a bit too fast for the horsemanship judge's liking. We also both stood on the outside when circling our horses. Sigg fell behind Pete, and Raudi barged ahead.

The exams/trot outs were completed by 9:30 p.m. A two-hour debriefing followed in which the trail master went over Saturday's day-long novice and competitive pleasure routes. I wasn't listening;

rather my attention was focused on the right-hand corner of my map. We were to first head down a semi-residential road, past several homes and a construction site. The trail master's aside was that the initial pace was going to be fast. I told the woman sitting next to me that the one consolation was that the start was seven hours away. She nodded and added, "No one ever gets a good night's sleep at these things."

The other rider was right. Every time I closed my eyes, I saw 57 horses barreling down a gravel road at warp speed. So instead of sleeping, I lay listening to the rain pummel our nylon tent fly. Even so, 6 a.m. Saturday morning came too soon. Pete made breakfast and I did morning chores. After, we groomed, tacked up, and mounted our horses. Raudi was, as she had been two years before, excited about the goings-on. At least, I thought, the route was such that we'd pass the manure barn later on. I glanced over at Tinni, who was eating his morning hay, and wished that I was riding him instead. I'd lent my steady eddy horse to Emily, age 15, for the summer.

I fell in behind Pete, who was attempting to settle an uncharacteristically fidgety Sigg. Raudi, in hopes of upstag-

ing her half-brother, alternated trotting, tolt, pacing, and cantering. I noticed that my legs were trembling uncontrollably. My Little Red Rocket was ready to blast off. Not so Pete's blue dun, who was born wanting to keep both feet on planet earth. We zipped across the field road and then turned onto the gravel road, where Sigg did a series of crow hops. Pete, undaunted, did a series of serpentines. I followed suit, keeping Raudi's head on Sigg's butt. This annoyed Raudi, who wanted to catch up with two enormous pinto Tennessee Walkers. I'd had enough for one day. I tried to articulate this to Pete, but because my throat was dry, words weren't forthcoming.

### THE WORST WAS OVER

I glanced to my left and saw our friends Cindy and Chuck Miller, respectively riding Manadis and Dynafari. We'd talked about riding together the night before. This now seemed unlikely, for maintaining a collective pace was going to be near impossible. We turned left on a dirt road, and then turned right onto a woodsy trail. Raudi slowed, and I breathed deeply, slowing her down further. The trail was both winding and log-strewn, so she now had to think about where she was placing



Chuck Miller on Drynfari watches from shore as Pete, out front on Sigg, and Alys, on Raudi, cross the Little Su River. Photo by Cindy Miller.

her feet. I told her that we had a long weekend ahead of us; however, the worst was over. In response, she snorted and flicked her ears back and forth.

The rest of the morning became a blur in which a few salient details later came to mind. Here and there were hayfields, dotted with white plastic-covered bales, and creek crossings with steep, slippery drop-offs. Here and there were the Open Division's blue-bibbed riders, moving fast and confidently on the ribbon-marked course. And here and there were judges, some visible, some hiding. I remarked to a passing rider who was riding a pony named Merrylegs that the only thing missing was a fox. "Tally Ho," she yelled, as her plucky little POA charged past my dancing steed.

We finally came to a sign that read "Maintain Forward Motion." This indicated that we were now within hailing distance of the first of four pulse and respiration stops. Raudi, liking the field footing, fell into her slow, rocking horse canter. I attempted to slow her by squeezing on the reins, and was met with an angry snort. This was followed by a loud neigh, one in which she announced to the horses at the P and R stop that she was ready to party down. Not surprisingly, her pulse (P) and heart rate (R) were 15 and 4, high; but low enough to continue on. An obstacle test in which we were to mount our horses and back three steps followed. Raudi and I did this perfectly, and no wonder, we'd worked on this daily, for four years.

## UP BALD MOUNTAIN

We continued on, the route taking Pete and me back to camp, where we had 45 minutes to eat and tend to our horses. Next was a strenuous uphill and downhill section on a slippery trail. I wasn't worried about this, for Raudi and I were adept at going up and down slippery hills in a collected fashion. Plus, unlike many other competitors' horses, she was wearing shoes.

Raudi was hard to rate on the uphill stretch, and in fact showed off for a passing stallion by switching her tail and prancing like a parade horse. Then there was Bald Mountain. Up she went, ratta-tat-tat, uphill, digging her hooves into slimy, churned up ground. Perhaps, I thought I should instead take up crocheting. No

surprise, Raudi's hilltop P and R were 19 and 9; consequently she was pulled, and I was informed that her counts would be retaken in another 10 minutes.

I considered the implications of this. I wouldn't be penalized time-wise. But Pete would lose time if he waited for me. And so, if Pete wanted to finish on time, he'd eventually have to go on ahead of me. I knew that Raudi would put up a stink about being separated from Sigg. I had no time to dwell on this, for we'd soon have to contend with a slick downhill trail and several gnarly creek crossings.

## LAST TWO MILES

We had no problem with the afternoon's varied terrain. However, the time-related moment of reckoning reared its ugly head at the final two-mile point, indicated by yet another Maintain Forward Motion Sign. It was here that Pete took off, saying that otherwise he and Sigg would be disqualified. I was aghast, for I'd presumed that we'd stick together. Raudi must have been aghast too, for she neighed for Sigg, who trotted briskly down-trail.

Those last two miles were the most tiring and stressful for me—ever. I dug deep into my tool box, in hopes that I might find ways of keeping Raudi in check. I first pulled forth my mental song list, and after scanning it, began singing my version of "You Are My Sunshine." This was most appropriate, considering that the earlier sprinkle was now a down-pour. Raudi, perhaps realizing that I was merely a singing sack of potatoes, slowed enough for me to reach for other riding-related tools. I sunk my butt into my seat, worked the reins, breathed deeply, and envisioned my legs being like melting chocolate. Raudi fought my efforts tooth and nail, but remained in check.

We arrived back in camp a half-hour later. There, Raudi and I simultaneously spotted Tinni. I did a doubletake, for the horse I'd nicknamed Slo Mo had finished ahead of his herdmate. Raudi and I trotted into the check-in area. Pete, who was all smiles, was there to assist me in getting out of the saddle. He remarked that in the end, Sigg picked up the pace. I wanted to but couldn't be mad at him, for I was pleased that the pair had done so well. Sigg's odd conformation has always caused me great concern, and this time



Pete on Sigg and Alys on Raudi during the first day of the CTR. Photo by Cindy Miller.

was no exception. I was equally pleased, when the veterinarian later declared our mounts to be sound. However, the best news of the day was yet to come.

## BLUE RIBBONS

That evening there was an awards ceremony for the Novice riders. Here it was announced that Emily and Tinni had won two blue ribbons: Emily receiving the blue ribbon for Horsemanship, and Tinni received one for the Best Conditioned Horse. I covered my face with my hands when I heard this news because I didn't want anyone to see that I was crying. The summer before (while being boarded out) Tinni had come down with white line disease. Last fall, I again had to start his training from scratch, by taking him for short walks. We worked up to lengthy rides, and this spring Emily took on his summer conditioning. Indeed, his stellar performance was an incredible accomplishment for all involved.

## ROUTE CHANGES

On Sunday, Pete and I awoke to overcast skies. We soon learned that several riders had bowed out of Day Two of the CTR, citing continued bad weather and trail conditions. Those who'd decided to stick it out soon discovered that the trail master had made several route changes in



the wee hours of the morning. The good news was that I was familiar with the new route. I'd ridden it a few years back on Tinni. The bad news was that we'd have to cross the Little Susitna River, which was at flood stage.

Raudi started out Day Two at a manageable clip, Siggi even more slowly. I was also more relaxed this time, in part because we were from the onset able to keep abreast with Chuck and Cindy. The day before Manadis had tripped, unseating Cindy. But at that moment we were all moving in unison.

The morning was blessedly uneventful. There were no terrain-related mishaps. However, Raudi, having decided to ignore her previous training, refused to sidepass over to, and back from, a nearby tree. And much to the amusement of the horsemanship judge, she went down a

steep embankment backwards.

As for the afternoon, I'd been thinking hard about how to handle P and Rs. This one was at the top of a hill, which was why I insisted that Raudi walk and not run up it. I also took a more proactive stance at the top. I pulled into the lineup, wiped her down with a wet Pack Towel, and fanned her legs and chest with a piece of cardboard. I did TTeam bodywork on her, including leg lifts and ear slides. Her pulse and heart rate were deemed to be 14 and 12, but I was told by the P and R judge that I could go on. I was relieved, for Raudi and I would now be able to finish alongside Siggi and Pete.

### THE RIVER

The infamous river crossing was ahead. I say infamous because a young rider came off her horse during a CTR clinic at this very spot. I watched, open-mouthed, as

the pair were washed into a sweeper. It took 15 minutes or so to rescue both.

My palms began sweating when we came to it, in part because two rescue riders stood on the shore. I said to Pete that the two would not be on hand if crossing this river was a safe activity. Pete wasn't listening; rather he was intent on getting logistical instructions from one of the two safety riders. Seconds later, Siggi and Pete plunged into the water, with Raudi and me following. I looked up and saw Vickie on Hunar—the pair were standing quietly on the far bank. Vickie and I had logged considerable trail miles together preparing for this event. She was correct in assuming that her waiting for us would provide Raudi and Siggi with directional incentive.

The remaining day's ride included two bridge crossings, another off-bank river crossing, a handful of creek drop-offs, and several more miles of tree-rooted trail. Raudi and my grand finale was the manure pit crossing. I breathed a sigh of relief seeing that there were no cows behind the mangled paneling; rather, this time, there were a handful of frisky ponies. Raudi, maybe for old time's sake, did a perfect 180, bolting back down the trail a hundred yards. This time, I stayed put and pushed her on through the squashy manure.

### MORE AWARDS

We four Icelandic riders arrived back in camp, where the Icelandic horses were dubbed the "energizer bunnies." The Competitive Pleasure and Open award ceremonies took place that evening. Chuck Miller and Dynafari won the Competitive Pleasure Horse Conditioning Award, and Vickie Talbot and Hunar took sixth in the Open and Horsemanship and Best Conditioned Horse categories. Neither Pete, Cindy, nor I placed. This was of little consequence. Ours was also an amazing accomplishment: Of the 57 who entered this ride, only 34 finished.

I remembered what I'd thought two days before, that we'd all have stories to tell at the conclusion of this event. The abbreviated version of mine was that I'd successfully completed a CTR after previously bowing out of one, and on a horse that I'd trained. Most importantly, I knew that this would bode well for Raudi and our future riding-related endeavors.



Chuck Miller on Drynfari (right), Pete on Siggi, and Alys on Raudi in a spillover channel of the Little Su River. Photo by Cindy Miller.



# A TEXAS TRAIL RIDE

BY MARYASHLEY MCGIBBON

Through my job as Equestrian and Marketing Director of YMCA Camp Flaming Arrow in Hunt, TX, I am blessed to have no shortage of horses to ride. But the rugged little breed from Iceland caught my attention inexplicably several years ago. My personal journey with the Icelandic horse was supposed to extend over many months, as I searched through the relatively sparse number of Texas Icelandic horse breeders and enthusiasts for one who would allow me to take a few lessons and make sure my interest in the breed could translate into ownership. Instead, it was only a matter of days before I found a neighbor with more Icelandics than she wanted—including a 12-year-old blue dun registered gelding, Tobbi from Rhythmhill. He had only been under saddle for two years but had proven himself to be sensible, reliable, and willing. A two-week trial agreement was reached, and Tobbi came home to my barn. Only a week passed before I gave his former owner a check: There was no way I wanted to be without this plucky little gelding, and I had the perfect job in mind for “Toto.”

For those unfamiliar with the North American Trail Ride Conference (or NATRC), it is a long-distance competitive trail riding organization founded in 1961. Good horsemanship and conditioning are paramount to the sport, which relies on qualified veterinary and horsemanship judges, and careful metabolic and soundness checks, to score riders and their horses as they navigate up to 35 miles a day for competitors in the Open division, or up to 24 for Novice riders. I am still very much a Novice rider, having competed with my older Appaloosa gelding since 2010. Knowing that gelding’s retirement was nigh, I had been searching for a horse that demonstrated stamina, sensibility, willingness, and character. Though not a traditional choice in a demanding sport that can favor the Arabian or half-Arab or similar breeds, I believe that the Icelandic horse can be a contender when properly conditioned and trained.



MaryAshley McGibbon and her Icelandic horse Tobbi from Rhythmhill competed in the NATRC Region 4 Benefit Ride at the LBJ Grasslands in Decatur, TX in September. Photo by Jim Edmondson, opticalharmonics.com.

## SUMMER IN SOUTH TEXAS

I spent the hottest summer months here in South Texas riding Toto almost daily. While we didn’t rack up tons of miles, I slowly acclimatized him to the sun and heat of a Texas summer. We practiced navigating natural trail obstacles and also developing near-perfect ground manners,

which would allow a vet judge to examine him at any point during competition. Most of all, we built a friendship and a bond that plays into the heart of the sport of distance riding—when the trail gets truly tough and grueling, it is much easier to face with a mount who is also a trusted companion. It was easy to buddy up to Toto and build that relationship—my



staff often teased me that he not only was named after a famous friendly dog, but he also usually acted like more of a pup than a pony.

During the first week of September, I hauled Toto almost 300 miles north to Decatur, TX at the LBJ Grasslands. There we competed in the NATRC Region 4 Benefit Ride, our first together. The ride begins with check-in on Friday, where each horse is evaluated for soundness and good health. That evening a ride briefing is held, where ride management passes out maps of the trail and the time table that we need to stick to while riding. An NATRC ride is not a race—riders must finish within a 30-minute window, and are penalized for being over or under that time. Pacing your mount is key.

## OBSTACLES

Saturday morning brings a 5:00 a.m. wakeup call. Horses are timed out around 7:00 a.m., and Toto and I hit the trail toward the back of the pack with another first-time horse, a tall and elegant Andalusian mare. Our team of mismatched breeds was quite a sight! We were slow to start, as the mare was young and green, but after the first obstacle—a judged downhill observation—we were able to switch to a ground-covering trot.

Toto is technically five-gaited, however his tölt has not been well-developed and he prefers the trot. Until this ride, I had experienced a slow, casual trot that sometimes bordered on laziness. My little horse finally revealed his secret weapon out there on the Grasslands—a trail-eating, hooves-flying, easy-to-post whirlwind of a trot. Even the long-legged Andalusian often had to push into a canter in order to follow my little Icelandic's trot. Unfortunately, some erroneous navigation and our slow start had put my human partner and I out of our maximum time and in danger of losing points on a late finish. We had to hurry, but not to overstress our horses because of our mistakes.

A judged mounting obstacle proved easy for Toto and me, as his 13.2-hand frame is the envy of other riders. I'd taught him the verbal command of "stand," which results in him putting all four feet in their most stable position. Unfortunately, my dismount onto a cinder block was flawed as I totally misjudged just how close to the ground I was. No



Tobbi and MaryAshley at a P&R stop, with Tobbi's tack pulled off in order to cool him down faster. Photo by Jim Edmondson, opticalharmonics.com.

matter my error, Toto was a ham for the judges and caused laughter and interested questions along the trail. Other judged obstacles—which are nearly all a surprise and not communicated to the riders beforehand—included a mounted gate, an uphill navigation, a trot-by, a map-reading question from the horsemanship judge, two back-ups, and an in-hand back (surprisingly the only thing we completely failed at, which just means more homework for us!)

At one obstacle with the vet judge present, we were asked to walk forward to touch a makeshift marker (a fluorescent green Koozie) and then back straight through two more. Before I could even ask for the back, Toto had reached out and retrieved the Koozie in his mouth, turning defiantly to the judges as if to say, "There! Did it! With no help from you humans!" None of our obstacles were perfect, but I was pleased with our attempts. Toto, who often responds to the unfamiliar by backing up quickly and warily eyeing the offender, was willing and patient for many new things we had never seen before: deep sand, bridge crossings, loose cattle, and dozens of well-designed cowboy gates.

## BIGGEST CHALLENGE

Our biggest challenge of an NATRC ride proved to be the pulse & respiration check, or P&R. In researching the breed, I had come across several mentions of

people who attempted to do endurance with their Icelandics (most notably, accomplished AERC competitor, John Parke and his horse Remington) and often found that their horses panted with greater frequency than the average horse, even when not displaying an abnormally high pulse. The anatomy of the Icelandic horse is partially responsible, with their smaller capacity to take in air (think of the comparatively huge heart girths and nostrils, and long tracheas, of the Arabian.) But temperature certainly is a factor, as a horse who is panting is often trying to dissipate heat. While I had completely body-clipped Toto for the first time in preparation for the ride, and we were used to riding in the high, dry temperatures at home, the higher humidity and deep sand trails of the Grasslands were a big challenge.

We did get held at one P&R for 10 minutes on Sunday, waiting for Toto's respiration to go down. His heart rate was elevated, but not to levels of concern. I was devastated by the setback, and consulted the vet judge, who checked his other metabolics and assured me that my horse was more than ready to continue. At the very back of the pack of riders, we finished with less than two minutes to spare, logging about 35 miles in two days. Later I came to find that a surprising number of horses had to be pulled due to various mishaps on the trail, rider navigational error, and exhausted riders, and because of our perseverance, Toto won a third place ribbon in our division and I also won third place in the horsemanship category.

Through the sport of distance riding, I have come to learn just how much heart God packed into the Icelandic horse. There were multiple moments on the ride when I felt like I'd bitten off more than I should have, and it was my little horse who pointed his nose down the trail and took off at his gentle canter, reminding me that we were fully capable of finishing. Since our first ride, we have completed a second, and now have over 70 logged competitive miles with NATRC. My goal is to bring him to 1,000 by the end of the decade. Toto has told me he is more than capable, providing I can be as good of a partner to him as he is to me.

For more information on NATRC, visit [www.natrc.org](http://www.natrc.org).

# THE HELMET ISSUE

BY ALEX PREGITZER

**T**o wear or not to wear ... a riding helmet? Is that really a question? When most of us grew up, nobody wore a riding helmet. Or a biking helmet. Or a skiing helmet. Somehow, we all magically survived. I have no idea how or why but something deep inside me refuses to think the fact that I got away without brain trauma was because I did *not* wear a helmet. The statistics are plainly not in favor of that thought.

In my early twenties, I started riding horses at a big facility and the owner suggested I should wear a helmet. Wait. "Suggested" goes like this: "Either you wear a helmet riding my horses at all times or you won't be riding my horses." Plain and simple. My then-boyfriend bought me a brand new riding helmet and spent what seemed like a fortune, asking me to please wear it at all times when mounted.

I have been riding with a helmet ever since. Possibly because the then-boyfriend

is the now-husband remembering that promise? Unlikely. Possibly because I have since witnessed and experienced a number of riding accidents? More likely. Possibly because I am getting older and presumably wiser? Who knows.

Because there is not much black and white in my life, I would not go as far as saying *never*, but if I ride and if I make the rules, I wear a riding helmet. Anybody riding any of my horses has to wear a riding helmet. Students have to wear riding helmets no matter who they ride. Other people can do whatever they like, but I may buy them.

## HELMET FACTS

If you don't routinely wear a helmet, I hope these statistics on head injuries while horseback riding from the Equestrian Medical Safety Association will be your wake-up call:

- Approximately 20 percent of horse-related injuries occur on the ground and not while riding.
- Most riding injuries occur while pleasure riding.
- The most common reason for riders to be admitted to a hospital is a head injury.
- The most common cause of death for riders is a head injury.
- Riders are more likely to suffer head trauma than football players, soccer players, or boxers.
- There are no brain transplants available.
- Horseback riders have a higher serious injury rate than motorcycle riders: A motorcyclist suffers a serious injury every 7,000 hours of riding; a horseback rider suffers a serious injury every 350 hours of riding.
- A fall from two feet can cause permanent brain damage. A horse can elevate a rider eight feet or more above the ground.
- A human skull can be shattered by an impact of 4 to 6 mph. Horses can gallop at 40 mph.
- A rider who has had one head injury



Young riders nowadays have many choices when it comes to helmet colors and styles. Photo by Alex Pregitzer.

has a 40 percent chance of suffering a second head injury. Children, teens, and young adults are most vulnerable to sudden death from second impact syndrome, which is severe brain swelling as a result of suffering a second head injury before recovering from the first head injury.

- Those who survive with brain injury may suffer epilepsy, intellectual and memory impairment, and personality changes.
- Hospital costs for an acute head injury can be \$25,000 per day. Lifetime care costs can easily exceed \$3 million. There is no funding for rehabilitation outside the medical setting.



Children, teens, and young adults are most vulnerable to complications from brain injuries. They need us to be good role models for them. Photo by Alex Pregitzer.



Think helmets are ugly? Think again. Our friend Janine is proof that a helmet can look very classy and will make a professional rider look even more professional. Photo by Alex Pregitzer.





No matter how safe the horse may be, it is a good idea to ride with a helmet no matter what your age, your level of experience, or where you are riding. Here world-class rider Ásta Covert rides Dynjandi frá Dalvík in the May CIA World Ranking Show in Santa Ynez, CA. Photo by Sarah Ziller.

- Helmets work. Most deaths from head injuries can be prevented wearing ASTM (American Society for Testing Materials), SEI (Safety Equipment Institute) approved helmets that fit correctly and have the harness firmly attached. Other types of helmets, including bike helmets, are inadequate.
- Racing organizations require helmets. As a result, jockeys now suffer fewer head injuries than pleasure riders. The US Pony Club lowered their head injury rate 29 percent with mandatory helmet use. Britain's hospital admission rate for equestrians fell 46 percent after helmet designs improved and they came into routine use.
- The American Academy of Pediatrics, The American Medical Association's Committee on Sports Medicine, the Canadian Medical Association, and the American Medical Equestrian Association/Safe Riders Foundation recommend that approved, well-fitted, and secured helmets be worn on all rides by all horseback riders.

### **SAFETY STANDARDS**

Wearing an ASTM/SEI approved riding helmet that fits properly may prevent head injury. Notice I say it *may*. It also may not. But chances are, as the statistics show, it will help. And the helmet is not going

to do any harm. Helmets are not attractive and they are not cool in the summer, but newer styles are more attractive and less hot and bulky.

The American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) writes safety standards for products that are risk-related, and the Safety Equipment Institute (SEI) ensures that manufacturers comply with the standards. Certified helmets are put through a number of tests specifically related to horseback riding. Other types of helmets are inadequate, as they are certified for their specific sport alone. For a current list of helmets certified by the Safety Equipment Institute to ASTM standard F1163, please visit the Safety Equipment Institute website at [www.seinet.org](http://www.seinet.org).

### **NO BRAIN TRANSPLANTS**

Still not convinced? I discussed the topic of wearing helmets in the *Quarterly* committee and with some friends. Brain transplants might not exist, but we can learn from other people's mistakes. Here are some of my friends' experiences:

Andrea: "I fell off my horse on an asphalt road years ago. I tore all the ligaments in my spine, had burns from my synthetic pullover melting into my shoulder and back, had a hematoma in my hip

joint, abrasions, etc. My helmet cracked in three places. It had a hole an inch and a half in diameter where I hit a rock in the road with the back of my head. I kept the helmet. It cracked instead of my head."

Marie: "I never wore a helmet because my head was too big and they always ended up hurting my head. The two most significant things that changed my mind were buying a 17.3-hand Thoroughbred that was afraid of people and reared (who ended up being a wonderful Grand Prix horse by the way), and Courtney King Dye's accident. Courtney was a beautiful young girl who had everything going for her, she had a beautiful position on a horse, the perfect rider's body, and she was extremely talented. She rode on the Olympic team for the US and usually wore a helmet. One day in Florida while on a training horse she didn't have a helmet on. The horse slipped and they both fell. Three years later she is now trying for a spot on the US Olympic team again and that is truly amazing. The heartbreaking part is that she will be trying out for the Para Olympic team and will only be riding at a walk because that is all she can do now."

Anne: "Many years ago (approximately 15), the professional Icelandic rider Baddi (Baldvin Ari Guðlaugsson) started riding with a helmet all of the time. When I asked him about the change, he said that a couple of professional riders had terrible accidents riding without helmets. One died, one was paralyzed. Both were on safe sensible horses. Baddi said, 'It's not the young crazy horse who produces the terrible accident. On that horse you are alert to everything. The bad accidents happen on horses that are familiar and safe because you're completely relaxed and don't see the little thing that causes the accident.' On the 'helmets are ugly' issue, I have to repeat my stepson's comment: 'However unattractive helmets are, they aren't nearly as unattractive as drooling.' I had skull fractures as a result of an accident at a time when I scorned helmets. I was susceptible to seizures for about eight months and still have almost no sense of smell. Sometimes intrepid is just another word for stupid."

Pamela: "A friend and I were riding through the woods. I was talking and not paying attention and ran my head right into a tree limb. I dented the helmet but

# YOUTH: COMPETING

## FRIENDSHIP AT THE FEIF YOUTH CUP • BY QUINN THOMASHOW

One crisp Sunday about three years ago, I remember my life changing for good. That morning I had been foxhunting. After getting scratched by tree branches and having mud flung into my face by the tremendously strong hind legs of my mother's Percheron, I was invited to get on my mother's friend's Icelandic. I had never really known of the Icelandic horse until this day. I jumped on Mel's back and cantered up and down the road. The next seven words to come out of my mouth would put my life into a spiral of excitement. I looked up at my mom with an enormous smile on my face and said, "From now on, I am riding Icelandic horses."

From then on I trained hard to become the best Icelandic horse rider I could be. When I heard about the FEIF Youth Cup, I committed myself to qualifying. A couple of months after I had sent in my application, I got a phone call in the middle of history class. I picked up the phone and my teacher covered her ears. As I stared at my teacher with a puzzled look, my mother on the phone announced to me that I was going to Germany. I broke down. Tears dripped onto my lips, the taste in my mouth salty and



Rain during the opening ceremonies didn't dampen the spirits of the USIHC's Youth Cup Team, left to right, Quinn Thomashow, team leader Jasmine Ho (behind the sign), Madison Prestine, and Ayla Green on Lukas vom Basselthof. Photo by Scott Prestine.

savoring. I couldn't believe that I, the girl who used to ride a donkey in a western saddle, galloping with no reins, was now going to represent the USIHC in Verden, Germany, to compete with the best young Icelandic horse riders in the world. It couldn't be possible. But it was.

The day I set foot in Germany my heart pounded. Little did I know I would

soon meet my best friends. I arrived at the Youth Cup with the American team and the Faroe Island team. Scared out of my mind, I checked in my horse and gave her everything she needed, and went to my room.

As the days passed, I met a tremendous number of kids my age who shared the exact love for these horses that I do. Being able to meet kids who finally understood the concept—who cherished the relationship these horses have with us—was a true breath of fresh air.

Too soon everything was over. The last day was full of emotion and tears. I've never made such close friendships with other people in such a short amount of time. The morning I left the Youth Cup was unforgettable and always will be.

The trip was amazing! But I wouldn't have been able to do it without help from so many people. I want to thank everyone who helped me raise money for my trip. Thank you to the USIHC and to my parents, who put in so much time and effort. Thank you to Sue for starting me in the Icelandic horse world! The biggest thank-you goes to Silver Maple Icelandic Horse Farm in Tunbridge, VT and especially to



Kathleen Monsef competing on Holmsteinn at the 2012 Kraftur Show. Photo by Kathy Sierra.



trainer Jana Meyer, who really pushed me to become a better rider each and every day.

Before this trip I knew nothing about the Faroe Islands. I hadn't even heard of them. Now I am Skyping girls from there, planning trips to see them again. The close friendships I made with the other kids at Youth Cup was unimaginable. It truly isn't about competition, it's about what you take back from this experience. By attending the Youth Cup, I have become a better person. I am more appreciative of what is around me and of the friends we make every day. I wish everyone could have this type of life-changing moment, because it truly does make you a more beautiful person.

### **COURAGE AT THE KRAFTUR SHOW BY KATHERINE MONSEF**

A year ago, I broke my leg when I fell off a horse. It took courage for me to do lots of things this year. Having a surgery right away, with a second one planned for April, was very tough. I was on crutches most of the year, but at the barn every day watching my friends and neighbors ride. I longed to get back on a horse again. The day that our horse Viska came to California I still couldn't ride. But I went to the barn where she was staying. All I could do was bathe her. Then she rolled on the lead line anyway.

I finally started riding again, but soon enough it was April and I had to go back to the hospital for my second surgery. I was not fully healed by the time of the CIA World Ranking show. But I headed down to Santa Ynez to watch my mom and sister. My sister, Catherine Monsef, was recognized for good and harmonious riding! My mom let me dress up as a mermaid and ride in the costume



The group of FEIF Youth Cup riders who trained at Basselhof included the American and Faroese teams. Photo by Scott Prestine.



Madison Prestine competing at the 2012 FEIF Youth Cup in Germany on Drottning von Espenau. Photo by Scott Prestine.

class, and Holmi was my rock. The show seemed so long watching everyone else ride, but once the show was finished I got to start with lessons again. Over the

summer I worked hard riding Holmsteinn preparing for the Kraftur show in Watsonville. I was going to get to show for the first time!

Watsonville was so exciting. It was my first show and I did really well. I was nervous the week before the show but once I got on the track to practice, it was a blast. One of the best rides ever. The next day I waited forever helping out other people until it was my turn to shine. I was so happy to score 6.7 for tölt. On the second day, I got the first place award overall for beginner tölt. The judge told me what I needed to work on, and we got to take a victory lap. We were trotting and tölting at first, but ended up cantering—one of my first times cantering since I fell off. It was so much fun, especially getting to be with all of my friends. I can't wait to go to the next show!



Ayla Green on Lukas vom Basselthof at the 2012 Youth Cup. Photo by Scott Prestine.



Quinn Thomashow riding Rökkvadis vom Hof Halali at the 2012 Youth Cup. Photo by Scott Prestine.

# APASSIONATA

BY LAURA BENSON

When I was asked to write about my travels with Apassionata, I never imagined I would be writing the things I have to say now. “Apassionata: The Beginning” was to be an 18-month, 66-city tour with 45 horses and riders of different disciplines. It was a surreal show of the equestrian arts, with incredible choreography, music, and lighting. I have never experienced a horse-related production of this quality before, and I have been in many horse performance shows.

But what we thought was the beginning of something grand was quickly snuffed out due to lack of funds. The show was cancelled after only a few performances. It’s been difficult to move on, almost like a parental divorce. But the friendships I made were strong. The connections I made to other professionals in the horse business, as well as in the tour industry and media, were priceless, so I cannot say it was all for nothing.

I was looking forward to writing of our many adventures on the road. Alas, all I have to give you are a few random thoughts I scribbled along the way, thinking I had much more time to tell stories.

## RIDING WITH FIRE

I arrived in Kentucky on Monday, May 28, to begin practice with my team. My first priority was to see my horse Stjarni, who came out a few weeks before to get trained with the lights and fire that we use in the show. (He was not fazed by any of it.)

During the day, my teammates, Caeli, Leó, and Aníta taught me our drill pattern, first on foot and then on horseback. After a full day, we went home to dinner, then headed back to practice with the sparklers in the dark. When we pulled up to the barn there was a thin layer of mist covering the fields, and the fireflies were blinking in full force. It was very dramatic. Stjarni was not in the least bit tense as Leó put the sparkler boots on, only excited. He loves the fire! He was perfectly calm underneath me, with ears pricked forward and jaw relaxed.



With sparklers on their legs, the Icelandics looked magical tolt through the fog at Apassionata. Photo by Bjarni Guðmundsson.

We walked around the arena first, the sparklers crackling beneath us, and then quickly moved into tölt. Stjarni glided along like we were just out for a normal trail ride. We rode amid the fireflies and the fog for about four minutes. Stjarni seemed disappointed when the sparklers fizzled out. We practiced again on Tuesday night, and then on Wednesday it was time to hit the road. One of the four giant trucks that haul the horses for Apassionata came to pick us up at the farm and take us to the hub at Blue Diamond Stables in Ohio, where we would meet the rest of the crew.

## LIFE ON THE ROAD

Here is how our weekly schedule worked: Our shows were generally Friday to Sunday, with two performances on Saturday. We usually left for a venue on Thursday morning around 6 a.m. We loaded up all 45 horses on the four semis; a fifth semi carried our tack and horse gear. On the tour, each Équipe or team has a mini van for our use in Ohio and to travel between shows. On this particular trip, our destina-

tion was East Rutherford, NJ, about a 10 to 11-hour drive. Leó and I did the majority of the driving and had a lot of fun being silly to keep each other awake.

Upon arrival we made sure all the temporary stables were set up and ready to go, with hay, bedding, and water. In New Jersey, the horses were stabled underground in the backstage of the IZOD center. Offloading the horses from the trailers down the long concrete ramp underground was definitely an experience!

Once the horses were settled in and all the gear offloaded, we headed to catering for some much needed food. This was five-star catering: an endless variety of food for every meal, complete with dessert and a cappuccino machine. Even apples and carrots for the horses (or bread for the Icelandics)! Then it was back to the hotel to try and get some sleep. Of course we ended up in the bar for a bit beforehand to relax. Usually someone from every team was there, the crew members, even the truck drivers. It was a good time to unwind and open up to other members of the tour.





In Baltimore, the Icelandics were stabled in the kitchens, where Leó did an emergency shoeing job on Stjarni. Photo by Aníta Margaret Aradóttir.

Friday morning, we were up early and doing TV interviews (sometimes at 5 a.m.!). Then each of the five teams had a practice time, with a dress rehearsal around 3 or 4 p.m. In between was make-up and wardrobe, whenever Cathy Ratcliffe, our extraordinary make-up artist, could fit us in. We also had to prepare the sparklers—well, Leó prepared them and we mostly just got in his way!

Then we put on the show. On Saturday we had two shows, a matinee and an evening show, so it was a bit tiring, but we still made it fun. On Sunday we had a matinee, and then it was time to tear down and load up all the equipment, leaving only the horses to load onto the trailers on Monday morning. On Monday morning, we drove back to the hub in Ohio on very little, if any, sleep. We

had Tuesday and Wednesday “off,” but this time was spent taking care of the horses, doing laundry, cleaning tack, and training. Wednesday night we loaded everything up and prepared for an early morning departure to the next show. This was the life of the road and I loved every minute of it.

### **BACKSTAGE**

The backstage area of this show was a sight to be seen. We had a 20 to 25-meter circle of sand brought in to use as a warm-up area. Now imagine at any given time, and sometimes all at once, eight Lusitanos doing canter pirouettes and passage and Spanish walk, another in-hand practicing his piaffe and levade, six horses being lunged at once (by the same person!), four Icelandics racing around,

possibly a giant Breton trotting in and out of this chaos with a crazy Frenchman playing practical jokes on everyone, a Friesian quadrille thundering around in trot and trick riders standing in a pyramid on two horses! All in that circle! The truly unbelievable part is that it was all done without any collisions. The dance was harmonious in all its chaos, and it will forever be a mystery to me how it all just seemed to work.

We also had people changing in and out of costumes, crew people running around like mad, dancers warming up, and miscellaneous riders who weren’t currently occupied holding horses for someone else. The excitement backstage was always high. The horses knew the music well and began to anticipate their acts. We played lots of practical jokes and laughed with each other, encouraged each other before our performances, consoled each other when things didn’t go well. Backstage was filled with energy, nerves, pride, and passion for the show we put on.

Because we only had one act, Team Iceland helped out quite a bit. Aníta, Caeli, and I were the “pony wranglers” for Laurent, who had three miniature horses in his act. These little stallions were terrors! They bit, kicked, spun, screamed, reared, and tried to challenge the large horses. We definitely had our hands full. Whenever I took mine out of his stall, he collected himself up and literally trotted in passage beside me, as if he were a high school dressage horse.

Leó was in charge of handling Naer, the giant Breton, and Basile the donkey for Laurent, since all his acts were so close together. We also helped Team Valença from Portugal hold their Lusitanos during costume and horse changes.

Beyond the “warm-up ring” was a curtain and a small area behind the main backdrop known as the Black Box. This is where we prepared to enter the stage. There was an atomic clock that counted us down for when the doors opened. When we entered here, we had already rigged the protective boots and sparklers on the horses’ legs and warmed up. We were ready to be lit on fire! We usually had about four people light us up, as it has to be done very quickly and all at the same time so that our sparklers would last the entirety of our act. Nazari, the Ukrainian trick rider, was the best at lighting us

up: He could light two horses at once. He never missed a show, even though he had his own acts to think about.

## SHOWTIME

The horses dance with anticipation, ears pricked and nostrils aflame. They are not scared. They are excited. The difference is clear. The clock counts down, the music cues up, I look at my teammates, we all nod: We are ready!

The doors slide open. A bed of fog covers the ground with thousands of shining lights reflecting across its billowing momentum. As we enter, the crowd always gasps. I don't think they ever expect to see horses with fire attached to their legs, ridden so slow and calmly. The setting really is ethereal. The music, the lights, the fire, the fog, and amidst it all, four Viking horses rhythmically tölting in unison as if it were any other day on the job. They are excited, just as we are, but they are calm.

Unfortunately, four minutes goes by very quickly, and it is over too soon. We come out of the Black Box quickly to make room for the next act, remove our horses' boots, and put them to relax in their stalls before the grand finale and curtain call. In the Finale each team makes one introduction lap around the arena with their name up on the big screen, and then we all parade in together, circling around each other and finally lining up to face the audience. We make lots of faces at each other. Every time I ride in, Gary, who is head crew and in charge of my door, pretends to conduct the final orchestral music, which I personally am not a fan of because it sounds like the end of a Disney movie. He, of course, decided to name it "Laura's Song," since I love it so much. Every show he says, "Get ready for Laura's Song everyone!" As we all ride out, the crew is lined up and high fives us all.

## BALTIMORE

We arrived in Baltimore at 5:30 p.m. on June 8. The First Mariner Arena where we would perform was right in the heart of downtown. The horses arrived around 7:30, and by that time we had gotten 40 stalls set up in the Arena's tiny parking lot and five stalls for our Icelandics—wait for it—backstage in the kitchen! It was pretty funny. The Icelandics enjoyed all the attention from the staff and were out of

the heat, so it was kind of nice. The best part was that Leó had to do an emergency shoeing job on Stjarni, so he just whipped out the farrier's kit right there. Everyone got a kick out of it.

Baltimore ended up being the craziest and best weekend I have ever had. Our performances were very tight, the crowds were good, and the practical jokes were wild and out of control! If we had only known it would be our last performance. But maybe it's good we didn't.

Sunday night we went out in downtown Baltimore—cast and crew—and it was a night to remember. The next day,

upon arrival at our hub in Blue Diamond Stables in Ohio, after our horses were put away and cared for, we were rounded up onto the front porch. We were exhausted from travel and sleeplessness. The words we heard fell heavy on our hearts. The tour would no longer go on. The company had lost its funding and was bankrupt. Still I go through moments of grief over what was, but I try and focus on the fact that I was lucky to do it at all. I still dream one day we can ride together again. Who knows, maybe we will.



Laura Benson and two of the Apassionata horses looking like ordinary Icelandics. Photo by Anita Margaret Aradóttir.



# BOOK REVIEW

BY CHRISTINA ROMANO

Readers of the *Quarterly* know me as the magazine's cartoonist, but I am a lifelong student of history. In 2003 an Icelandic horse came into my life unexpectedly. Searching for information on Icelandic horses, I found *A Good Horse Has No Color: Searching Iceland for the Perfect Horse* on Amazon and sent Nancy Marie Brown a fan letter with a cartoon. The rest, as they say, is history. If you haven't already, I encourage you to read this book, especially if you haven't traveled to Iceland. With an honest tone, Nancy takes us through a change of mindset on what she wants in an Icelandic horse. Along the way we learn about the farms, farmers, and horse brokers, and the history, landscape, and myths of Iceland.

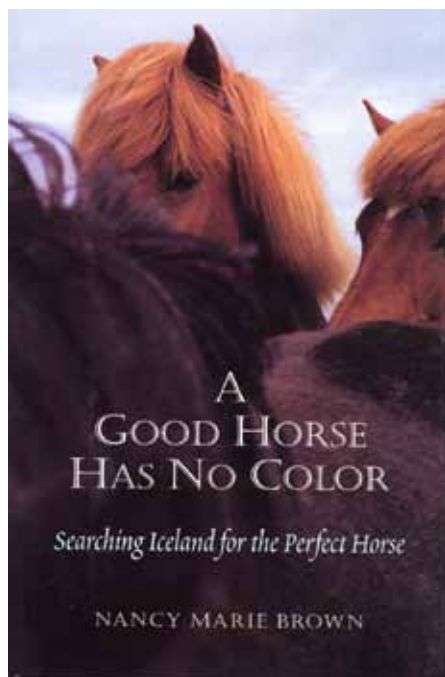
The names of our Icelandic horses are sometimes rooted in those myths, which is the subject of Nancy Marie Brown's latest book, *Song of the Vikings: Snorri and the Making of Norse Myths*. As she explains in her blog, "Horses were sacred in many of the old religions of northern Europe. When Iceland was discovered in about 870, the gods most Scandinavians worshipped, according to Snorri Sturluson's *Edda*, rode Shining One, Fast Galloper, Silver Forelock, Strong-of-Sinew, Shaggy Fetlock, Golden Forelock, and



## SONG OF THE VIKINGS

SNORRI AND THE MAKING OF NORSE MYTHS

NANCY MARIE BROWN



Lightfoot. The gods of Day and Night drove chariots drawn by Skinfaxi ('Shining Mane') and Hrimfaxi ('Frosty Mane'): The brightness of the sun was the glow of the day-horse's mane, while dew was the saliva dripping from Hrimfaxi's bit. The goddess Gna had a horse that could run 'through the air and over the sea.' Called Hoof-Flourisher, it was sired by Skinny-sides on Breaker-of-Fences. The most famous horse was Odin's eight-legged steed, Sleipnir."

Icelandic horses are not the subject of *Song of the Vikings*, which is mainly a biography of Snorri Sturluson, but the book tells many of the humorous, exciting, and bloody tales that still fill the Icelandic people's hearts. As Nancy states on her blog, she first looked into the Norse myths when writing *A Good Horse Has No Color*. In 1999, she published a story about the horses of the gods in the *Quarterly*; shortly afterwards she joined the magazine's editorial committee. She is now co-chair of the *Quarterly* Committee and co-editor of the *Quarterly*.

### MEDIEVAL HISTORY

But *Quarterly* readers may not know the full range of Nancy's literary endeavors and her devotion to medieval history. I've

had the pleasure of reading her three historical books, all of which bring the Middle Ages to life. Though these three books are not about Icelandic horses, understanding Iceland's early settlement, politics, and culture can help prepare us to respect and better enjoy Iceland when we do visit. For those not planning to travel to Iceland, but who have an Icelandic horse or many, knowing the history of Iceland will only bring greater appreciation of your chosen horse breed.

In *The Far Traveler: Voyages of a Viking Woman* (2007), Nancy describes the life of Gudrid, who lived in Iceland around the year 1000. Her adventures include going to Greenland, Vinland (North America), and even to Rome! *The Far Traveler* chronicles Gudrid's life as taken from various Icelandic sagas, as well as from several archeological digs, particularly one at her reported homestead at Glaumbaer in northern Iceland.

In 2010, Nancy published *The Abacus and the Cross: The Story of the Pope Who Brought the Light of Science to the Dark Ages*. While not directly connected to Iceland, Pope Sylvester II lived at the same time as Gudrid the Far-Traveler; it is too bad he died before she had a chance to visit him on her pilgrimage to Rome. As a young man, Sylvester helped bring Arabic numerals and computational methods to northern Europe though his invention of a new kind of abacus board. As the leading astronomer of his day, he taught his students how to make and use astrolabes: He had learned the necessary mathematics in Islamic Spain. Astrolabes would have been of great interest to Viking navigators. Their existence also underscores the fact that all educated persons in the Middle Ages knew the earth was round.

### THE TOLKIEN CONNECTION

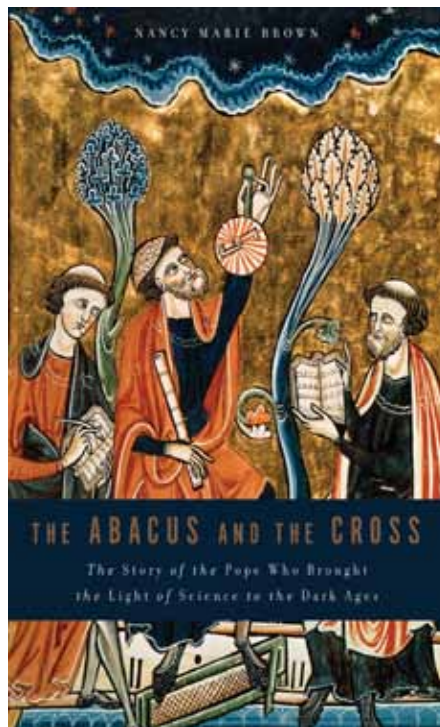
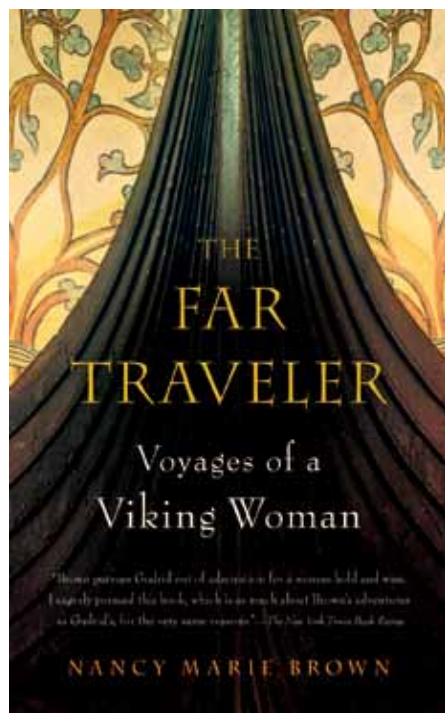
Nancy's new book, *Song of the Vikings*, focuses on the life of Iceland's famous saga writer, Snorri Sturluson. In the introduction, Nancy describes how she was drawn to studying Icelandic literature through the works of J.R.R. Tolkien, author of *The Hobbit*. She made the connection in a college class on comparative mythology.

“To learn about the gods of Scandinavia,” she writes, “I was assigned *The Prose Edda*, a collection of mythological tales drawn from the work of the 13th-century Icelandic writer Snorri Sturluson.” In Snorri’s work, she recognized many of Tolkien’s names, including “Gandalf.” Nancy ended up learning Icelandic because, she says, Tolkien professed that the Icelandic sagas were even better in their original form. Tolkien loved “the cold, crisp, unsentimental language of the sagas, their bare, straightforward tone like wind keening over ice.”

On her blog, she adds, “I had gone to Iceland first in 1986, after studying Old Norse for several years—and having been taught that the language was ‘dead,’ like Latin. I was delighted to learn to the contrary on that first visit that Old Norse wasn’t ‘dead’ after all. It had just shifted into Icelandic, changing about as much as English has since Shakespeare’s day. By 1997 (my seventh trip to Iceland), I knew that the sagas themselves were still very much alive, some 800 years after they had been written. Everywhere I went in Iceland, someone shared an allusion from a saga. The medieval past was remembered in the name of every hill and farmstead (not to mention every beer and candybar). There was a saga everywhere I turned.”

## WIT AND DRAMA

Few of us can read the sagas in Icelandic,



like Nancy, and not all of us have read them in translation. So we think sharp wit and sharp drama are modern conventions, but they’re not new. In *Song of the Vikings*, Nancy gives us an in-depth look at this pivotal, but overlooked 13th-century author, Snorri Sturluson, who wrote the first and some of the best Icelandic sagas, as well as almost everything we know of Norse mythology. She condenses centuries of history concerning the sagas and the rise and fall of the Icelandic commonwealth into Snorri’s turbulent life. It is almost an accident that he became one of the first true novelists.

The book distills Snorri’s consolidation of power, which after his death, ultimately costs Iceland her independence. Snorri is a rich Icelandic businessman

and chieftain of many estates. He manages his complex duties with good stewardship, as well as with dramatic manipulation and coercion. His love of ancient Viking poems and tales of the Norwegian kings motivates him to write his books. Nancy shows how Snorri embellished the old tales, capturing on parchment stories that had been told for centuries and were in danger of being forgotten. Part of his motivation to write comes from his adoration of royalty and the high life he witnesses living in Norway for a few years. He wants to become the Norwegian king’s court poet. Unfortunately, the king prefers the new style of Christian chivalry and the tales of King Arthur and his knights of the Round Table to the Old Norse ways and tales. Snorri’s own story becomes a cautionary tale of intrigue and thwarted ambition.

Nancy gives us vivid descriptions of his era, letting the reader better understand fantasy literature’s rough and bloody beginnings. The book concludes with details on how various copies of Snorri’s works nearly disappeared forever, but a few copies survived. His books affected not only literature but modern history, including inspiring the Norwegian and Icelandic nationalistic movements. Unfortunately, his sagas were also co-opted by 19th-century German nationalists and 20th-century Nazis. Nancy ends by explaining how Snorri’s life and works are relevant today, as the inspiration for much of modern culture. This idea is especially relevant to us in the USIHC, since through our horses we enjoy a bit of multiculturalism, both North American and Icelandic.

As an author, *Quarterly* co-editor Nancy Marie Brown is devoted to medieval history, especially the history of Iceland. Photo by Jennifer Anne Tucker and Gerald Lang.





# WHERE IN THE WORLD?

*Two USIHC members recently visited Icelandic horse farms in far-flung places. Lisa Keller traveled to New Zealand and Susan Verberg to the Netherlands to write these stories.*

## **DUTCH GETAWAY BY SUSAN VERBERG**

**T**his June when we went to the Netherlands for a family reunion I also planned a midweek trip to the small island of Vlieland where my mother's family is from—both to visit my grandparents' burial site, as they'd both died since our last trip two years ago, and to revisit the Icelandic Horse stable that kickstarted my interest in the Icelandic breed. When I rode with Stal Edda two years ago, I had never ridden either Icelandic horses or the tolt before. From my first visit I especially remember the horses to be very, very short—much shorter than the ones I later met here, it seemed like—and I was curious to see if they actually were. Everything seems bigger in the States, so why not the horses as well? But nope, it was just my first impression, my memory of my initial "You want me to get on that?" response!

It was nice visiting the stable again



Riders threading through the dunes on the Dutch island of Vlieland, organized by the Icelandic horse farm Stal Edda. Photo by Susan Verberg.

with some knowledge of the breed, to realize the way they are housed differently from mainstream barns (no stalls) and appreciate the perfect fit of the Icelandic breed on this rustic island. Vlieland is one of a row of small islands at the northern

end of the Netherlands with the Wadden Sea (with mudflats) on the south side and the North Sea (with sand beaches) on the north side. The island is about 9,900 acres, half of which are beaches and sandbanks, with about 1,300 residents and over 130,000 visitors each season.

Residents with a commercial need are allowed the use of a car, and some of the tourist residences use horse-drawn wagons to haul luggage from and to the ferry. The stable owns about 25 horses, and in summer the ones chosen for rentals are housed in a sand drylot and work about four hours a day. When the tourist season is over, their vacation starts and they are released onto the property of the Forestry Commission, where they are allowed to graze, unfenced, all winter long.

The founder of Stal Edda, Wim Gieles, was stationed on Vlieland through the Air Force, fell in love with the place, and did not want to leave. When in 1982 he opened Stal Edda, it was love at first sight with the Icelandic breed and its compatibility with the island; the stable has been Icelandic horse exclusive ever since. As Wim is kept busy with other responsibilities (he's on City Council), he found assistance in the shape of Krista



A fast ride on the beaches of Vlieland, a small island in the Netherlands that is home to a stable of 25 Icelandic horses. Photo by Susan Verberg

Nobel. Krista had just finished an agricultural internship at an Icelandic barn in Gröninge, and after a few years ended up taking over ownership of Stal Edda. She can't quite make ends meet from horse rental income alone—she works part time at Hotel Golfzang—and plans to expand the seasonal trail rides and add Icelandic horse riding lessons. She also hopes to certify Stal Edda to be able to offer internships for Secondary Professional Education (MBO) agricultural and equine programs.

Which brings me back to my ride. I had scheduled a one-hour trail ride (all that was available that day) and had six MBO students and their teacher as companions! Plus one quiet German, who had come to Vlieland especially for Stal Edda and went for a ride every day he was there. Which initially I thought as unusual (lucky him) but apparently he was not unique in that at all. People come from all over Europe, even all the way from North Sweden by plane, train, and boat, for a week of Icelandic horses at Stal Edda.

After the six students, their teacher, the German, and I were paired up with a suitable horse, we pulled them from the dry lot to clean and tack up. The visitors were helped every step of the way, with expert tutelage and Icelandic horse-specific explanations from the couple of knowledgeable stable helpers. To encourage quality seasonal help, the stable offers on-island lodging. It was pretty clear from the start that the girls (the students) knew their way around horses, but also that their teacher was a bit in high water. I was pretty sure I'd signed up for the advanced beach ride and remembered my ride a couple years back, with some trepidation—the beach canter (barely in control, full-out gallop to me). But we were both assured that this was a standard ride, not too fast, with definitely no dangerous all-out gallop on the beach. Not too sure how I felt about that, as I had hoped to feel my seat improved after riding Icelandics for two years.

After all were mounted, with stirrups the right length and girths properly tightened, off we went. First single-file through the dunes and later in semi-file over the beach. The scenery was gorgeous, the weather great—not too hot, not too cold—and the hard-packed low-tide

beach proved perfect to practice our tolt. And then the spot to turn around came. Lots of ears perked up. Quite some feet began to move around. It was harder and harder to ride a tolt. And then the tour guide gave the signal: It's time to run! And run they did! Flat-out gallop over the beach, one horse racing the other, churned up sand flying everywhere! My heart starts racing again just writing about it! Boy, was that fun. Just what I was hoping for and more than I expected!

After what seemed like forever, the guide steered us into the loose sand, we

slowed down, collected all the slower riders (including the teacher, who was looking a little pale around the edges), and had a nice walk in the loose sand near the dunes. And then we were off again. A little slower this second time around, but still pretty fast and energetic. By the time we reached the passage back over the dune, we all were wearing huge grins. By the way, I never even saw a waiver.

You can learn more about Stal Edda (if you read Dutch) on their website: [staledda.nl](http://staledda.nl)



Turn the page to visit the Icelandic horses in Hobbit Land—aka New Zealand. Photo by Lisa Keller.





Neðri Bakki Icelandic Horse farm is located in the picturesque rolling hills of New Zealand, near Auckland airport.

## LAND OF THE HOBBITS BY LISA KELLER

Last year I had a wonderful opportunity to travel to New Zealand. One evening before I left, I decided to Google “Icelandic horse New Zealand” just for fun. I wasn’t expecting to find any results. To my surprise Google returned a listing! I knew right away that Neðri Bakki Icelandic Horse farm was one of my must-see places.

Visiting with Kenneth and Snejina, and touring their Icelandic horse farm, turned out to be one of the highlights of my trip. I was really impressed. The farm is located in a beautiful, picturesque area, with rolling hills and gorgeous scenery, an ideal place for trail riding and, of course, toting! The farm offers over three miles of riding trails. All the horses looked amazing and extremely happy on the farm. I knew immediately that I wanted to share this gem of a find with other Icelandic horse owners, and so I suggested that I interview Kenneth and Snejina for the Quarterly. To pique the editorial committee’s interest, I noted that *rumor has it* Neðri Bakki supplied the Icelandic horses being used in Peter Jackson’s filming of J.R.R. Tolkien’s “The Hobbit”—but more about that later.

Neðri Bakki is the largest Icelandic horse training center in New Zealand. The name Neðri Bakki is derived from the Icelandic words “Neðri” referring to their position “down-under” and “Bakki” which means “at the edge of a stream.” The farm is located in the countryside of Pukekohe, about 19 miles from the Auckland International Airport. Although New Zealanders drive on the left side of the road, I found it to be an easy drive from the airport to the farm.

Here is my interview with Kenneth and Snejina:

*Q: Can you tell us a little bit about yourself, your family, and your farm? Where did you come from, and why move to New Zealand?*

A: We are both career academics. Snejina is a professor of International Business, and Kenneth is a professor of Innovation. We were attracted to New Zealand by several factors. One of them was related to the great nature and climate of the country, as well as its friendly people—it is just so easy and enjoyable to be a foreigner here. The other factor is job-related. We came on a seven-month sabbatical in 2004 and got offered two positions at the lead-

ing university of the country, The University of Auckland. In Kenneth’s case the position was associated with kick-starting Auckland’s economy through innovation and research commercialization. So we left our positions at Copenhagen Business School in Denmark, took our three kids, packed a huge container, and relocated to New Zealand in 2005.

*Q: How did you choose New Zealand to start an Icelandic horse farm? Did you own any Icelandic horses where you lived before?*

A: Kenneth worked with Icelandics in Denmark in the 1980s, when he was funding his university studies by training horses and riders, even though his background was in eventing and dressage with Danish warmbloods. We did not own Icelandic horses in Denmark and were not involved with horses at all for a long time—in fact, until a few years after we relocated to New Zealand. We then decided that Icelandics, with their special features, fit well with us as a family, but also with New Zealand riders and country people. We also found it exciting that we could be among the first to introduce Icelandics to New Zealanders.



*Q: What kind of services do you offer at your farm?*

A: So far we have been focusing on building up the facilities and the livestock on our farm. We were also actively involved in establishing the Icelandic Horse Breeders and Riders Association NZ. We have been gradually building up the services we are offering. We now have two stallions available, and we offer starting young horses, training horses and riders, and trail rides on our farm. Most importantly, we sell high quality, well-trained horses. We put a strong emphasis on selling easy-to-ride horses and providing the new owners with the needed training for taking care of and riding them. We are also in the process of developing a new product that builds a bridge to our professional careers—equine supported management and innovation education. In this activity we plan to use the interaction with the horses to emphasize some crucial points in relation to management and innovation.

*Q: What process was involved transporting your horses from Europe to New Zealand? Did the horses travel well? How many horses have you brought over to New Zealand?*

A: We imported five horses from Denmark. Two of them we actually bought from the son of the family where Kenneth was introduced to training Icelandics in the 1980s. Importing the horses was a huge exercise, not only financially, but also organizationally and logistically. After extensive testing, the horses were shipped from Denmark to the UK, where they stayed in quarantine for three weeks. Then they were flown to Auckland and kept for a second quarantine before finally being released to us. This was further complicated by our decision to import mares in foal. We imported from Denmark—since Iceland is not a member of the European Union, the import from there is very, very difficult. This is a pity because both Iceland and New Zealand have very high equine health standards and also relatively few horse diseases, but the reality is the import/export is really difficult.

*Q: Your website mentions a guesthouse for travelers. If someone was to come to New Zealand, can they stay at your guesthouse?*

A: Yes, we have tourist accommodation on our farm—a two-bedroom self-contained cottage. We have a trail system established

on the farm, and cottage guests can certainly enjoy the trail riding service we offer on our well-trained horses.

*Q: What are your hopes for the Icelandic breed in New Zealand?*

A: There are currently around 100 Icelandic horses spread over New Zealand. We hope New Zealanders will gradually get to know this wonderful breed and we will over time see some clusters of Icelandic horse owners emerge here.

*Q: Eidfaxi magazine has mentioned that Icelandic horses are being used for the Hobbit movie. Are you able to comment further about Icelandic horses being used in the upcoming movies?*

A: Unfortunately we are not allowed to comment on that. We will all need to wait till “The Hobbit” is released.

You can read more about Kenneth and Snejjina and the Neðri Bakki Icelandic Horse Farm on their website: [www.ice-horse.co.nz](http://www.ice-horse.co.nz).



Part of the herd at Neðri Bakki Icelandic Horse farm, the first and largest Icelandic horse farm in New Zealand. Photo by Lisa Keller.





## MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

New Application  Renewal

Membership Type:  Individual  Family  Junior  
 Foreign Friend of the US Icelandic Horse Congress

Name: .....  
 Address: .....  
 City: ..... State/Province : ..... Postal Code: ..... Country: .....  
 Phone: ..... Email: .....

- Keep my name and contact information private.
- Never use my email address instead of the US Mail to notify me of official USIHC business.
- I prefer **not** to receive a copy of the *Quarterly* magazine in the US Mail.

Regional Club: .....

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

Name	Year of Birth (juniors only)	Email (optional)	Enroll in Pleasure Rider Program (optional)

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

Farm: .....  
 Owners: .....  
 Address: .....  
 City: ..... State/Province : ..... Postal Code: ..... Country: .....  
 Phone: ..... Email: .....  
 Fax: ..... Web: .....

Membership Fees & Restrictions			
<b>Individual</b>	\$45/year. One adult. One vote.	Membership Fee:	\$.....
<b>Family</b>	\$65/year. Two adults and unlimited children living in the same household. Adults vote.	Farm Listing Fee:	\$.....
<b>Junior</b>	\$35/year. One child (under 18 years). Not eligible to vote.	<b>World Championships Donation:</b>	<b>\$.....</b>
<i>Members in the categories above with non-US mailing addresses must be US Citizens</i>		Youth Fund Donation:	\$.....
<b>Foreign Friend</b>	\$70/year. One adult non-US Resident/non-US Citizen with limited benefits. Not eligible to vote.	(optional support for youth programs)	
		Total:	\$.....

**Make checks to "USIHC" and mail to the MAIN OFFICE address.**  
**Congress memberships are for one year. Your membership is active on receipt of payment and expires one year later.**

MAIN OFFICE: 300 South Sawyer Road, Oconomowoc, WI 53066  
 Phone: (866) 929-0009 [extension 1] Email: info@icelandics.org

# THE ICELANDIC HORSE MARKETPLACE



**DEADLINES:** • January 1 (Issue 1 mailed in March) • April 1 (Issue 2 mailed in June) • July 1 (Issue 3 mailed in September) • October 1 (Issue 4 mailed in December)

**AD FORMATS:** Upload only ads that are camera-ready and in Mac-format PDF, JPG, or TIFF. No PC formats accepted. Ads should be full-size, saved at 300 dpi.

**PAYMENT:** All advertising can be placed online at [www.icelandics.org/quarterly.php](http://www.icelandics.org/quarterly.php). Simply click on the link that says "ad purchase and upload page" and you will be directed through the process of buying an ad.

**QUESTIONS:** If you are unable to access the Internet or have questions regarding advertising, please contact Juli Cole at 724-667-4184 or [juli2875@yahoo.com](mailto:juli2875@yahoo.com)

<b>RATES AND SIZES:</b>	<b>per issue</b>
Color Pages (7 3/8" x 9 3/4")	\$ 200
Full page (7 3/8" x 9 3/4")	\$ 150
Half page (7 3/8" x 4 3/4")	\$ 75
Third page (7 3/8" x 3 3/4")	\$ 50
Quarter page (3 1/2" x 4 3/4")	\$ 35
Classifieds (text only)	\$ 25

*The USIHC reserves the right to reject any advertising at any time. Each advertisement is accepted with the understanding that the advertiser is authorized to publish its contents and agrees to indemnify the USIHC and the Icelandic Horse Quarterly against any loss or expense resulting from claims arising out of its publication.*

## 25.1.13 deadline!

Advertise. Studvertise. Subscribe.  
[TheIcelandicStudBook.com](http://TheIcelandicStudBook.com)



THE ICELANDIC

# StudBook

ICELANDIC STALLIONS OF NORTH AMERICA





# F A R M L I S T

The owners of the farms listed below have offered to have you visit in order to become acquainted with the Icelandic horse. Some are breeders, some importers and some are interested in breed promotion alone. Their listing here does not constitute an endorsement of any kind by the USIHC.

## CALIFORNIA

A Breeding Farm For Icelandic Horses,  
Schmalztopf  
Nancy Vanderbilt Schmalz  
Arvid Schmalz  
9499 Santa Rosa Road (oo Box 67)  
Buellton, CA 93427  
(805) 693-9876 (phone)  
schmalztopf@earthlink.net  
www.icelandichorsebreeder.com

Flying C Ranch  
Will & Asta Covert  
3600 Roblar Ave.  
Santa Ynez, CA 93460  
(805) 688-1393 (phone)  
(805) 688-0629 (fax)  
info@tolt.net  
www.tolt.net

Mountain Icelandic Farm  
Annette Coulon  
620 Calabasas Rd.  
Watsonville, CA 95076  
(831) 722-8774 (phone)  
annette@mountainicelandics.com  
www.mountainicelandics.com

Sunland Ranch Icelandic Horses  
Kimberly Hart  
3675 Copper Crest  
Olivenhain, CA 92024  
(858) 472-1626 (phone)  
(858) 759-8577 (fax)  
kmbryhrt@sbcglobal.net  
www.sunlandranch.com

Valhalla Icelandic Horses  
Stina & Steinar Sigurbjornsson  
17498 Santa Rosa Mine Rd  
Perris, CA 92570  
(818) 808-8089 (phone)  
(818) 890-4569 (fax)  
valhallaicelandic@mac.com  
www.valhallaicelandic.com

Valkyrie Icelandic  
Laura Benson  
1 Duane St. #33  
Redwood City, CA 94062  
(321) 278-0250 (phone)  
leiri91@aol.com  
www.valkyrieicelandic.com

## COLORADO

Hanging Valley Ranch  
Garry & Sharon Snook  
Box 66  
1555 Nettle Creek Road  
Carbondale, CO 81623  
(970) 963-3517 (phone)  
(970) 963-3503 (fax)  
snookcolorado@gmail.com  
icelandicmountainhorses.com

Hestar Ranch  
Monika Meier-Galliker  
P.O. Box 1744 / 30420 C.r. 500  
Arboles, CO 81121  
(970) 883-2531 (phone)  
m.meier@hestar-ranch.us  
www.hestar-ranch.us

Lough Arrow Icelandics  
Andrea Brodie, Dvm  
22242 County Road 46.0  
Aguilar, CO 81020  
(505) 238-0896 (phone)  
fiddlinvet@gmail.com  
tinyurl.com/3xn3yys

Tamangur Icelandic Horses  
Coralie Denmeade  
P.O. Box 2771  
Monument, CO 80132  
(719) 209-2312 (phone)  
coralie@tamangur-icelandics.com  
www.tamangur-icelandics.com

## GEORGIA

Creekside Farm  
Katrin Sheehan  
3170 Double Bridges Road  
Rutledge, GA 30663  
(706) 347-0900 (phone)  
(706) 997-9011 (fax)  
kat@creeksidefarm.com  
www.creeksidefarm.com

## INDIANA

Windstar  
Bonnie L. Windell  
4845 Warrenton Road  
Evansville, IN 47725  
(812) 983-4125 (phone)  
bonniwindell@yahoo.com  
www.windstarranch.com

## KENTUCKY

Gudmar Petursson Icelandic Horses  
Gudmar Petursson  
1800 Halls Hill Rd  
Crestwood, KY 40014  
(502) 243-9996 (phone)  
gudmarp@gudmar.com  
www.gudmar.com

## MAINE

Boulder Ridge Farm  
Brian & Cindy Wescott  
1271 Cape Rd  
Limington, ME 04049  
(207) 637-2338 (phone)  
info@bricelandics.com  
www.bricelandics.com

Grand View Farm  
Charles & Peggy Gilbert  
137 North Road  
Dixmont, ME 04932  
(207) 257-2278 (phone)  
(207) 941-9871 (fax)  
grandviewfarm@midmaine.com

Ice Follies  
Deborah Plengey & Trudie Lee  
159 Lyons Rd.  
Manchester, ME 04351  
(207) 621-2942 (phone)  
debplengey@roadrunner.com  
icefolliesfarm.com

## MASSACHUSETTS

Four Winds Farm  
Lori B. Leo  
703 Hanover Street  
Hanover, MA 02339  
(617) 827-2001 (phone)  
(781) 829-2276 (fax)  
fourwinds@fourwindsicelandics.com  
www.fourwindsicelandics.com

## MINNESOTA

Crow River Icelandics  
Sharon & David Johnson  
2277 Colbert Ave. N.w.  
Buffalo, MN 55313  
(763) 682-3815 (phone)  
sharonhilljohn@hotmail.com  
www.crowrivericelandics.com



North Star Icelandic  
Deborah & Steve Cook  
1250 Waterville Rd  
Waterville, MN 56096  
(507) 362-4538 (phone)  
(507) 362-8090 (fax)  
cookice@frontiernet.net  
www.frontiernet.net/~cookice

## NEW YORK

Icelandic Sports, Ltd  
Daniel Slott  
P.O. Box 113  
281 Rotue 3  
Ancramdale, NY 12503  
(518) 329-0185 (phone)  
(518) 329-0188 (fax)  
dslott@icesport.com  
www.icesport.com

Sand Meadow Farm  
Steven & Andrea Barber  
300 Taylor Road  
Honeoye Falls, NY 14472  
(585) 624-4468 (phone)  
(585) 624-9361 (fax)  
toltstar@yahoo.com  
www.sandmeadow.com

Thor Icelandic  
Kristjan Kristjansson & Family  
76 Catskill View Road  
Claverack, NY 12513  
(518) 929-7476 (phone)  
(518) 392-5718 (fax)  
kristjan@fairpoint.net  
www.thoricelandics.com

## NORTH CAROLINA

Hulinndalur  
Sara Lyter  
372 John Weaver Rd  
Columbus, NC 28722  
slyterz@yahoo.com

Suncrest Farm  
Paul and Renee Smith  
1919 Barbee Road  
Shelby, NC 28150  
(704) 480-0366 (phone)  
docnshop2@aol.com

## OHIO

Cytraas Farm  
John R. Haaga  
Call For Appointment  
Chagrin Falls, OH 44022  
(216) 464-7260 (phone)  
johnhaaga@gmail.com  
www.cytraas.net

## PENNSYLVANIA

Burns - Anderson Stable  
Mary Burns, Caleigh Anderson,  
and Connie Anderson  
1641 Wildlife Lodge Rd.  
Lower Burrell, PA 15068  
(724) 337-4207 (phone)  
caaenglishrider@yahoo.com

Meant To Be Farm  
Juli & Steve Cole  
109 Germanski Lane  
New Castle, PA 16102  
(724) 667-4184 (phone)  
juli2875@yahoo.com  
www.meanttobefarm.com

## SOUTH CAROLINA

Aleiga Icelandic  
Helen & Lori Lessley  
2210 Bermuda Hills Rd  
Columbia, SC 29223  
(803) 920-1414 (phone)  
icelandictreasures@aol.com  
www.aleigaicelandics.com

Black Creek Farm  
Sarah C. Elkin  
449 Jewell Boone Rd.  
Pelion, SC 29123  
(803) 894-4514 (phone)  
bigdoglady@pbtcomm.net  
web.me.com/blackcreekfarm

## TENNESSEE

Clear Springs Hollow Farm  
Marianne E. Filka & Ronnie D. Roark  
137 Hugh Garland Rd.  
Jonesborough, TN 37659  
(423) 753-6075 (phone)  
(423) 753-6075 (fax)  
filkaroark@embarqmail.com  
filka-roarkhorses.com

## TEXAS

LoneStar - A Texas Icelandic  
Horse Breeding Farm  
Chris E Creighton  
Off Hwy 29- West Of Town  
Georgetown, TX 78628  
(512) 930-7070 (phone)  
icelandichorse.us

## VERMONT

Silver Maple Icelandic Horse Farm  
Susan Peters  
106 Gilley Road  
Tunbridge, VT 05077  
(802) 889-9585 (phone)  
susan.peters@gmail.com  
www.silvermapleicelandics.com

## WASHINGTON

Evans Farm-Orcas Island  
Wanda & John Evans  
P.O. Box 116  
Olga, WA 98279  
(360) 379-4961 (phone)  
evansfarm@orcasonline.com  
www.icelandichorsesnorthwest.com

Lone Cedar Icelandic Horses  
Dawn Shaw  
P.O. Box 524  
451 E. Murray Road N  
Grapeview, WA 98546  
(360) 275-7542 (phone)  
iceherd@hotmail.com  
www.lonecedariclandichorses.com

Red Feather Icelandic  
Dick and Linda Templeton  
24 Whitewater Drive  
Trout Lake, WA 98650  
(509) 395-9380 (phone)  
redfeathericelandics@gmail.com  
www.redfeathericelandics.com

## WEST VIRGINIA

Icelandic Thunder  
Denise & James Taylor  
Rr 1. Box 219  
Philippi, WV 26416  
(304) 457-4238 (phone)  
icywoman@msn.com  
icelandicthunder.com

## WISCONSIN

Winterhorse Park Icelandic Horse Farm  
Barbara and Daniel Riva  
S75 W35621 Wilton Rd.  
Eagle, WI 53119  
(262) 594-5152 (phone)  
(262) 594-2720 (fax)  
winterhorse@centurytel.net  
www.winterhorse.com





# WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS 2013 IN BERLIN

04.-11. August 2013



# I'll be there!

*one world - five gaits!*



## Tickets- book 'em now!

Attractive rates with discounts for families and groups available at [www.berlin2013.de](http://www.berlin2013.de)

## Give Berlin

*as a gift!*



Ticket vouchers in their exclusive WM 2013 design - a special present for all friends of the Icelandic horse.



## Hotels

*right on location!*

Everything from luxury hotels to youth hostels - find all offers with amazing discounts on our website. Questions: [hotels@berlin2013.de](mailto:hotels@berlin2013.de)

## My Horse

*for Berlin!*



Create your own unique life-sized Icelandic-horse sculptures with your personalized design. All info on the web.



[www.berlin2013.de](http://www.berlin2013.de)

Host: IPZV e.V. Bundesgeschäftsstelle · Postfach 12 20 · D-31159 Bad Salzdetfurth · Tel.: +49 50 63 - 276 96 40 | Venue: digibet Pferdesportpark Karlshorst · Treskowallee 129 · D-10318 Berlin  
Organizer: easy TOP Event GmbH · Jahnstraße 12 · D-31079 Almstedt · WM Office: +49 50 60 - 96 17 45 Fax: +49 50 60 - 96 11 41 · E-Mail: [info@berlin2013.de](mailto:info@berlin2013.de)

*If you missed us in May 2012. . .*

## **Don't Miss the 2013 Show**



**May 18-19, 2013**  
**Herndon, Virginia 20171**

**Come Early. Ride the beautiful Virginia countryside. Stay Late.**  
**Visit the White House, Capitol Mall, Monuments and the Smithsonian.**

*"Fun and educational event at a great venue. We hope to see more riders take part in this show in 2013."*  
– Will and Asta Covert, Flying C Ranch, California

*"Thanks for a wonderful weekend at the FRIDA show. I really appreciated being part of it. The show team did a marvelous job to promote the Icelandic Horse. The range of classes, horses, and riders showed the versatility of the Icelandic Horse from pleasure riding to ambitious sports. I hope that more competitors will take part at the next show. Everyone who is interested in Icelandic Horse riding should not miss the chance!"* – Florian Schneider, Germany

*"I was very pleased with my experience at the 2012 FRIDA Horse Show. The facilities at Frying Pan Park were ideal – nice stalls, easy parking, nice track, and it was great to have several outdoor areas for lessons and warm up. Having a selection of hotels and restaurants close by was convenient.*

*For me, as a participant, the show ran very smoothly. I was kept updated on any schedule changes. I saw how hard the show committee worked and I think they really pulled off a super show.*

*I look forward to 2013!"* – Lynn Wiese, Georgia

*"Thank you to all of our sponsors, contributors, and supporters for making the 2012 show a success. FIRC looks forward to hosting another great show in May 2013."* – Tony Colicchio, President FIRC

**For more information, visit: <http://firc.us>**

**Show Committee:** Pat Moore, *chair*, [pat.moore81@verizon.net](mailto:pat.moore81@verizon.net)  
Kim Davis, *registrar*, [cottongrassfarms@cox.net](mailto:cottongrassfarms@cox.net)  
Sverrir Bjartmarz, *regulations*, [sverrirbjartmarz@hotmail.com](mailto:sverrirbjartmarz@hotmail.com)  
Sali Peterson, *marketing*, [sagasayer@cox.net](mailto:sagasayer@cox.net)



# GREETINGS FROM ICELAND



get on our list  
now for 2013

AMERICA **2** ICELAND  
LLC

ASK US ABOUT DISCOUNTS FOR YOUR GROUP OR CLUB  
[WWW.AMERICA2ICELAND.COM](http://WWW.AMERICA2ICELAND.COM)  
207-233-8330 • [info@america2iceland.com](mailto:info@america2iceland.com)



[www.gudmar.com](http://www.gudmar.com)

*Penelope George, London*

### **Ink and Brush Creations**

*Offering Embroidered clothing, use-able and wear-able Art, perfect for the on the go Icelandic Horse owner.*

**Cafe Press**  
<http://www.cafepress.com/artbyshari/7733764>

**Zazzle**  
<http://www.zazzle.com/inkandbrush>

**Main Web site**  
<http://www.inkandbrushcreations.com>



*Godman on illustration*

TOP REITER - FÁKUR - BACK ON TRACK - G-BOOTS - HRÍMNIR - ÁSTUND - FEATHER WEIGHT - BURLINGHAM - APPLE  
PPLE PICKER - 66NORTH - TOP REITER - FÁKUR - BACK ON TRACK - G-BOOTS - HRÍMNIR - ÁSTUND - FEATHER WEIGH  
ACK - G-BOOTS - HRÍMNIR - ÁSTUND - FEATHER WEIGHT - BURLINGHAM - APPLE PICKER - 66NORTH - TOP REITER -



**WWW.FLYINGCTACK.COM**

PHOTO: DYNJANDI FRÁ DALVÍK RIDDEN IN A BRIDLE FROM FÁKUR, BIT BY ÁSTUND, BOOTS BY G-BOOTS AND IQ SADDLE BY TOP REITER

# TÖLT NEWS IS BACK!



Join the tölting revolution by subscribing and advertising today!  
[www.toltnews.com](http://www.toltnews.com) | [tolt@toltnews.com](mailto:tolt@toltnews.com) | 518 929 0009



# RELEASE YOUR INNER CAVEMAN!

“FINALLY A BEEF JERKY THAT ACTUALLY TASTES LIKE BEEF!”

— ANGIE, PALEO DIET FOLLOWER AND AVID CROSS FITTER



THE ONLY 100% PALEO DIET COMPLIANT BEEF JERKY ON THE MARKET! NO PRESERVATIVES. NO SWEETENERS. JUST GRASS FED BEEF AND ORGANIC SEASONINGS!

PLEASE VISIT US ONLINE AT [WWW.CAVEMANFUEL.COM](http://WWW.CAVEMANFUEL.COM) FOR MORE INFORMATION



# Meant To Be Farm

[www.MeantToBeFarm.com](http://www.MeantToBeFarm.com)

Breeding and sales of quality Icelandic Horses

Also offering:

Stallion and broodmare management

Overnight stabling

109 Germanski Lane  
New Castle, PA 16102

724-667-4184  
[juli2875@yahoo.com](mailto:juli2875@yahoo.com)