

ISSUE FOUR

THE

2015

ICELANDIC HORSE

Q U A R T E R L Y



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



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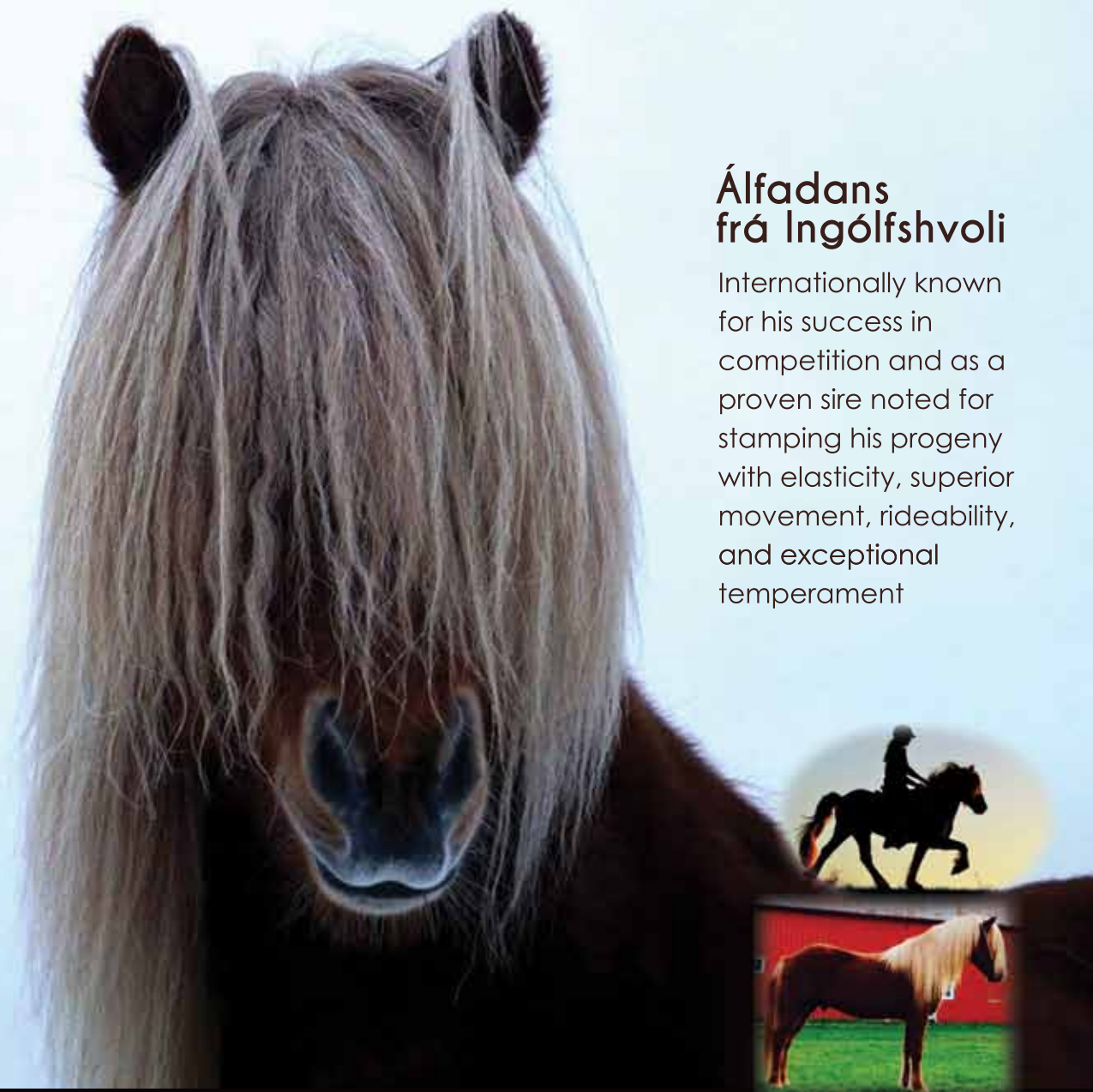
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Heidi Benson at 831-428-6111
or email at centaurcity@gmail.com



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THE USIHC MISSION

- Support the use and health of the Icelandic horse according to international standards
- Advance the study, breeding, and exhibition of the Icelandic horse
- Represent FEIF in the United States and represent the United States to FEIF
- Maintain a registry of purebred Icelandic horses

The U.S. Icelandic Horse Congress is a member of FEIF (www.feif.org), the International Federation of Icelandic Horse Associations, representing the national Icelandic horse associations of 19 countries. FEIF governs competition activities and regulates the breeding and registration of Icelandic horses throughout the world outside of Iceland.

The USIHC 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.

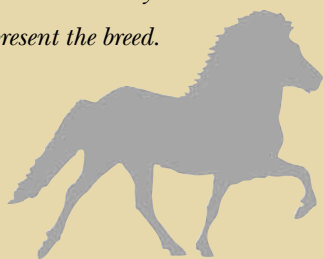


Photo by Andrea Barber

W H Y J O I N T H E U S I H C ?

LEARN

As the owner or rider of an Icelandic horse, you chose a very special breed with its own culture and history. It is important to learn about the breed's unique traits, capabilities, and needs, so that you and your Icelandic horse will have a happy relationship and it will live a healthy and long life in a country far from its origin. As a USIHC member, you have a wealth of information at your fingertips and a personal connection to the best experts in the country.

You receive *The Icelandic Horse Quarterly*, a 52-page all-color magazine, four times a year. All issues since 2008 are available online.

You have free access to WorldFengur, the worldwide database of all registered Icelandic horses. About 400,000 horses, alive and deceased, are included, with pedigrees, offspring, ownership, and evaluation and competition results. Some horses even have photos and videos. WorldFengur is an invaluable tool for all Icelandic horse breeders and very interesting for the rest of us. Go to "Search Horses" on the USIHC website and find

any US-registered Icelandic horse by its number, name, or farm name to link to WorldFengur.

You can take part in—and even help create—educational seminars and teaching programs. For example, the USIHC Education committee developed and now administers the Riding Badge Program for pleasure and competition riders of all ages. On the USIHC website you can find links to FEIF-certified trainers who are USIHC members and can help you get the best out of your Icelandic horse. In 2014, the Education committee began offering yearly Sport Judges Seminars for those wanting to learn to judge competitions.

The USIHC also has a scholarship fund for members who complete their certification to become national or international judges.

CONNECT

Icelandic horses are social animals, and so are their people. The USIHC is the umbrella organization of regional clubs all over the U.S.: There are currently 12 active clubs. Find the regional Icelandic riding club in your area through the

USIHC website, so that you and your horse can ride with friends. USIHC Youth members can apply to participate in the American Youth Cup or the international FEIF Youth Cup or Youth Camp. These are great events designed to bring young riders together for a week of fun, learning, and competition.

Through the USIHC website, you can sign up for RSS feeds for the Events Calendar or web updates. You can check the membership list to see if your friends are members and when your own membership expires. And you can stay connected through the USIHC Facebook page.

COMPETE

The Icelandic horse has international competition rules: You can compete in the same classes and under the same rules in any of the 19 FEIF member countries and compare your progress with competition riders from around the world.

The USIHC Competition committee adapts these international FEIF rules for American venues and special circumstances, publishing a new set of USIHC Competition Rules each year. These are available on the USIHC website, along with all the tools needed to put on a sanctioned show, such as entry forms, judging forms, judges' cards, and announcers' cards. (These tools are also useful for organizing fun shows and schooling shows.) Also on the website are lists of prohibited tack and equipment and other necessary information for competition riders.

Sanctioned shows are eligible for funding under the Flagship Event Funding Program. Sanctioned-show organizers have access to the IceTest software to record show scores so that they immediately appear in the U.S. National Ranking; qualified shows can also send scores to the FEIF World Ranking list. Scores are posted on the USIHC website for everyone to see and compare.

Only USIHC members can join the U.S. team at the Icelandic Horse World Championships, held in a FEIF country every other year. If you hope to compete at an international level, see the team recommendations and requirements on the USIHC website. Tryouts for the team are open and are National Ranking events: Anyone can ride for scores and to get feedback from an international judge, whether or not you intend to compete in the World Championships.

PROMOTE

USIHC members promote the Icelandic horse at many equine expositions around the country. The USIHC provides a beautiful display, brochures, and copies of the *Quarterly*, and will contribute to the cost of the booth and stall space if certain requirements are met.

The new USIHC Breed Ambassador program rewards members who take their Icelandic horses to all-breed events and shows.

Trainers, breeding farms, and trekking barns can promote their services through the USIHC Farm List in the *Quarterly* and on the website. Stallion owners can promote their stud services through the online USIHC Stallion Book.

REGISTER

Whether you plan to breed one mare or have a breeding farm, the USIHC Registry and the Breeding committee provide information and services to help you. The Icelandic horse is one of few breeds with international evaluation standards, so that breeding horses from all over the world are judged on the same 10 points of conformation and 10 points of ridden abilities, and all scores are entered into the WorldFengur database. That allows you to compare the quality of your breeding stock with Icelandic horses around the world, both past and present.

USIHC-sanctioned breeding evaluation shows for registered adult horses ages four and up are scheduled by USIHC Regional Clubs and private farms. Breeding shows are eligible for funding under the Flagship Event Funding Program. All rules and regulations are supplied by the Breeding committee from the international FEIF rules and are available on the USIHC website. Regional Clubs and private farms can also organize Young Horse Assessments for foals to three-year-olds. Beginning in 2015, these assessments also qualify for USIHC funding; contact the Breeding Leader.

In accordance with FEIF rules, the USIHC has adopted stringent tests before a foal can be registered as a purebred

Icelandic horse. You can be sure of the parentage of any registered Icelandic horse and know that your registered foals have proof of their value.

You don't have to be a USIHC member to register your Icelandic horse, but by becoming a member you help support this vital USIHC program.

INNOVATE

The USIHC is a member-driven organization. The more active and involved our members are, the stronger the USIHC becomes. Do you have an idea for a project or event that will support the Icelandic horse in America?

If so, write a proposal. USIHC members are eligible to receive a grant to fund creative projects that meet the USIHC's mission statement. Grant funding is included in the USIHC's annual budget—for 2015, \$8,000 is budgeted. Contact the USIHC president for more information or read about the grant program in Issue Three 2013 of the *Quarterly* on the website.

JOIN US

There are only about 4,500 registered Icelandic horses in the U.S. and the USIHC, at about 500 members, is still a small "pioneer" organization compared to our counterparts in Iceland and Germany. Our committee members and board of directors are all volunteers. Please join us so that the USIHC can, as FEIF's mission states, "bring people together in their passion for the Icelandic horse"!

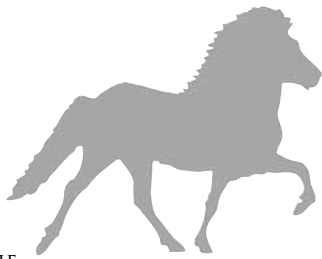
Yearly membership for an adult is \$45; youth memberships are \$35 or for a family (two adults, unlimited kids) it is \$65. Mail in the form in this magazine or join online at www.icelandics.org/join

QUESTIONS?

USIHC Board members and Committee chairs are here to answer them. For general questions, call or email our information desk or check the website.

Toll free: 866-929-0009
info@icelandics.org
www.icelandics.org

FEIF'S MISSION: FEIF BRINGS PEOPLE TOGETHER
IN THEIR PASSION FOR THE ICELANDIC HORSE



ICELANDIC HORSE

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QUARTERLY
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On the cover: Eva Dykaar from
California received the Horsemanship
Award at the first American Youth
Cup, held at Léttleiki Icelandics in
July. Here Eva rides Gulldís frá Hellu.
Photo by Shaila Ann Sigsgaard.

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NEW NATIONAL JUDGE

Congratulations to Alexandra Dannenmann of Florida Icehorse Farm, who passed the FEIF test to become a National Icelandic Horse Sport Judge (or USIHC Sport Judge A; see the new judges' matrix below). She will be awarded \$1,000 from the USIHC Sport Judge Scholarship fund, which was set up by an anonymous donor in 2009 to inspire members to become FEIF-certified judges.

The FEIF test was held at Kronshof, Dahlenburg (near Hamburg) in Germany on September 28-29. Of 27 candidates from seven countries, 10 passed the International test and 3 passed the National test. According to International Judge Þorgeir Guðlaugsson, who oversaw the testing, Alex scored the best of all candidates taking both tests. "I'm looking forward to working with the newcomers in the future," Þorgeir said, "hoping they will bring with them a gust of refreshing wind. There is obviously a lot of talent out there!" Said Alex, "It was worth the long trip to Germany! I'm looking forward to giving my best as a judge in North America. This is what makes me happy!" To learn more about the process of becoming an Icelandic horse sport judge, see <http://www.icelandics.org/Education/sportJudge.php>

ELECTION NEWS

Lynn Wiese, chair of the USIHC Election Committee reports: "In accordance with Section 2 of Article IV (Voting and Elections) of the Constitution of the United States Icelandic Horse Congress (USIHC), the Election Committee accepted nominations until October 1, 2015. No nominations were received. As stated in the Notice of Election 2015, the upcoming election shall select three directors, who will serve for terms of three years starting on January 1, 2016. Incumbent directors Sara Lyter and Anne Elwell declined to run for re-election. Lori Cretney opted to run for re-election. Since there are no nominees, no election will be held and Lori Cretney will automatically serve another three year term and there will be two vacancies on the USIHC Board of Directors."



Congratulations to Alexandra Dannenmann of Florida Ice Horses, who became a USIHC Sport Judge A on September 29. She was immediately put to work judging the USIHC-Sanctioned Kentucky Show on October 10-11.

2016 ANNUAL MEETING

The 2016 USIHC Annual Meeting, organized by the Cascade Club, will be held in Portland, OR on January 15-17, 2016 at the Radisson Hotel PDX, located 2.5 miles from the airport overlooking Lake Colwood. See www.radisson.com/portland-hotel-or-97218/portarpt. To receive the special conference room rate of \$98 a night, make your hotel reservations as soon as possible through Rebecca Bliefer-

nich of Peak Travel (800-544-2395 or rblief-ernich@PeakTravel.com). To volunteer to help with the meeting, or to purchase vendor space, contact Susan Wellington (Susanleewellington@yahoo.com).

VIDEO JUDGING

The application period for the biannual FEIF Youth Cup, to be held July 22-31 in The Netherlands, closed on December 1. As part of the selection process, youth members had to submit a video to be judged by a FEIF International Sport Judge. And, as in the past, the USIHC opened this judging opportunity to members of all ages. The scores and comments from the judge will be returned to the riders after the selection period ends. All scores will be entered into the National Ranking as though they were from a sanctioned sport tournament.

AMERICAN YOUTH CUP

The Youth Committee was very busy, along with many other USIHC volunteers, creating and executing the inaugural American Youth Cup at Léttleiki Icelandics in Shelbyville, Kentucky on July 21-26. The AYC was modeled after the FEIF Youth Cup, giving young riders ages 12-17 the opportunity to receive ridden instruction and to compete on unfamiliar



Jess Haynsworth and Glæta frá Brekku enjoy a glorious fall trail ride in Warren, VT. Photo by Augustin Demonceaux.

horses. "All 20 accepted participants arrived," says Youth leader Colleen Monsef, "all team leaders and teachers did an amazing job, and the USIHC-sanctioned show went off perfectly. The kids learned so much. The Youth Committee is grateful to Carrie Lyons Brandt of Léttleiki Icelandics, to Carrie's parents, and to a whole slew of others who helped in this successful event."

BREEDING EVALUATIONS

Marel from Creekside Farm (US2010104426) qualified to represent the U.S. at the World Championships by achieving a total score of 8.11 on July 8 at an evaluation in Germany. However, his owners decided not to show him at the championships this year. Congratulations to breeder Barbara Frische and owners Creekside Farm Rutledge LLC (Katrin Sheehan) and Nicole Kempf on an excellent result.

Also of note, the gelding Ali from Dalalif (US2007103535), ridden by his owner Lucy Nold, achieved a total score of 7.96 in the July evaluations held in Vernon, BC Canada. Congratulations to Lucy and to breeder Anne-Marie Martin.

PROMOTION NEWS

There's been an increase in interest in the USIHC display booth this year, as compared to the previous two years. To schedule the booth for your event, contact Promotion chair Juli Cole (promotion@icelandics.org). USIHC brochures are also available from Juli for use in promoting the breed and the Congress. The tri-fold, full-color brochures include general information about the breed, along with a listing of all USIHC Regional Clubs. The brochures are available in multiples of 50. There is no charge for the brochures and the USIHC will also pay for standard USPS First Class shipping. Requests for quantities of 500 and above must be made at least four weeks in advance.

REGIONAL CLUBS

At the September Board meeting, Regional Club Committee chair Anita Sepko reported that the committee was working on an efficient and fair way to allocate



Salute the judge before you begin your program, they told young rider Shay Heath at the Kraftur Club's Tölt in Harmony clinic. They didn't say how to salute! Photo by Lisa Heath.

funds to the clubs for educational purposes. "After much discussion," she said, "it was felt fair that the USIHC allocate \$500 to each club yearly with the following parameters: 1. The Club must be in good standing with the USIHC. 2. The requesting Club must fill out a request form. ... 3. The educational activity for which the Club is requesting funds must be conducted by a certified Icelandic trainer/clinician. This will make sure the event is in alignment with the goals and the structure of the USIHC. 4. If a Club does not use their funds in a given year, those funds are lost.... 5. A summary of the activity along with photos must be submitted for inclusion in the Quarterly." The \$500 figure, Anita explained, was derived by taking \$5000 and dividing it between the 10 established clubs. The Board decided to table the proposal until the 2016 Budget Meeting. It also

asked the committee to expand the idea to include clinicians accredited with a recognized organization outside of the Icelandic horse community.

COMPETITIONS

Three USIHC-sanctioned shows were scheduled for this fall: The Flugnirkeppni Icelandic Horse Show on September 5-6 at Winterhorse Park in Eagle, WI, was organized by Kevin Draeger (shows@flugnir.org). The Kentucky Icelandic Horse Show on October 10-11 in Shelbyville, KY, was organized by Margaret Brandt (maggie@litttleikiicelandics.com). The CIA Open Fall Show on October 24-25 in Santa Ynez, CA, was organized by Ásta Covert (info@tolt.net or see www.ciaclub.net). Results of all USIHC-Sanctioned shows are posted on the USIHC website (www.icelandics.org/showresults.php).

FARM SHOW

At the recent Kentucky Icelandic Horse Show viewers were treated to a professionally organized farm show. These kinds of shows are very popular in Europe but we hardly get to see them here in the U.S. because of the huge distances between farms and event locations.

Creekside Farm in Georgia was represented by a team of eight, bringing an impressive total of 17 horses and 7 riders to the event. An additional two riders from Léttleiki Icelandics helped present the horses. The evening farm show on Saturday showed off some of Katrin Sheehan's top quality breeding mares and stallions, along with their offspring and other young horses out of the Creekside breeding program. The ridden presentation on the oval track was announced by international breeding judge Barbara Frische, who did a fine job providing interesting information about the horses.

Óskar frá Litla-Dal (US1994102887)

was one of the stallions presented at the farm show in his last performance on an oval track: Óskar will be enjoying his well-deserved retirement from competition at Creekside Farm.

All the young horses were American bred and had just been started six weeks ago. It was most impressive to see such inexperienced horses zoom around the oval track in the dark, tölt, trotting, cantering, and even showing off a flying pace while the crowd clapped, cheered, and took flash photos. To see such talented and good minded young American horses being ridden by very talented riders was a true treat.

JUDGING SEMINAR

A USIHC-sponsored Judging Seminar was conducted by Þorgeir Guðlaugsson on October 8-11, in association with the Kentucky Icelandic Horse Show at Léttleiki Icelandics in Shelbyville, KY. The seminar included lectures, video presentations,

and practical judging, with an optional examination. A total of six riders, breeders, and intern judges participated in the seminar.

"The seminar was outstanding," says Alex Pregitzer, who passed the exam as a USIHC Sport Judge B. "There have been quite a few changes in the judging system in the past few years, and Þorgeir is very knowledgeable and passionate about what he does. He's a fantastic judge, teacher, and person."

For information on future judging seminars, contact Education committee chair Alex Dannenmann (alex.dannenmann@gmail.com).

NEW SPORT JUDGES MATRIX

The new ranks for judges in the U.S., the qualifications needed to achieve them, and the events each judge is entitled to judge were approved by the USIHC Board in September. They are:

International FEIF sport judge: passed the FEIF exam on the international level; entitled to judge all tournaments, including the World Championships.

USIHC Sport Judge A: passed the FEIF exam on the national level; entitled to judge all tournaments, including World Ranking events other than the World Championships. You must be a Sport Judge A for 2 years before taking the FEIF exam on the international level.

USIHC Sport Judge B: passed the U.S. exam on the B level; entitled to judge USIHC-sanctioned shows when there is more than one judge, excluding World Ranking events. You must be a Sport Judge B before taking the FEIF exam on the national level.

USIHC Sport Judge C: passed the U.S. exam on the C level; entitled to judge schooling shows.

BOARD MEETINGS

The USIHC Board of Directors met by conference call on July 14 and September 15; there was no August meeting due to the Icelandic Horse World Championships. All members are welcome to sit in on the calls. The meeting minutes can be read online at www.icelandics.org/bod/minutes.php.



One of the spectacular performances at this year's Flugnirkeppni competition, organized by the Flugnir Club at Winterhorse Park in Eagle, WI. Here Carrie Brandt rides Veigar frá Lækjamóti. Photo by Sydney Horas of OnIce Icelandic.

FEIF BOARD MEETING

FEIF's Board of Directors met in early October to prepare the conference and 2016 Delegates Assembly in February. Several positions on the FEIF board and committees, all operating on an honorary basis, will be up for re-election or are open to new members. The board evaluated the details of the past World Championships in order to improve the procedures, organization, and schedules of future events. Apart from the World Championships, many activities (in addition to ongoing projects like the World Ranking) took place in 2015; among them, a sport judges exam and seminar for international sport judges, a video contest and the FEIF Youth Camp, a young horse breeding trainer seminar, a breeding judges exam and open breeders meeting, the relay ride and the virtual ride to Hering. In November an education and youth seminar was to be held. Several FEIF working groups have been working on a variety of projects this year, including the FEIF equipment manual (to be published at the end of 2015) and the new structure of the FEIF rules and regulations and statutes.

NEW SPORT JUDGES

FEIF conducted an International Sport Judge License examination in Germany at the end of September. From a total of 27 candidates, 10 passed the exam to become new FEIF International Sport Judges. They are: Heri Djurhuus Dahl (FO), Jenny



Göransson (SE), Pétur Vopni Sigurðsson (IS), Stefan Hackauf (DE), Lise Brouér (DK), Roger Scherrer (CH), Stefan Schenzel (DE), Anna Andersen (FI), Svenja Braun (DE), and Jóhan Häggberg (SE). In addition, three candidates qualified for licenses at the national level: Aly van der Veen (NL), Hrönn Kjartansdóttir (IS), and Alexandra Dannenmann (US).

EDUCATION SEMINAR

The international FEIF seminar "Teaching the next generation: joint FEIF Education & Youth seminar for riding instructors and trainers at all levels and national youth and education leaders," was to be held in Weistrach, Austria on November 27-29, while this issue was at press.

The focus of the seminar was the teaching of young riders at different education and training levels, organizing practical training in an age appropriate and interesting way, and handling the difficulties that might arise. Different theoretical and practical demonstrations were followed by discussions. The seminar was open to all licensed trainers levels 1-3 and to national education and youth leaders. Trainee trainers and not yet qualified trainers could also apply for registration.

HOME TO HÓLAR

It is not too late to join the virtual ride to next year's Landsmót in Hólar, Iceland. You will be in the company of riders from all over the world, including Austria, Romania, and Australia. The concept is simple: register online, calculate the distance from your home to Hólar, follow your normal riding routine, but also add

up the distance you have ridden over a month, and send it in. See <http://www.feif.org/LeisureRiding/VirtualRide.aspx>

FEIF YOUTH CUP

The 2016 FEIF Youth Cup will be held July 22-31 in Exloo, The Netherlands. For more information, see www.icelandics.org/youth/youthCup2016

CLEAN CHAMPIONS

The Icelandic Horse World Championships has once again proved to be a clean sport event. No prohibited substances were found in the different random taken samples from sport and breeding horses at the 2015 championships at Hering, Denmark.

HARMONY

The FEIF Sport Department congratulates the 105 riders who have been nominated for Good and Harmonious Riding in the 2015 competition season. Thank you all for being such excellent examples of the type of riding we hope to see in our sport.

POSITION OPEN

FEIF is looking for an energetic and knowledgeable person to join the board as Director for PR. Responsibilities will include fundraising and sponsorship, publicity and communication merchandising, and developing the FEIF brand. The position is voluntary, but travel and other expenses will be reimbursed. Interested? Please send a brief outline of your experience and the reasons why you might be interested to office@feif.org.

REGIONAL CLUB UPDATES

CASCADE (PACIFIC NORTHWEST)

BY SUSAN WELLINGTON

Members of the Cascade Icelandic Horse Club enjoyed a variety of events over the summer. Linda Eddy, Janet Boggs, Linda Templeton, Dick Templeton, Lori Birge, Lisa Brandenberger, and Karin Daum participated in the virtual ride "From Here to Herning," followed by an actual trip to Herning to watch the 2015 Icelandic Horse World Championships with Sasha Roland, Ed Boggs, and Martin Daum. Other members of the virtual ride team included Freya Sturm, Dorothy Connors, and Deb Faver. Christian Eckhart, who led the actual FEIF Relay Ride, sponsored a reception for all the virtual riders during the championships and gave them a collapsible hoof pick as a memento.

Mark and Glenda Josey rode every weekend. Their Icelandic horses were seen at Dibblee Beach, Northrup Creek, Williamette Mission State Park, Milo McIver State Park, Mollalla River Recreation Corridor, Port Blakely Tree Farm, Reehers



Cascade Club member Mark Josey took his Icelandic horses on many trails in Oregon and Washington.



Members of the Cascade Icelandic Horse Club enjoyed three days of beach riding at Long Beach, WA.

Camp, Timothy Lake, Twin Lakes, the Banks-Vernonia Trail, the Olson Quarter Horse Ranch, Rock Creek Horse Camp, and Wipple Creek.

This list of places brings up a problem for CIHC members that developed this year. Our club's area straddles the Oregon/Washington border. In past years the two states agreed to allow horses to travel freely across the border for limited stays. This year that agreement changed. Now to cross the river we have to have negative Coggins and health certificates for inter-state travel. This has affected attendance at club events, as half our members will be on the wrong side of the river whatever we plan.

Our July event was at Long Beach, WA. Karen Brotzman, Claudia Rancore, Lynn Devleming, Cindy Seibert, Susan Wellington, Janella Radetich, Rachel Clark, and Lisa Brandenburger enjoyed three days of beach riding with great weather.

In August we met at Wren Hill Farm in Ridgefield, WA for a play day and summer meeting. We met two new members, Sharon Patterson and Susie Griffin. Bobbi Sloane showed us how to do Bowen Work "moves" on our horses' muscles to produce healing energy.

In September Rachel Clark, Linda Eddy, Lori Birge, Lisa Brandenberger, Pamela Nolf, and Karin Daum participated in the "Tölt in Harmony" Clinic with Trausti Þór Guðmundsson at Red Feather

Icelandics in Trout Lake, WA. There were rave reviews about that experience.

FIRC (MID-ATLANTIC)

BY RICH MOORE

The Frida Icelandic Riding Club had numerous activities this summer, including participation in the NEIHC show in July, trail rides in July and August, a riding clinic with Steinar in August, a schooling show in September, and drill team practices.

In mid-July a contingent of FIRC members traveled to Thor Icelandics in Claverack, NY to attend the annual



Cascade Club member Rachel Clark at the "Tölt in Harmony" Clinic with Trausti Þór Guðmundsson at Red Feather Icelandics in Trout Lake, WA.



Tammy Martin, Mitch Martin, Antje Freygang, Rich Moore, and Sverrir Bjartmarz took part in the FIRC trail ride at the Manassas National Battlefield Park in August.

NEIHC Open. Riding were Sverrir Bjartmarz, Antje Freygang, Mitch Martin, and Tammy Martin. Attending were Susan McPhatter, Donny McPhatter, Pat Moore, and Rich Moore. It was great to see old friends at the show in such a superb setting. FIRC members all appreciated the warm welcome they received and look forward to more joint events with our northern neighbors.

Laura Colicchio wrote about a July 25 ride on the NCR trail in Hunt Valley, MD, "This ride was a joint collaboration between FIRC and TROT, coordinated by me and Barbara Sollner-Webb. FIRC riders included Tony and Laura Colicchio, Denis and Barbara Webb, and Diane Grant-Hatcher. What a great turn-out it was, with 11 riders total. Riders broke



Mitch Martin and trainer Steinar Sigurbjörnsson at a FIRC Clinic in August. Photo by Suzi McGraw.

into an all-walk group and a faster group. (All the Icelandics ended up in the fast group!) The scenery was breathtaking as we rode along the Gunpowder River, meandering into the water several times to cool the horses off. We rode along high rock walls, through groves of giant trees, and along rolling country meadows and farms. Joining the two groups together, and integrating all the breeds, has been amazingly fun."

Sverrir Bjartmarz, Mitch Martin, and Tammy Martin organized a FIRC ride on the Manassas National Battlefield Park on August 14; they were joined by Antje Freygang and Rich Moore. The trails were dry and in excellent condition. Since all the horses and riders were experienced,

Nancy Green, Merja Kantola, and Christine Hofmann (left to right) attended a FIRC clinic taught by Steinar Sigurbjörnsson. Christine (on Suzi McGraw's Sleipnir frá Þúfu) was riding an Icelandic horse for the first time since she was a child. Photo by Suzi McGraw.

there was one group and the pace was brisk! Everyone had a great time.

Steinar Sigurbjörnsson gave a clinic in August at Antje Freygang's farm in Middleburg, VA. Riders included Antje, Nancy Green, Christine Hohmann, Merja Kantola, Mitch Martin, Tammy Martin, Suzi McGraw, and Hedy Sladovich. "As usual Steinar worked with each horse-and-rider team



FIRC riders Tammy Martin, Mitch Martin, Sverrir Bjartmarz, and Antje Freygang attended the NEIHC Open Show in Claverack, NY in July.



Jacki Edens and Sverrir Bjartmarz competing in the beer tolt at the FIRC schooling show in September in Herndon, VA. Jacki won a close victory.

diagnosing specific needs and planning matching training strategies and exercises for improvement,” said Suzi McGraw.

Frying Pan Farm Park in Herndon, VA was the site of the annual FIRC schooling show. Alex Dannenmann judged, assisted by Susan McPhatter as scribe. Rich Moore was the announcer. There were 12 horse-and-rider combinations. Said Pat Moore, “Alex was a great judge and clinician, and everyone enjoyed the show.”

The FIRC drill team continued to

hold regular practices in Antje Freygang’s covered arena. Members riding include Sverrir Bjartmarz, Pat Carballo, Jacki Edens, Antje Freygang, Mitch Martin, Tammy Martin, and Pat Moore. Rich Moore directs and rides.

Sali Peterson, a long-time member of FIRC, will be leaving us and moving to California. We appreciate all Sali’s service to the club, including her time on the

board of directors and on the committee that planned the FIRC sanctioned and schooling shows. Her mastery of graphic design will be sorely missed. We wish her good luck in the Golden State.

In our report in Issue 3/2015 the trainer Brendon Wise was referred to as “Brandon West.” We apologize for the error.

FLUGNIR (MINNESOTA & WISCONSIN)

BY JACKIE ALSCHULER

In July Flugnir gathered for the second annual Minnesota Icelandic Horse Celebration. Kydee Sheetz reported: “We partnered with the Minnesota Tennessee Walking Horse (TWH) Association and met in Hinckley, MN for two days of competition. While we shared the facility and expenses, each breed used their own judge and followed breed-specific rules. Icelandic riders requested and received “live” comments from judge Barbara Frische during several classes, which contributed to the learning experience as it was possible for riders to make adjustments in the heat of competition. As most of the audience was from the TWH group, the judge’s descriptions and comments educated enthusiasts from both



Pernille Lyager Møller and Brá frá Fellskoti show beautiful form at the Flugnirkeppni show, held in September at Winterhorse Park in Wisconsin. Photo by Sydney Horas of OnIce Icelandics.



Scenes from the Flugnirkeppni Show (clockwise from top left): Dan Riva on Fjalar frá Bjargshóli, Terral Hill pacing Svali frá Tjörn, Gabrielle Pittman pacing Rós from Helms Hill, and Carrie Brandt on Veigar frá Lækjarmóti (left) with Kydee Sheetz on Tandri from Aslan's Country. Photos by Sydney Horas of Onlce Icelandics.

breeds—particularly those TWH riders who “crossed over to the other side” and competed on borrowed Icelandics for the first time! In addition, we enthusiastically battled the TWH riders in obstacle course and costume competitions, various games, and the open gaited breed classes. One highlight was when Barbara Frische on Alfadans frá Ingólfshvoli went head-to-head in the Master’s Division against one of the top TWH judges in the U.S.!”

Flugnir members were also busy this summer with our newest breed promotion idea: Icelandic Horse Open House events. This year two different farms, Aslan’s Country Icelandics (owned by Kydee Sheetz) near Duluth, MN and River Brink Farm (a public boarding facility) in River Falls, WI participated. Wrote Kydee, “Icelandic horses are not well known in our region, so we used everything from

Craigslist to road signs to promote each event. Icelandic horse enthusiasts from as far as 200 miles away brought their horses to both farms to demonstrate gaits, drill maneuvers, trail obstacles, and the ever-popular beer tölt. In addition, each farm recruited a veterinarian and a farrier to present on various topics of interest. At my farm, skilled riders from other breeds were invited to enjoy a free tölt lesson. Our primary goal at each event was to introduce committed horse enthusiasts from other breeds, as well as the general public, to our amazing horses. We hope to expand this concept next year and have farms in other areas of our region host similar events.”

Nick Cook reported on the annual Flugnirkeppni competition, held on September 11-12: “The show was graciously hosted by Flugnir founding members Barb and Dan Riva at their beautiful Winter-

horse Park facility in Eagle, WI. We were honored to host international sport judge Will Covert, accompanied by his wife Ásta and their lovely daughter Anna Bella. Will’s welcoming demeanor and willingness to provide real-time feedback to riders of all levels always makes this event an extra-special learning and growth experience for everyone.”

A special thanks is in order as well for fellow Flugnir founder Deborah Cook, a regional sport judge who is continuing to work on her credentials and judged alongside Will. Scribing was “the always reliable and pleasant Terri Ingram,” Nick said. Terri also played the essential role of keeping in order the announcer, Kevin Draeger, and the show secretary and Ice-Test guru, Nick himself, which, Nick said, “is always a daunting task.”

A big thank-you on behalf of the Flugnir board goes out to the generous class sponsors, volunteers, and special prize donations. “As with past Flugnir shows,” Nick said, “we worked to incorporate as many fun and gaming classes as scheduling would allow, and this year Eve and Dave Loftness worked extra hard to bring back a trail competition class.

“Every show has special moments and this one was no different,” Nick said. “We had participants representing Canada, Minnesota, Kentucky, and Wisconsin. It was extra-special to see some new—and some returning—young faces. Jay Maio, grandson of Dan and Barb Riva, led the show in total entries, ranging across virtually every different riding class level. It was terrific to see participants stretching the limits of their abilities and entering more difficult events, in order to gain on-track education regardless of their scores. Jay was also involved in a show highlight, competing head-to-head with his sister, Macy Maio, in a youth tölt class. Macy had a bit

of trouble getting her horse (31-year-old Dama) to move-out, so Grandpa Dan Riva took to the track to chase her. While Dan didn’t have the most elegant tölt himself, he looked in good form for a stallion his age, having a blast with his enthusiastic grandchildren.

“Other highlights included Terral Hill and Carrie Lyons Brandt’s participation in open four-gait, open five-gait, and open tölt competitions, scoring outstanding marks and providing strong inspiration for many of us to strive for more. This event would not be the same—and would scarcely be possible—without the support of our friends at Léttleiki Icelandics!

“While 2015 was not the largest Flugnirkeppni by any stretch (the unseasonably hot weather really cut the number of class entries), it is always wonderful to see old friends, meet new ones, and share in our fellowship around the amazing Icelandic horse.”

KLETTAFJALLA (ROCKY MOUNTAINS)

BY KRISTINA BEHRINGER

Several months ago I received an invitation to a three-day clinic hosted by Coralie Denmeade of Tamangur Icelandic Horses in Larkspur, CO. Coralie, a



The Klettajfjalla Club’s recent events included a clinic with Guðmar Pétursson: at top left, he helps Susan Burns and Sonur, at bottom, he coaches drill team practice. At top right, Barbara Frische and participants of the 3-Gait class at the Klettajfjalla Schooling Show congratulate Jim Wiggins and Silfri for yet another win. Photos by Coralie Denmeade.



Alyssa Tisdell and Hrappi won the beer tölt—with trot and canter—at the Klettafjalla Schooling Show. Photo by Coralie Denmeade.

Maile Behringer with Hnoss showing Klettafjalla team spirit. Photo by Jake Behringer.



certified trainer who is endlessly patient and has the ability to meet each rider at their skill level, brought in famed trainers Barbara Frische and Guðmar Pétursson. Being new to Icelandic horses, I immediately RSVP'd, "Yes"! Yet as we got closer to the clinic date, I considered canceling. I had been struggling with my lovely mare, Elska, and we were not toltng much—or really at all.

The clinic began on Friday, however private lessons with Barbara were offered the day before. I took advantage of the opportunity and was immeasurably pleased with my decision, as Barbara is able to instill a sense of confidence in both rider and horse.

Guðmar, from whom my daughter received most of her instruction, was kind and unpretentious—despite his celebrity-like status—and able to explain what she should do in a way a 13-year-old could comprehend. My daughter quickly absorbed what he was teaching, and impressed me with her maturity and focus. It was obvious that she was enjoying the instruction, and she made great progress over the weekend. She's even given me some pointers learned from Guðmar since we have been home and riding together.

Coralie, who amazed all of us, as usual, with her exceptionally helpful analogies in teaching during the weekend, also played the roles of MC, host, photogra-

pher, coach, mother, wife, and diplomat.

The three days went by much too quickly. In the near-perfect weather, when not riding we watched each other and listened to Barbara, Guðmar, and Coralie describe conformation issues and the difficulties they create for the horse. Each night we all had dinner together, which was overridden with laughter. On the final day, we all participated in a schooling show. What a surprise at how different an Icelandic show is from anything I've ever seen! Granted, it was a schooling show, but we had some seriously talented riders and horses. One of the highlights was to see Barbara and Guðmar borrow helmets in order to race around the track together on horses they had not ridden prior—we cheered them on like crazed sports fans as they paced the borrowed horses, smiling all the while.

I'm so glad we went, because I had so much fun and learned so much by riding and watching others ride. There was a great sense of camaraderie, and every color of Icelandic, conformation, level of training, riding experience, and even some barely-tölters! We had great weather, great food (thank you Shawn Denmeade for the gourmet dinner and lunch) and an all-around, better-than-I-could-have-hoped-for time! As we drove away covered in dust, I said a small prayer to Sleipnir

that I wouldn't get pulled over and have to explain why my pants smelled like beer. Do you think the Colorado Highway Patrol have heard of the Beer Tölt?

KRAFTUR (NORTHERN CALIFORNIA)

BY BERT BATES

"Summertime done, come and gone, my, oh my." –Hunter, Garcia

Shortly after our last report, Kraftur volunteers, with a huge assist from Annette Coulon, held the Spring Show at Mountain Icelandics (MIF) in Watsonville, CA. As seems to be our tradition, we had a great blend of youth riders, veterans, and folks new to Icelandics.

Congratulations to our youngest riders, Friða Hildur Steinarsdóttir (our unofficial, extra-special rider who just turned five), Valerie Carvajal, and Isra Saalisi. Other youth riders included Emily Benito, Cameron Tolbert, Elizabeth Monsef, Katherine Monsef, Kajsa Johnson, Abigail Moerer, Allison Moerer, and Julia Hasenhauer.

We welcomed longtime rider, but new Icelandic horse owner Liz Riehl, and our reliable group of veterans: Alexander Venable, Annette Coulon, Annie Aston, Laurie Prestine, Kathy Sierra, Lorrie Thompson, Bruce Edwards, Colleen Monsef, and Robynn Smith.

Our judge was the effervescent Hulda Geirsdóttir. In addition to the competitive classes you'd expect (V1, V3, T3, T8, and so on), extremely hard-fought battles were held during the Ride-a-buck and Beer Tölt classes. Another tradition at MIF shows has become a dressage class: Congrats to Annette and Robynn for making use of that beautiful short court for their dressage class.

Finally a huge thanks to the volunteers who made this show such a success: Linda Moerer, Laurie Prestine, Carol Tolbert, Gabriele Meyer, Lin Campbell, Bruce Edwards, David Sallisi, Gary Shapiro, Nahiely Carvajal, Carlos Nunez, and Sarah Stern.

Before moving on, I have to admit that we struggled mightily with Icestest during this show. The good news is that



Scenes from the Kraftur Club's events: Annette Coulon riding Thokka (top left) and Abigail Moerer riding Igull (top right) with Trausti Þór Guðmundsson at the Tölt in Harmony clinic at Mountain Icelandics. Photos by Lisa Heath and Annette Coulon. Olivia Rasmussen (middle left) and Ayla Green (middle right) competing at the Kraftur Schooling Show held at Coast Stables. Photos by Alex Venable. Bottom left, Shay Heath, with assistant judge Doug Smith, and (right) Jessica Blough competing at the Kraftur Schooling Show. Photos by Eleanor Anderson.



Left, Sierra Kenville (photographed by Alex Venable) and right, Elizabeth Monsef (photographed by Eleanor Anderson) compete at the Kraftur Schooling Show held at Coast Stables in September.

we've written a short "How to Survive Ice-test" guide, available as a free download on the website seriouspony.com.

During the summer, MIF and Annie Aston hosted a Tölt in Harmony clinic led by Trausti Þór Guðmundsson. This was the first TiH clinic we've held, and I think it's safe to say we're all fans. Participants ranged from riders fairly new to the sport, all the way to seasoned trail riders and VI competitors. Every rider reported feeling they were challenged commensurate with their skills. TiH seems to be a fantastic complement to the sports shows normally held in the U.S.

Finally, in September, Heidi and Laura Benson hosted a fantastic schooling show at Coast Stables. Will Covert was the judge and chief mentor and Doug Smith helped with logistics. We offered all open and intermediate classes, along with pleasure tölt for fun. The goal of the show was to give riders the opportunity to challenge themselves, and we encouraged riders to try individual programs, even if they wouldn't be so bold in a sanctioned show. Congrats to junior rider Shay Heath for attempting his first T1!

NEIHC (NORTHEAST)

BY JESS HAYNSWORTH

As we head into leaf-peeping season here in the Northeast, our members have a lot of fun memories to look back on.

The main event this summer was the Third Annual NEIHC Open Sanctioned Show, which may just have been our best show yet! Thor Icelandics hosted, Hulda Geirsdóttir judged (and offered individual feedback to all who asked), and a lot of fun was had by all.

One big change this year was the addition of a class called "Team Four Gait," in which riders could form teams of two, each performing two of the four gaits; their scores were averaged and the team with the highest score won. Acoustic tölt was once again popular (this is the class in which the judge is blindfolded and scores the horses based on clarity of beat alone), with six riders participating.

Tölt-T1 was very special this year, because Thor Icelandics donated a beautiful trophy in honor of the great horseman Einar Öder Magnússon. The cup will be a traveling trophy, going home with the winner each year unless one person wins the cup three years in a row with the same horse. This year, youth rider Hanna Huss on the legendary Stigandi frá Leysingjastodum II won the cup with a score of 7.0!

Once again, we offered division championships to riders who completed both a tölt and multi-gait class in one division on the same horse. Horse-and-rider pairs who qualified had their scores from both classes averaged together, and the two highest-scoring pairs became the division champions and reserve champions. These

and all other scores can be found on the USIHC website at <http://www.icelandics.org/showresults.php>.

Last but not least, we congratulate the winners of our "Feather Prize," given to riders who demonstrate light and harmonious riding throughout the competition: Carrie Lyons-Brandt (adult) and Isabelle Maranda (youth).

The 2016 NEIHC Open will take place July 30-31 at Thor Icelandics in Claverack, NY. The judge will be Nicole Kempf of Germany. A competition clinic with Nicole will be held before the show. Contact neicelandichorseclub@gmail.com for more information.

Just one week after the NEIHC Open, the very first American Youth Cup was held in Kentucky at Léttleiki Icelandics in Shelbyville, KY. Four NEIHC youth members qualified for and attended the event. Isabelle Maranda and Emese Dunn were both on the "blue team," which won the Team Spirit award for their great cooperation. Hanna Huss was on the "gray team," which won the Team Equestrian Award, given to the team with the highest combined score average; Hanna also won the trail challenge. Our fourth youth rider was Alicia Flanigan. All four made us very proud with their fantastic sportsmanship and beautiful horsemanship—on unfamiliar horses, no less!

Wrote Hanna, "The week was filled with training, making friends, and learning



opportunities. The 20 participants were divided into four teams and had to complete certain tasks as a team. Tuesday through Thursday we had lessons with the four instructors, got to know our horses, and prepared for the show. On Friday there was a field trip to the Kentucky Horse Park and the Hagyard Equine Veterinary Clinic, which was very interesting and informative. On the weekend, we got to show off our (new) skills with our new horses in a USIHC-Sanctioned show. The show was very successful, and there were awards given out to riders and teams. Overall, it was a wonderful experience. All the volunteers, instructors, judges, team leaders, and organizers were incredibly friendly and attentive, and it was a great opportunity to make friends who share the same passion all over the U.S.”

The NEIHC also sponsored a Tölt in Harmony clinic with Trausti Þór Guðmundsson at Thor Icelandics. According to Kara Noble, “Trausti gave lessons

to eight riders, individually and in pairs, throughout the weekend, then we finished with a friendly competition. The champion was Leslie Chambers on Vikingur, second place went to Margot Apple, and Paula Noga and Arsenio Paez tied for third. Everyone who attended won great advice and training to help their horses move better. Over the course of the weekend about 20 auditors were able to watch and learn, compliments of a generous sponsorship from Thor Icelandics.”

NEIHC members’ activities aren’t just limited to NEIHC events. Mike Kooyman (age 12) and trainer Nicki Esdorn won a hunter pace! Said Mike, “Off to John Jay Homestead we went on September 13. John Jay is a historical site in Katonah where the Bedford Hunter Pace is held. Me and my partner Nicki Esdorn were off to a good start with our trusty Icelandics, Vikingur and Alfrun, and with our lucky team number: 1. It was a beautiful day, and there were many brand new jumps and

Scenes from the NEIHC Open, held at Thor Icelandics in September. Top left, a horseless victory lap by the youth stars: Alicia Flanigan leads, as champion of the youth division. Reserve champion Isabelle Maranda trots along behind her, followed by her sister, Amelie Maranda, champion of the Youth Jr. Division. Middle, T1 winners Hanna Huss and Stígandi frá Leysingjastöðum with Stígandi’s owner, Martina Gates. Their beautiful trophy was donated by Thor Icelandics, and will be a traveling cup. Top right, Carrie Brandt on Svali frá Tjörn tóting hand-in-hand with Leslie Chambers on Herdis from Mill Farm, after an exciting T2 final. Carrie won the Feather Prize, and she and Svali were the Open Division Champions. Below, a three-way tie for third place in the V1 A final: Nicki Esdorn on Álfrún frá Hrafnstöðum, Antje Freygang on Skuggi frá Strandarhjáleigu, and Jessica Haynsworth on Vigri frá Vallanesi. Photos by Heleen Heyning.

different trails and water crossings. One fourth of the way into the Pace we came to the first jumping field. My horse took the first little log, and as we landed I realized that he had lost a shoe. I hopped off to grab the shoe. I was really disappointed. We walked back to the start and luckily didn’t run into any other teams on the way. We asked if there was a farrier on site, and thankfully he had just shown up. We got the shoe back on and restarted the pace. We finished with smiles all around and won first place for the Junior Division.”

NEIHC member Anne Owen also had a hunter pace adventure on September 13. She wrote: “The Icelandic Foursome strikes again: Both teams came first in the Fall Hunter Pace at Lord Stirling in Basking Ridge, NJ. Karen Damato and Marilyn



Left to right: Five-year-old NEIHC member Liesl Kolbe rides Thór frá Skorrastad in a lesson at Mad River Valley Icelandics in Warren, VT. Photo by Augustin Demonceax. NEIHC member Sarah Porter, riding Oskadis from Mill Farm, took this photo during a foxhunt in Vermont. In front of her, on the white horse, is Susan Peters riding Aska frá Geldingaá. NEIHC member Caeli Cavanagh on her new horse, Peyr frá Ytra-Vallholti, at Hólar University in Iceland. Peyr will be Caeli's "student horse." Photo by Jasmina Koethe.

Weiner competed in the Hilltoppers Division, while Anne Owen and Sandy Perkins competed in the Seniors. The four riders' accumulative age is 260. Karen's horse, Freyr, is a 25-year-old gelding who loves the hunter paces and is always the first at the gate to go on a trail ride. That's what keeps him young and flexible."

Vermont riders Susan Peters and Sarah Porter took their Icelandic horses fox hunting on September 7. Sarah wrote: "I'm privileged to live close to the North Country Hounds, the only live hunt in New England. While the other hunts are drag hunts, where the scent of a fox is laid over a course with a defined beginning and end before the hunt begins, hounds won't always pick up the scent of a fox during a live hunt. When a scent is found, however, the excitement begins, with long chases through forests and fields that bring wide grins to the faces of all on the ride. If a live fox is found, the well-trained pack of hounds are called off, and all go on their merry way. I've been hunting a few times with the North Country Hounds and each time, I've had a swift, steady Icelandic as my mount. Though the Irish Sporthorses tower over me, I've always kept to the front of the pack, amazing those who aren't familiar with Icelandics' speed, smoothness, and reliability. Live hunt or drag hunt, there's nothing more exciting than bursting into a tölt upon hearing the musical baying of the hounds."

Maine residents Cindy and Brian Wescott and their daughter Krista of Boul-

der Ridge Icelandics, along with Barbara Wilkins and Nancy Renton, recently had an off-road adventure of their own in Acadia National Park. Wrote Cindy: "Our Icelandics didn't blink an eye at the carriages or bicycles, and the weather was awesome. It was a lot of fun. We did approximately 20 of the 47 miles of carriage roads at the park. Horses from all over come to Acadia to ride. One woman was telling me how her big horse was difficult as a youngster going forward, so I asked her what she did to help solve her problem: She told me that she rode with an Icelandic!"

And from Iceland, Caeli Cavanagh writes to us just a few weeks in to her first semester at Hólar University College; Caeli hails from Vermont and is the third American to attend Hólar's equestrian program. There, she said, "I have a chance to approach the art of riding from all angles. Right now we are studying biochemistry, horse behavior and fundamentals of riding. In riding class we are studying the details of different dressage exercises, trying to address different problems in our seat, and learning proper lunging technique. We also have rider training twice a week where we do strengthening exercises, endurance, and stretches so our bodies can be the tools of communication they need to be. I am so happy to be here with so many dedicated and talented horse people."

While summer has ended, NEIHC members have a number of exciting things to look forward to this fall. As I

write this, any of our riders are gearing up for the annual Kentucky Icelandic Horse Show, hosted by Léttleiki Icelandics, on October 10-11. Riders who might not normally get to participate have the opportunity to do so this year thanks to the generous offer of Curtis Pierce to ship horses from the Northeast to Kentucky and back again.

On October 17-19, there will be two clinics in New York, one with Steinar Sigurbjörnsson at West Wind Farm in Delhi, and the annual Maestro Clinic at Thor Icelandics in Claverack.

And on November 12-15, we look forward to Equine Affaire in Springfield, MA. Said Kara Noble: "Throughout the spring and summer, NEIHC members have been busily working on preparations for the club's booth. The booth will provide plenty of literature from the USIHC and the NEIHC, including complementary copies of the *Quarterly*. Sigrún Brynjarsdóttir from Solheimar Farm in Tunbridge, VT will be presenting ridden and in-hand demos, and we plan to show videos of Icelandic horses at the booth. We're delighted that we will be joined in the booth this year by our friends from Íshestar, one of Iceland's best-known trekking companies. We're also thrilled that one of the neighboring booths will house the Knights of Iceland, who will be riding in this year's Fantasia show. We will make sure that Icelandic horses are well represented at Equine Affaire!"

POSTCARDS FROM SUMMER CAMP

BY HALEY & BROOKE WEHRHEIM

Editor's note: Every other year, the USIHC's parent organization organizes an international summer camp for kids ages 12 to 18. Representing the USIHC at this year's camp, held June 28 to July 5 at Reitschule Berger in Berlar, Germany, were Haley and Brooke Wehrheim from Alaska; their mother Jane, acted as Country Leader. Writes Jane, "It's amazing to me to see the international friendships that formed in this week among the youth and the country leaders. We all have come back with fond memories and lots of future plans with our new friends, all involving Icelandic horses, of course. We bought our first Icelandic horse a little over two years ago. I had no idea then how many opportunities and friendships would come from this sturdy horse—what a blessing to our family."

HALEY'S POSTCARD

I had many amazing experiences at the FEIF Youth Camp. I made new friends from different countries and got to learn about their Icelandics and the sorts of competitions and events they do with them.

The camp was centered around circus skills, and we were taught to walk on stilts, glass, and nails. We practiced aerial acrobatics, juggling, fire tricks, and much more. The last day, we put the skills we learned during the week together into a show that area residents came to watch.

We had many other activities throughout the week, both related to



The 2015 FEIF Youth Camp in Germany focused on circus skills—along with riding Icelandic horses, as below. Photos by Gundula Sharman.

horses and not. We visited an amusement park, a horse museum, the State Riding School, and strolled around a small village for an afternoon. We went on a four-hour trail ride through the mountains. I was able to ride down a mine cart for the first time in my life and walk into an old silver, lead, and zinc mine. My favorite thing was getting lessons from two Icelandic horse world champions, Jolly Schrenk or Silke Feuchthofen. I learned many tips on riding from them—and I got their autographs!

BROOKE'S POSTCARD

If you like meeting people from all around the world, having fun, exploring new places, being silly, and riding Icelandic horses, then this camp would be perfect for you! I had such a wonderful time—I would go back in a heartbeat if I could! I made so many friends, that I will keep in touch with.

The thanks for joining us all together should go to Ula, our instructor in circus skills. She had us play lots of games to get to know one another. They were so entertaining! We all had to work together, learn to trust one another, and think outside the box. We had to walk on glass, lie or stand on a bed of nails, or act like a mime. On the night of the circus we had a fire show, gymnastics, juggling, and people walking on stilts. I did aerial gymnastics and trapeze. To end the night we had a barbeque, inviting all our guests who came to watch the circus.

I would definitely recommend going to this camp, it's a once in a lifetime opportunity filled with memories that will last forever!

Read the official FEIF Youth Camp report by Gundula Sharman at http://www.feiffengur.com/documents/FYCamp2015_report.pdf.



THE AMERICAN YOUTH CUP

BY CARRIE BRANDT

It all began with FEIF Youth Cup alumni Ayla Green and I dreaming that the United States could hold its own Youth Cup. Our goal was to encourage teamwork and friendships among youth across the nation and to allow our best young riders to show their skills. Last summer that dream became a reality: The first American Youth Cup was sponsored by Léttleiki Icelandics at Swallowland Farm in Kentucky from July 21-26.

Did we meet our goal? This is what participant Emese Dunn had to say: "When I first arrived at Léttleiki Icelandics for the American Youth Cup, the hum of at least 20 voices was a little overwhelming. I wondered if I would fit in. I wondered what horse I would get—would it be a difficult ride? The first day rolled around, the teams were chosen, and we were introduced to our horses. Everyone on my team enjoyed each other. Our horses? Some were seasoned competitors and some weren't. My horse was one of those that wasn't. She was nervous and fidgety, and required two people to tack her up. Two days of training and team activities went by in no time, and we spent the third day at the Kentucky Horse Park and touring a veterinary clinic. The show was that weekend and as everyone



Instructor Terral Hill on Spörður frá Bergi leads the AYC Green Team (left to right): team leader Coralie Denmeade, Eva Dykaar (CA), Jamie Blough (CA), Emma Erickson (CA), Hanna Bailey (CA), Amelia Carney (AK), and team assistant Terri Ingram. Photo by Colleen Monsef.

prepared, I wondered how I would place with my mare. When it was time to go, I got on my horse and made my way to the track. I think my mare sensed we were being watched and performed better than I had ever expected. The competition was over, and it was time for people to head home. We hugged and said our goodbyes (maybe we cried a little). The next day seemed a little empty, and I realized that the American Youth Cup had been one of the most memorable weeks of my life."

APPLYING

A total of 26 youth riders applied and we were able to accept 20. The application, designed by a team that included USIHC Youth leader Colleen Monsef, determined if the applicants had the necessary skills to thrive at the Youth Cup. These skills included riding a horse they had never ridden before, being open to learning in a challenging environment, the ability to be a team player, and good sportsmanship. Each applicant wrote a resume of their experience riding Icelandic horses in clinics, shows, trail rides, and other events over the last three years. Had they done an internship? Were they listed in the USIHC national ranking? Did they have experience training a variety of horses? Their riding instructors were also asked to submit an evaluation. Using a scale of 1-5, Alex Pregitzer graded the resumes and Deb Cook reviewed the instructor evaluations. The resume counted 60% and the instructor evaluation 40% of an applicant's total score. This score was then used to rank the applicants.

PREPARING

Since this was the first time an American Youth Cup had ever been held, we had to create the template for the entire event. This involved finding instructors, team leaders, judges, staff, and volunteers. We



The AYC Red Team (left to right): Alicia Flanigan (ME), Katherine Monsef (CA), Olivia Rasmussen (CA), Julia Hasenauer (CA), and Eden Hendricks (CA); not pictured are team leader Madison Prestine and team assistant Lori Cretney. Photo by Colleen Monsef.

needed a detailed schedule and job descriptions, so that everyone's responsibilities were clear. We wrote a Code of Conduct and Rules and Guidelines to help guide the event toward the mission of the Youth Cup. Due to the enormous financial burden of the event, we actively pursued sponsorships from businesses and individuals.

We organized finding more than 20 suitable horses, the majority of which were trained intensively for the month leading up to the Youth Cup so that they were in good condition for the event. It was important for safety reasons to make sure that each rider was matched with an appropriate horse. In addition, certain participants could not be paired with five-gaited horses because they were too young to ride pace in a sport competition. This is where our intensive application process became very important. This ranking, the applicant's age, and comments from the riding instructors helped us divide the riders into four categories. Next we placed the horses into four similar categories and assigned them classes in the competition. Within each category, horses were randomly selected (drawn out of a helmet) for each rider. All riders were paired with a horse they had never ridden before. Next the horse-rider pairs were split up into balanced teams, where each team had members from each level of horse-rider pairs. By the end of the competition, the validity of this process was confirmed when the teams ended up having final scores only fractions of a point apart!

This event could not have been possible without our amazingly qualified staff members. In addition to me (a Hólar Graduate with a B.S. and a Trainer Level B),



The AYC Blue Team (left to right): Jay Maio (WI), Jessica Blough (CA), team leader Kevin Draeger and his assistant Debbie Faver, Elizabeth Monsef (CA), Emese Dunn (NY), and Isabelle Maranda (VT). Photo by Erika Reptschik.

our instructors were Ásta Covert (the most successful competition rider in the United States), Laura Benson (Hólar Graduate Level C), and Terral Hill (young horse starter and experienced horse trainer). Our team leaders were trainers and instructors in their own right: Coralie Denmeade (FEIF Level 1) and FEIF Youth Cup attendees Ayla Green, Kevin Draeger, and Madison Prestine. Their endless positive energy and guidance for the participants throughout the week was one of the things that made this event a success. Our judges, international sport judge Will Covert and U.S. Intern Judges Alex Dannemann and Deb Cook, were always encouraging and professional.

LEARNING

Our team leaders arrived on July 19 to help prepare the horses and tack for their team. They rode the horses so they would be familiar with their training status and therefore be better able to assist their team members. In addition, folders for each staff member, volunteer, and participant were carefully put together, covering everything from emergency medical information to schedules.

July 20 was full of meetings: With such a large team, we found it incredibly important to discuss all aspects of the schedule, rules, participants, and horses. This was key to the smooth functioning of the event throughout the week: every evening we met to review the day and to prepare for the next. Volunteers also met with Maggie Brandt to get briefed on all their jobs, from chaperoning the field trip to cooking the meals. But the most exciting part of the day was the arrival of our young riders, who were picked up at the airport or dropped off by their parents. House-mother Jane Thomas welcomed each one and helped him or her get settled.

On Tuesday the final participants arrived, and the American Youth Cup officially began with lunch in the main barn. The participants were introduced to the staff and were presented with the Code of Conduct and Rules and Guidelines for the Event, as well as a review of the schedule for the day. After a group bonding activity



The AYC Gray Team (left to right): Ellie Pittman (KY), Hannah Huss (NY), Elizabeth Robertson (CA), Kajsa Johnson (CA), Cameron Tolbert-Scott (CA); not pictured are team leader Ayla Green and team assistant Anna Collins. Photo by Colleen Monsef.



Katherine Monsef (Red Team) performs in the dressage competition on Sólmyrkva (Rós) from Helms Hill. Photo by Colleen Monsef.

led by Tess and Tristan Krebs, the participants were assigned their teams and had their first riding lesson with the instructors. This was an exciting time for all the participants to meet and get to know their horse. They also took on responsibility for the general care and feeding of their horse. Following dinner, our judge Will Covert gave a lecture on Sport Competi-



The Gray Team giving their poster presentation on the foundation stallion Orri frá Púfu. Photo by Erika Reptschik.

tion rules, with a particular focus on the classes the young riders would be competing in that weekend.

Wednesday was the first day of serious training. Each participant had two private lessons with one of the instructors. One lesson focused on the classes on the oval track, while the other helped prepare for the dressage and trail competitions. In between lessons the participants did team building exercises and began working on the poster challenge, for which they drew a topic out of a hat. The after-dinner lecture on the World Championships was presented by Ásta Covert and Madison Prestine. Our hope was to encourage these promising young riders to set the World Championships as a future goal.

Thursday was another intensive training day. Before lunch the participants practiced on the oval track and worked to finish their posters. After lunch the team leaders assigned their members to a particular class, to strengthen any

weaknesses or to encourage particular strengths. In the afternoon each team also built a “horse,” with one team member as the front legs and the other as the back. The teams learned the correct footfall of all five gaits of the Icelandic horse so that their “horse” could “perform” a five-gait program during the competition. Veterinarian and parasitology expert Dr. Martin Nielsen gave our evening lecture on equine parasites, proper deworming practices, and how to count eggs in a fecal sample. Participants and staff alike found this a very exciting lecture!

On Friday, the horses got to rest while the participants visited the Kentucky Horse Park for a variety of demonstrations, films, and museums, then took a tour of Hagyard Veterinary Clinic, one of the nation’s premier equine veterinary clinics. Meanwhile back at the farm, the staff prepared for the competition, including everything from vet checks to prepping the oval track, and the judges and instructors met to discuss



At the Youth Cup Sanctioned Show, left to right, Elizabeth Robertson shows lovely tölt in harmony with Veigar frá Lækjamóti; photo by Shaila Ann Sigsgaard. Julia Hasenauer on Salvör frá Grafarkoti shows beautiful fast tölt; photo by Colleen Monsef. And Cameron Tolbert-Scott on Ögrún frá Grafarkoti shows excellent canter; photo by Shaila Ann Sigsgaard.



At left, the Green Team builds their "horse" to demonstrate the Icelandic gaits while, at right, the kitchen volunteers (left to right, Barb Riva, Maggie Brandt, Deb Cook, Lidia Hasenauer, and Sharon Cretney) work to provide delicious food. Photos by Colleen Monsef.

the trail and dressage classes. After the field trip, the teams groomed their horses, cleaned tack, and finished their five-gaited "horse." Finally over dinner we started our official USIHC-Sanctioned Show with a judges meeting and the forming of an arbitration committee.

Said team leader Kevin Draeger, "I was blown away by the number of talented young riders we have in our country. The spirit of the entire event was uplifting. The kids came to the event with energy and dedication. It was clear that they grew as horsemen and made connections and friendships that will last a lifetime. The intention of the organizers and staff was that this event be about horsemanship, teamwork, and sportsmanship. The participants brought this idea to life, cheering each other on, and celebrating each other's successes. It was really special for me to see kids enjoying the Icelandic horses the same way I did as a kid. It's reassuring to know that the next generation will continue to honor the horses and each other. The Icelandic Horse community is truly special and the youth are an important part of the continuation of the community. They are the legacy. The American Youth Cup highlighted the beauty of it all and the event was just plain fun! I look forward to the next one."

SHOWING

The competition began on Saturday with V3 (intermediate four gait) and F2 (intermediate five gait). After lunch came T5 (intermediate tölt) and T6 (intermediate loose rein tölt). Each rider rode individually, which let judges Alex Dannenmann and Deb Cook judge horsemanship more

accurately. They judged the rider's seat, aids, and how well he or she brought out the best in the horse. Each rider also received a sport show score from Will Covert, as in a regular sanctioned show. The two scores were averaged for the Youth Cup's equestrian ranking, but only the sport score counted towards making finals in a class. After each performance, the judges gave extensive feedback to the young riders.

In the late afternoon the teams presented their posters, judged by the four instructors. Poster topics included Orri frá Þúfu, collection, operant conditioning and classical conditioning, and Mette Moe Mannseth. The A Finals in all the

sport classes were held in the cool of the evening.

Throughout the day it was incredible seeing the quality of horsemanship and sportsmanship the participants demonstrated, as they rode horses they barely knew. Commented instructor Ásta Covert, "Seeing every rider at the event embrace the horse they had been assigned and improve throughout the week was rewarding to see as an instructor. It was a well run event and I think everyone walked away feeling inspired to continue improving their skills. I genuinely hope this event is here to stay. It definitely was a boost for the Icelandic horse youth riders and the community as a whole in this country."



Elizabeth Monsef (Blue Team) on Ari frá Norðurstjarna showing beautiful suspension in a forward trot. Photo by Colleen Monsef.

Sunday morning began with the trail competition (TR1). It was a fun way for the young riders to show off their skills as they coaxed their horses through challenging timed obstacles. After lunch was the Dressage Test (FS1), a challenging program that tested the riders' abilities to guide their horse through precise patterns, exercises, and transitions in the dressage arena. Many of the students had only ridden the test through once before, but they all showed focus and good horsemanship.

THE AWARDS

The Highest Scoring Equestrians, from an average of three FIPO class scores and three horsemanship scores were:

1. Elizabeth Robertson riding Veigar frá Lækjamóti
2. Julia Hasenauer riding Salvör frá Grafarkoti
3. Eva Dykaar riding Gulldís frá Hellu
4. Jessica Blough riding Svali frá Tjörn
5. Kajsa Johnson riding Flís frá Viðivöllum

Elizabeth Robertson won the Featherlight Riding Award, as the rider who best demonstrated good and harmonious riding. This award was decided upon by the three judges, and the horsemanship scores played a large role in their decision.

For the next two awards, team leaders nominated a member of their team and then the judges and instructors voted. Jay Maio received the Meeting the Challenge Award. One of the youngest participants, he showed huge improvement in his riding. During the entire event he focused on being a team player, despite being with 19 teenage girls!

Elizabeth Monsef won the Sportsmanship Award. Her team leader said she never missed one of her team members' rides unless she was riding herself, and tried to encourage her team members with her words and actions no matter what. The entire staff noticed that Elizabeth was always quick to say thank you and to show her appreciation for the staff's work.

Team Blue (Jessica Blough, Emese Dunn, Jay Maio, Isabelle Maranda, and Elizabeth Monsef) won the Team Spirit Award, one of the most prestigious awards of the Youth Cup. Team Blue stood out the entire week as a team that showed constant support and encouragement for



Hannah Huss (Gray Team) on Máni demonstrates good balance and flexibility picking up a lost "lamb" in the trail class. Photo by Colleen Monsef.

all its team members and enthusiasm for all aspects of the event.

Team Gray (Hannah Huss, Kajsa Johnson, Ellie Pittman, Elizabeth Robertson, and Cameron Tolbert-Scott) won the Team Equestrian Award, for the team that had the highest average equestrian scores, including both horsemanship and sport scores.

Julia Hasenauer won the Youth Ambassador Award. This was a surprise award given out at the end of the ceremony. Our goal here was to reward a rider who exemplified everything we felt the American Youth Cup encouraged. This participant needed not only to be ranked in the top five equestrians, but also to be selected by a majority vote of all the staff. The Youth Ambassador would get to attend the 2016 FEIF Youth Cup, if a younger participant, or have the option of being a team leader in the 2017 American Youth Cup, if older. Julia Hasenauer showed exemplary horsemanship and sportsmanship throughout the entire AYC. She embodied the event by being encouraging and kind to the other participants, always showing a positive attitude towards learning, and also bringing out the best in her horse. We really look forward to seeing what Julia goes on to do in her Icelandic horse career and are very excited to see her as a team leader in 2017!

THANKS

My mother, Maggie Brandt, and all of us at Léttleiki Icelandics would like to thank everyone who made this first American Youth Cup possible. Without your enthusiasm, flexibility, dedication, and hard work we couldn't have put it together. In addition to those already mentioned, thanks go to housemother Jane Thomas, driver Bert Lyons, photographer Colleen Monsef, the food crew of Pamela Nolin, Barb Riva, Deb Cook, and Sharon Cretney, announcer Martin Nielsen,



Jay Maio (Blue Team) on Leifa frá Nýjabæ confidently negotiating the see-saw during the trail class. Photo by Colleen Monsef.



Team spirit, here exemplified by the Gray Team. Photo by Erika Reptschik.

scribe Sharron Cretney, Alexa Zinser, and parent volunteers Lidia Hasenauer, Kelly Blough, and Gabrielle Johnson.

This event was also a major financial undertaking. It would not have happened without generous grants from Flying C Ranch, Willy and Eileen Ma, the NEIHC, Kraftur, Godhamar, Pegasus Flughestar, Florida Icehorsefarm, FIRC, SDS Horse Lotion, Hullindalur Farm, and the USIHC. Debbie Faver, Emily Bingham, Deb Cook, Kathy Davis, Katrin Sheehan, and Andrea and Steve Barber also generously loaned horses.

THE ADVENTURE

The last words on the 2016 AYC come from participant Elizabeth Monsef. She wrote, “From the moment I received my acceptance email at school, up until the final goodbyes at the end of the show, the American Youth Cup was an incredible adventure for me. I looked forward to it for months. When it finally came around I was beyond joyous. It was not just a competition where I could demonstrate my riding level. No, it was a chance to meet 19 other spectacular riders who share my passion for the Icelandic horse. I was eager to meet new people, learn lots, and most importantly, have fun. My team quickly became like a second family to me. We supported each other, laughed hard, and took pride in our accomplishments. We had the opportunity to train with four different trainers and to receive feedback from an international sport judge. We had to become comfortable with a horse we didn’t know, and the bonds we built were unbelievable. For every opportunity we were given—from horses, to tack, to the field trips, and the fantastic food—we are forever grateful. It is amazing how much time and effort the volunteers put in to make sure we had the best time ever. I will never forget how comfortable I felt, whether it was asking questions during lectures, performing silly activities with my team, sharing a room, the spontaneous dance parties before bed, giving group presentations,



Cameron and Ellie from the Gray Team impersonating a very spirited silver dapple! The teams built a paper-maché horse and had to work together as front and hind legs to show the gaits of the Icelandic horse. Photo by Erika Reptschik.

or even the crazy games of badminton we had on the lawn. Nothing I say can describe the magic that occurred during the wonderful short six days of the American Youth Cup.”

For information on future American Youth Cups, contact Carrie Brandt (carrie@litttleikiicelandics.com) or USIHC Youth Leader Colleen Monsef (youth@icelandics.org).



At the show, left to right, riders Ellie Pittman, Elizabeth Monsef, and Cameron Tolbert-Scott; judges Alex Dannenmann, Deb Cook, and Will Covert; and riders Emese Dunn and Isabelle Miranda. Photo by Colleen Monsef.

WHO IS FREYA?

BY ALEX PREGITZER

Freya Sturm recently moved from southern Germany to Trout Lake, WA, where she is trainer-in-residence at Linda and Dick Templeton's Red Feather Icelandics. According to Linda, who arranged for her visa, Freya is "here for good." Freya holds an M.S. in Agricultural Economics and a Trainer C certification from the German Icelandic Horse Association (IPZV).

WHY DID YOU MOVE TO THE UNITED STATES?

I came here first in 2012 and stayed half a year, after finishing university and before I started working for a consultancy in Germany. It was my "timeout" before the corporate world absorbed me. I stayed at Red Feather Icelandics, helping with horse training, and fell in love with the Pacific Northwest—the people and their mentality, and the great environment for horses.

Going back to my "real" job in Germany, I left a part of my heart in this beautiful horse farm at the foot of Mt. Adams. I managed to come back every year, but last year I made the decision to stop dreaming and start actualizing, so Linda, Dick, and I started the long process of getting a visa that would allow me to stay and work. We found a good solution that allows me to bring my training skills to



"Training is a lifelong journey," says IPZV Trainer C Freya Sturm. Here she rides Fen in beautiful Trout Lake, WA.



Freya ponying a friend on a young horse. Her philosophy? "I train the horse to become the best partner possible."

the farm and, in return, learn about their breeding management.

After almost a full year of preparation, I sold my house and my little barn, put my horses on a plane, and in July 2015 I moved to the U.S. with four boxes and three suitcases. Here I am, ready for my dream job on my dream farm in my dream area.

WHAT IS YOUR HORSE EXPERIENCE?

I started riding when I was five years old—by that time I had convinced my parents there was no way around my wanting to ride. I started in the classical dressage world, until I met Icelandic horses, when I was seven. I fell in love with this breed instantly and got my first Icelandic when I was twelve. Stjarni was a beautiful six-year-old, very forward, with tons of tölt, and the best teacher a 12-year-old could hope for. He is still with me: At 24 he now lives in Trout Lake, WA!

Over the years I have had the chance to work with horses from a lot of different breeds. I learned from every single one, and I am looking forward to meeting many more. One of the first lessons I learned is that a horse is a horse is a horse. Whatever breed, size, talent, temperament, regardless of how many gaits, horses are horses—and they are wonder-

ful. I lost my heart to gaited horses, especially the ones from that little island in the North Sea, but every horse is welcome on our farm and in my training.

I worked with several Icelandic horse trainers in Germany, such as Michel Becker (IPZV Trainer B), Jens Füchtenschneider (IPZV Trainer A and instructor), Rosl Rößner (IPZV Trainer A and instructor), and Elisabeth Berger (IPZV Trainer A and instructor) as I earned my IPZV Trainer C certificate. To get this license, you follow a certain training program. You have to get several badges—like horse care, lunging, and a series of riding badges—before you can attend the actual trainer course, which takes several weeks.

For the last ten years I have been training horses and giving lessons on a professional level. I have been continuing my education by working with great horsemen like Manolo Mendez, one of the founding members of the Royal Andalusian School of Equestrian Art in Spain. There is so much to learn out there!

WHAT IS YOUR TRAINING PHILOSOPHY?

My training plans are determined by the horse's readiness, both mentally and physically, factoring in the horse's past experiences. With that in mind, I train the horse to help it become the best partner possible for its rider.

Every horse is different: There is nothing like a "one-size-fits-all" training plan. But basically all horses need to be taken care of, treated fairly, and trained carefully. All horses need to learn to trust and to respect.

Any natural asymmetry in the horse's body needs to be identified and worked on, to help it build up straightness and strength to be able to carry the rider's weight without damaging its own body.

Horses like life to be simple. They understand and need simple things. So I try to make their life and training with me simple.

Horses question everything, all the time. They need safety, so I try to make them feel safe.

Horses move away from pressure. They move away from whatever is uncomfortable towards what is comfortable. Communication with a horse can be summarized as action and reaction. Horses are always right and never wrong: Their reactions make sense, so I work on my actions to get the reactions I am looking for.

My training basically follows the classical training scale, where rhythm, suppleness, contact, impulsion, straightness, and collection are put in this particular order to develop the horse's body and mind in the most healthy way possible.

For me, horse training is about balance. I work with the horse's and the rider's balance and help them move together in harmony. But I also need balance in my mix of training. How much groundwork, body work, riding, dressage, or trail work does each horse need? I need to balance known exercises with new things. When it comes to gait training, I need to find a balance between building up tension and releasing it through relaxation, to build up the horse's muscles, strength, confidence.

Training is a lifelong journey. There is a big difference between a horse with some training and a trained horse. The work, time, and energy it takes to help a horse become the responsive, willing, and safe partner that we would like to spend our time with is often underestimated.

WHAT IS YOUR PHILOSOPHY IN TEACHING?

When it comes to teaching, I have two clients to take care of: the horse and the rider. Both need to learn, to feel well during their lesson, and to be happy afterwards. Of course every horse-and-rider couple is different, so again there is no standard solution. A good riding lesson requires a high amount of trust and openness from everybody involved—horse, rider and trainer—to achieve a certain goal and to find solutions for problems, but my special focus always lies on the rider's seat as a way to help both the horse and the rider reach the best balance together.

I like to explain how things are connected to help my riding student set up his or her own system with his or her horse. What is a good environment to work in? What mindset do you need to have to work with your horse successfully? Why does your horse react in a certain

way? How do you get your horse to work with you? How can you define a goal for your training, and when do you have to adjust? Where is the safety base for you and your horse, the place you can always go back to if things get confusing or frustrating? Have you invested in building a proper foundation in walk, from which everything else stems?

I want to teach awareness and to enable my students to listen to, watch, notice, and sense what their horses need. I want to make my students independent trainers for their own horses.

WHAT ARE YOUR HOPES FOR ICELANDIC HORSES IN THE UNITED STATES?

As horse breeders, we try to breed what the market is asking for but also to improve the breeding stock in North America. So far the Icelandic horse owners in this country are mainly pleasure and endurance riders. For us at Red Feather Icelandics, that means breeding horses with easy-to-ride tölt and great



Freya lunging Funi in the indoor arena. "For me," she says, "horse training is about balance."

temperament. In the future we would like to expand the existing market to include competition horses, while keeping our main focus on the horse's character. We are bringing in high quality mares and stallions from Iceland and Europe to support our genetic material with the attributes and talents we are looking for. We are committed to breeding reliable, safe, friendly horses with high quality gaits and great character.

As a horse trainer I would love to see people be more willing to invest in picking the right equine partner. There is no such thing as a free horse. Finding the right horse and building the relationship with it takes—besides money and energy—a lot of time. It is a wonderful experience that is an important part of the long journey of owning a horse.

I would love to see more people ask for assistance in finding the right match. I would love to see them work with a trainer who specializes in Icelandics and knows about the breed, the gaits, and the horse's unique character and can set the horse and rider up for success together.

Above all, as I am a big fan of the Icelandic horse, I want people to appreciate the complexity and the wonder of this strong, proud, and very talented horse! Don't underestimate, undervalue, or undertrain your horse.

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GOLA'S STORY

BY KARA L. NOBLE

“Is the horse going to your house or is she going to Canada?”

The question came from a friend who phoned to say that friends of hers in Missouri had found a 19-year-old registered Icelandic at a stock auction in Oklahoma a few weeks earlier. They bought the mare hoping to rehome her, but had no luck finding a buyer. Since they couldn't afford to keep her any longer, she was scheduled to be on the next truck heading north to the slaughterhouse. They put out one last call hoping to find her a new home.

“How much?” I asked.

“A dollar a pound.”

“When do they need to know?”

“They're loading now. The truck pulls out around 5:00 tonight.”

How could I take a horse—probably a troubled one—I had never even seen? How could I not take her?

I asked to see her papers and a photo and, within minutes, received an email with both attached. Now she had a name: Gola from Saga California (US1995202304).

The mare's dam was Gletta frá Hóli and her sire was Fagri Jarpur from Saga California; she was foaled in southern California. She'd had one recorded foal herself, a filly named Matilda, but other than her BLUP scores, her records were minimal. She was sold in October 2003, but her registration was never transferred, so there were no clues about how she got from California to Oklahoma or what had happened to her in the intervening 10 years.

I called my friend back. “Tell them I'll take her.”

It was days before Christmas 2013, and I was poorly prepared to add a new horse to my small herd. I had no quarantine area. I didn't have a stall ready. I wasn't even sure I had enough hay.

The first challenge was getting her. Transportation options were limited, so she would have to come on the truck that was already scheduled to take her, a trailer carrying a mixed load of cows and horses to slaughterhouses in New York and Canada. I needed to meet the truck



“The more she learned, the more confident she became,” Kara says of her rescue horse, Gola. Here, at age 20, she is the oldest “colt” in a colt-starting clinic.

in New York, where it was delivering the cows. I couldn't do it myself, but another friend was scheduled to haul a load of pigs to the right place at the right time. He got the mare off the slaughterhouse truck and delivered her to Massachusetts on December 23, amid the squeals of her porcine traveling companions.

She was a sorry sight when she stepped off that trailer.

She was soaking wet from a cold, steady rain, about 100 pounds underweight, filthy, matted, and reeking

of cow pee. She was covered with bot eggs. Her feet were long, with crushed heels and cracked, chipped, broken walls. Her neglected teeth had so many sharp points she could hardly move her jaw to the left to chew. There were open sores from bites and kicks on her back, flanks, and shoulders. She was petrified, but despite her fear, she was not aggressive. She obviously wanted human friends—but she wasn't sure she could trust anybody.

The first order of business was getting her comfortable enough being handled

so that she could safely receive the vet and farrier care she needed. We decided it would be best to treat her as if she had never been touched by anyone. We slowly and carefully accustomed her to being touched, haltered, and led. As she became more trusting, we started treating her wounds and cleaning her filthy coat. My veterinarian guided us in her care, gave vaccinations, ran tests, and devised a strategy to eliminate her heavy worm load without provoking colic.

After about three weeks, the farrier was able to start working on her feet. On the first visit, he could only trim her front feet—she was still too anxious to let him do more than lift her hinds. Given her other health issues, the vet discouraged the use of tranquilizers, so the farrier came once a week for several weeks to slowly get her feet to the correct length and shape.

Within a month, we decided she was healthy enough to move out of quarantine and meet the rest of the herd. We set up a pen adjacent to our main paddock to let Gola meet her new “sister,” Kolbrá frá Brávöllum, and our mini donkeys, Angel and Buttercup. All of them were very excited, but everybody behaved beautifully during the introduction period. Within 24 hours, they were all happily sharing a paddock and grazing together without incident.

Next we brought in the equine



A year after her rescue, Gola's friendly personality has reappeared.



The day after she arrived at Kara's farm, Gola was slowly accustomed to being haltered and handled.

dentist, and after three gentle and productive visits from him, Gola could finally eat normally too.

From the beginning, I worked with her daily to build her skills and manners, gradually introducing hand hikes in the woods and groundwork and in-hand training sessions in the ring. She learned that fly spray and velcro are not dangerous, and that a bath could feel nice. She overcame a fairly significant phobia of trailering. Bit by bit, she relearned the “Horse A-B-Cs,” the skills and behaviors any horse needs to live safely and successfully with humans.

The more she learned, the more confident she became. Gradually her sweet, kind personality emerged from the fear. We learned that she loves to be cuddled and scratched behind the ears. She became very talkative, snorting at things that met with her disapproval, nickering to welcome anyone who came to visit her, squealing at anything exciting. She proved to be opinionated, curious, smart, and willing.

By the summer of 2014, Gola had the basics down. I could pony her safely from Kolbrá, and she had learned how to longe and how to navigate all kinds of obstacles from the ground. She happily left the herd for solo training sessions and stopped melting down when I rode out with Kolbrá. A friend suggested it was time to ride her. I had never started a horse, but I decided to give it a try.

I signed her up for a local colt-starting clinic. At age 20, she was definitely the oldest “colt” there, but everyone was encouraging and supportive. When I got on her

for the first time, she looked back at me as if to say, “What are you doing up there?” At first she was reluctant to even walk with me on her back, but the trainer helped us through her initial confusion and hesitation. By the end of the weekend, we took our first mini trail ride together around the farm with the trainer and other horses in the clinic.

Once she was started under saddle, we began taking weekly lessons, which she loved. She was most comfortable when she could follow another horse, so we did a lot of trail riding with Kolbrá and other friends, including an American Competitive Trail Horse Association (ACTHA) ride in October 2014. Gola finished the course and tried every obstacle (Kolbrá came in third out of 27).

In September 2015, we decided to test ourselves by bringing Gola to the NEIHC's Tölt in Harmony clinic with Trausti Þór Guðmundsson at Thor Icelandic. Trausti was realistic about her capabilities, but he worked kindly and patiently with us to improve her walk and trot. He even got us to ride a reasonably balanced and nearly round circle. Gola's stall overlooked the meeting and meal area where clinic participants gathered, and she happily hung her head over the door to nicker agreement with Trausti's lessons and to accept cuddles and kisses from everyone who stopped to say hello. It was a huge accomplishment for a horse who stepped off a slaughterhouse-bound trailer skinny, filthy, and terrified 21 months earlier.

I knew I was taking a chance when I agreed to buy Gola. But I'm glad I did.

WINTER CARE

BY NICKI ESDORN

Icelandic horses are horses of the arctic, and for centuries their worst enemies were bad weather and a lack of food. They developed a formidable defense against both! The Icelandic horse grows several different kinds of hair: a fuzzy wooly undercoat for warmth; a sleek overcoat with longer hairs interspersed, for keeping dry and to allow water to drip off; long feathers to protect the legs; and an abundant mane and tail. Icelandics are known for being “easy keepers,” able to survive on little and coarse food. They even developed a relatively narrow wind-pipe to warm the air coming into their lungs.

In this article, I'll describe how I keep my Icelandics comfortable in cold and snowy New York, along with insights from Alex Pregitzer in Michigan. Then Laura and Heidi Benson will explain a completely different kind of winter care—in California. All of us are professional Icelandic trainers and riding instructors. We hope our experiences will help you enjoy winter with your Icelandic horses.

WARM FEET

If you decide to give your horse the winter off, as some people do, pull his shoes and let him live outside with a shelter, extra hay, and a reliable source of fresh water. All should be well.

However, winter riding in the snow is a lot of fun! Icelandic horses feel great in cool and cold weather, and can withstand it much better than a hot summer. They often choose their shelters on a hot summer afternoon to get in the shade and away from flies, and stay outside when it snows!

So we humans should take advantage and bundle up and go riding. Alex Pregitzer cannot imagine winter in Michigan without an Icelandic riding suit, fleece or wool underwear, and warm winter boots. Changing wool socks often during the day is the secret to warm feet, she says.

WINTER RIDING

So, what do we need to do to keep riding in the winter and take good care of our horses? First, allow the horse a longer



Alex Pregitzer enjoys riding all winter long in chilly Michigan, thanks to her insulated riding suit and lots of wool socks.

warm-up and cool-down time in cold weather, as the muscles take longer to limber up. Even in Iceland, spring training starts in January, when the riding horses are brought inside the stables.

Second, be sure your horse is dry before you turn him out again. If you cannot offer a warm place to dry your horse, you must adjust your riding accordingly. Do lots of walking and never ride your horse into a real sweat.

While the horses' full coats protect them well from rain and snow from the outside, they become a problem when the horse is ridden and becomes sweaty and wet from the inside out. With wet “underwear” the horses are not protected against cold and freezing temperatures. They need to come inside until they are dry and warm again. Sponging or washing the sweat off with warm water, or at least a good grooming when dry, is necessary to prevent fungus growth and itchiness.

BLANKETING

The super fuzzy look, like a puffed-up bird, of an Icelandic in his winter coat is created by a response in the skin that makes the hair stand straight out. This creates an air

pocket with warm air around the horse that insulates really well. When we put a blanket on, the weight of the blanket flattens the coat and prevents this effect. An Icelandic with a full winter coat, with access to shelter and good food should not wear a blanket, even in very cold temperatures.

Blankets are useful, though, when you are trying to dry off a wet, sweaty horse after a winter ride. The moisture goes from inside to outside, so a moisture-wicking fleece blanket can speed up this process considerably, while keeping the horse warm. The blanketed horse should be kept inside, in a warm stall, until he is dry.

Another option to help speed up the drying of a sweaty horse in winter is to give the horse a minimal clip on his chest and neck. (See the article “To clip or not to clip” in Issue 2/2012 of the *Quarterly*, available in our online archive at <http://www.icelandics.org/quarterly/equarterly.php>) This clip is like opening your shirt at the neck: It helps with overheating and speeds drying time.

However, a clipped horse needs extra protection against cold and rain or snow! If you clip, you should also blanket your horse when it is outside in cold temperatures.

SHOEING

Going barefoot is a good option if your horse gets the winter off. Snow and ice accumulate in regular shoes, forming big clumps that can trip your horse or put great strain on his legs.

Winter riding outside in snow and ice requires special shoeing. Your farrier will shoe with a snow pad or snow rims. The snow pad has a bulge in it that pops any accumulated snow back out, and the rims prevent snow from freezing to the metal shoe. Winter shoes also have studs to provide extra traction. Winter shoeing is more expensive, but since the horse's hooves grow less in the winter, it is not needed as often.

FEEDING

Unless it is extremely cold and freezing, horses should be fed according to their regular routine. (See the article "Nutrition for Icelandics" in Issue 4/2013 of the *Quarterly*.) Horses in light to moderate work require about 2 percent of their body weight in feed. Fiber digestion in the hind gut (cecum) creates heat as a byproduct. If the horse is fed little and often, fiber is continuously digested and keeps the horse warm. Feed a couple of pounds more hay, preferably from a slow feeder like a nibble net, when it is very cold, or in wet and freezing weather.

Horses who are free from parasites can digest and use their feed well and stay healthier. Talk to your veterinarian about deworming before winter sets in. Usually



The super fuzzy look of an Icelandic in his winter coat. Photo by Alex Pregitzer.

you will need to have a fecal sample tested and then treat accordingly.

It is extremely important that the horse has easy access to plenty of fresh water at all times, even and especially when it is cold! This can be a problem in freezing temperatures and needs constant vigilance. Check automatic waterers and immersion heaters frequently and make sure you have a Plan B should electricity fail or the pipes freeze. Provide a good salt lick to encourage drinking.

WARM WINTERS

People in the Northeast were looking very enviously at photos of beach riding in California during last year's extremely snowy and cold winter. Icelandic horse people in warm climates need to do a different kind of winter care: hair management! Here is what Heidi and Laura Benson, Icelandic

horse trainers in Santa Cruz, CA, recommend to keep arctic horses comfortable during a winter where temperatures rarely go below 40 degrees.

When the summer coat is fully shed out, they start bathing and clipping, as often as needed. Some horses grow more coat than others and need to be clipped several times to stay comfortable. The first full clip usually happens in September, with a possible second clip in January, and a last one before the first week of March when the summer coat starts to grow.

Heidi and Laura like to do full body clips, which are easier to maintain. They make sure the horses are really scrubbed and super clean and the hair is fully dry before clipping. This makes clipping go easier and faster, saves the expensive clipper blades, and the outcome is a sleek and shiny horse.

BLANKETING AGAIN

Winter weather in California can mean many rainy days, heavy fog, and temperatures that dip into the low 40s or even upper 30s. Clipped horses must be protected with waterproof and breathable turnout sheets or a light blanket depending on the horse's condition and age, and the temperature. An older horse may even need a blanket when the temperature is 50 degrees.

HOOF CARE

Horses are usually stabled in outdoor pens in California. Rainy weather means muddy, wet footing and that poses one of the major problems of winter care for Icelandic horses in this climate. Constant exposure to mud and moisture can cause white line disease, bacterial infections, and other hoof problems. The horse needs to have a place with dry footing, like a mat or an area covered with pea gravel, to spend most of his time. The same goes for rainy periods in any climate!

We hope these tips help you get through the winter. If you have questions, contact Nicki Esdom (FEIF International Trainer Level 1) at nickiesdom@mac.com; Alex Pregitzer (IPZV Trainer C) at alexandra.pregitzer@gmx.de; Laura Benson (FT, Holar Graduate, Trainer C) of Valkyrie Icelandics at laura@valkyrie-icelandics.com; and Heidi Benson (riding instructor) at Centaur City Icelandic Riding School, centaurcity@gmail.com.



Icelandic horse owners in warm climates need to clip their horses regularly. Photo by Heidi Benson.

RIDE AROUND THE WORLD

BY NANCY MARIE BROWN

During a riding trip in Iceland last August, I was amused to see my friend Dot Connors from Pennsylvania diligently using the “Map My Walk” app on her cell phone to keep close track of our mileage.

“Why does it matter so much how far we go?” I asked.

Dot gave me a dismissive glare.

“Aren’t you riding home to Hólar?” she asked in return.

That’s when I learned how much fun—and how addictive—virtual rides can be.

The USIHC’s parent organization, FEIF, the International Federation of Icelandic Horse Associations, has organized four virtual rides in the last four years. So far three have been completed: to the World Championships in Berlin, Germany in 2013; to Landsmót in Hella, Iceland in 2014; and to the World Championships in Herning, Denmark in 2015. Dot took part in the 2015 ride, “From Here to Herning,” which came to an end at the opening ceremony of the Icelandic Horse World Championships on August 5; she



Dot and Flauta (on left) with some of their “escorts.” Her virtual companions on the FEIF “From Here to Herning” ride were curious about the other breeds she rode with.

is now part of the 2016 ride, “Home to Hólar.”

According to the FEIF website (www.feif.org), “The Virtual Ride offers everyone in the Icelandic horse world a chance to celebrate the flagship events on the Icelandic horse calendar: the World Championships and Landsmót. These events are held in alternating years on the European continent and Iceland respectively. In the course of a year, the Virtual Ride makes it possible for all Icelandic horse riders to make their way gradually to these events.”

HOME TO HÓLAR

The current virtual ride, called “Home to Hólar,” goes to the 2016 Landsmót Hestanna, which will be held June 27 to July 2 at Hólar in northern Iceland.

“Riders will start from home—wherever that is—and ride in the direction of Hólar to be part of the biggest festival of the Icelandic horse,” says Gundula Sherman, who is coordinating the virtual ride for FEIF. “This event is not a race,” she adds. “Focus on your own achievements and those of your team. It is the ride that matters! Then we can all be champions. Have fun! For those of us lucky enough to actually be at Landsmót in 2016,” Gundula says, “there will be an opportunity to meet other riders from the virtual ride face to face.”

The idea is simple: First you calculate how far it is from your home to Hólar (ignoring obstacles like oceans and cities). The FEIF website suggests you use an online distance calculator (<http://www.distance.to>), but Gundula will help you find the exact distance once you register at FEIF’s Virtual Rider website (<http://feif-virtual.weebly.com/home-to-holar.html>).

Ride as you ordinarily would, but keep track of the distances and, once a month, send in your total—in kilometers—through the website. You can track your own progress and that of your team—or of anyone else—on the scoreboard. Says Gundula, “You will be astonished how far we all get.”

JOIN THE TEAM

Once you have registered, don’t forget to join the “Home to Hólar” Facebook site and share the highlights of your rides. “You’ll learn a lot,” Dot said.

“From Here to Herning” included 286 riders from all over the world: from Europe, the U.S. and Canada, and even New Zealand. The total distance ridden was 64,382 kilometers—an amazing 40,000-plus miles—all on Icelandic horses. “That is (roughly speaking) all the way around the globe plus the distance from New Zealand to Herning!” according to FEIF. “New friendships were formed, and all the participants got a real feeling of



Out in all weathers, Dot and Flauta racked up the miles on their virtual ride to the 2015 Icelandic Horse World Championships in Herning, Denmark.

how big the Icelandic horse world is.”

“Obviously we weren’t really riding to Herning,” Dot told me, “but everyone who signed up throughout the world got there virtually.” For Dot the actual number of kilometers she needed to ride (or swim, as the Atlantic Ocean was in the way) was 6,000—about 3,700 miles, or over 10 miles a day for a year. Not impossible but, as the FEIF website says, “daunting.” That’s why FEIF encourages riders to join a team and combine their riding mileage until they reach their goal.

Yet Dot’s “team” was nearly as far away as Herning—and in the opposite direction. Having no other USIHC members nearby to ride with, Dot joined the Cascadians. This was a group of seven riders from the Cascade Club, the USIHC Regional Club in Oregon and southern Washington. Members were Lori Birge, Janet Boggs, Karin Daum, Linda Eddy, Lisa Roland, and Linda and Dick Templeton—as well as Freya Sturm from Germany, Deborah Faver from Ohio, and Dot. She has some of the same team members for “Home to Holar,” including Janet, Karin, Dick, and Linda.

SHARE THE RIDE

What do they share on Facebook? Everything and anything. Dot, for example, likes to share photos of her “escort horses.” She usually rides with Rocky Mountain horses, Kentucky Mountain horses, Leopard Appaloosas, registered Appaloosas, Quarter horses, Tennessee Walking horses, or Thoroughbreds. “People from other countries were very interested in seeing all these other breeds.”

During “From Here to Herning,” Dot said, people posted pictures of their saddles, their winter riding gear, their favorite boots—“even their horses’ butts. There’s nothing prettier than the back end of a horse with a beautiful tail.”

They shared photos and videos of the shows they attended—whether Icelandic or all-breed—and photos of their farms and the villages they lived in. They chatted about the weather, about training and desensitizing on the trail, about their farriers—or how they’d become farriers themselves—and about their horses’ health. “If someone’s Icelandic was sick, we were all sad,” Dot said. “If someone won a blue ribbon, we were all happy.”

The most emotional part of the ride,



Summertime in Pennsylvania—a perfect day for a trail ride. Who knew Dot was riding all the way to Denmark!

for Dot, was cheering on the official FEIF Relay Riders, who took the FEIF baton from Berlin, site of the 2013 championships, to Herning for the 2015 championships. They posted to the Facebook page all the way. “We watched them ride through the Brandenburg Gate,” Dot said. “They rode to the Rhine and got on a ferry—I can still see them in my mind’s eye, getting off that ferry, and it was pouring down rain, and they mounted up and rode on. Along the way, other riders

joined them with their Icelandics. At the border of Germany and Denmark, when they were met by Danish riders, I was just bawling—I was so full of joy!”

A VIRTUAL VACATION

What surprised her? “People are doing tons of dressage!” Also, she adds, that “I didn’t see one unkind post the whole time. They were all supportive.”

“We became a big family,” Dot said. “I have friends in Romania now! And in Scotland and Iceland and Holland—oh my gosh, the fields of tulips in Holland just knocked me out. One woman lived in a beautiful house almost like Hansel and Gretl’s, with snow up to her knees—I think she was from Canada. And I remember a photo of a horse tied outside this cute little coffee shop in Germany.

“At the end, we didn’t want to stop. We didn’t want to lose track of each other. Seeing those pictures from all over the world—it was a virtual vacation on horseback.”

So Dot immediately signed up for the 2016 virtual ride. “My husband sees me on my cell phone doing Facebook, and he says, ‘Are you riding again? Where are you going now?’ To Iceland, I tell him. Home to Hólar.”

For more information, or to join a virtual ride, see <http://www.feif.org/LeisureRiding/VirtualRide.aspx>



Dot and Flauta enjoying a late summer ride in Pennsylvania—and sharing it with friends from all over the world, via the FEIF Virtual Rides Facebook page “Home to Holar.”

HOW TO HANDLE RISK

BY THERESA J. JORDAN

Ed Viesturs, arguably the most accomplished American mountaineer, who has summited all 8,000-meter peaks worldwide, including multiple ascents of Everest, frequently is asked why he is such a risk taker. His response is that he is not a risk *taker* but rather a risk *manager*. To this he adds a wonderful bit of wisdom: “Safety is first; fun is second; success is third.”

As riders of Icelandic horses, we have chosen an amazing sport and wonderful animals to engage with. Nevertheless, our sport engenders fears as well as excitement, and presents us face-to-face with risks, calling upon us to use riding skills, coping skills, and everyday courage.

On some level, humans know that fears exist to keep us healthy, safe, and alive. Yet, as riders, we have selected a sport that involves risk. What does this say about us as a group, and about us as individuals?

As a group, it means that we have turned our passions to activities with large, fast animals with which we certainly can get hurt. This does not mean that as a group we are risk takers: We can get very good at being risk managers.

MIND OVER MATTER

As individuals, being a good risk manager means knowing how to get better at what we are doing, so that we are increasingly adept at beating the odds of getting hurt. To a great extent, honing our skills by working with a good trainer is a positive path to managing risk.

For example, we can learn not to pitch forward, squeeze with our legs, and scream when our horse misunderstands our cues and takes off at a fast gallop. We can learn how to act against our “instinctive” reactions, and to sit deep, loosen our legs, and force our voices into a deeper, calmer, more authoritative register. No, it isn’t easy to act against what our bodies want to do, but we certainly can learn to use the old adage of “mind over matter.” Learning what to do while we are not mounted, and taking control of ourselves if and when a bolt happens, will make tak-



ing control of our horse so much easier. What feels like an acceptable risk—well within your safety lines—changes over time and with your attitude. Having committed herself to riding in high-level international competitions, Terry (shown here competing in Germany) was willing to tolerate high levels of pressure from her trainer in order to improve her skills.

Honing our skills by working with a good trainer is a positive path to managing risk.

ing control of our horse so much easier. Pitching forward, squeezing, and screaming reinforce the horse’s idea that she should run fast—and releases her

hindquarters, so she is free to use them to speed up like a thoroughbred on the racetrack. Think: Why do jockeys sit the way they do?

A calm demeanor and sense of self-control, on the other hand, will help our horse understand that slowing down or stopping is the better choice. Forcing ourselves to calm down carries the additional benefit of relaxing our bodies, so that if we do hit the dirt, we are less likely to sustain much more than a few bruises.

When we find that we cannot actually relax while riding through something that scares us, try the technique of acting *as if* we were relaxed. Managing our breathing, as a start, might not fully trick us into believing that we are unafraid, but will likely send a message to our mount that our level of tension is subsiding.

IRRATIONAL BELIEFS

Believing that we will never experience a bolt on our trusted horse, never fall off or get banged up, or that falling would be a catastrophe, means that we hold irrational beliefs about riding. Sooner or later we will wind up in the dirt. Irrational beliefs set us up to be shocked when that reality sets in. They can make us more likely to experience long term negative psychological impacts, such as Post Traumatic Stress symptoms.

Building a healthy stress context that will help prevent traumatic stress reactions can be an important aspect of riding for those of us who tend to experience anxieties. Just as we humans have different tendencies to get common colds, stomach distress, or dental problems, to name a few, we also differ in our tendencies to experience anxiety, depression, or any number of other psychological difficulties. To begin building a healthy context that can inoculate us against acute anxiety, we need to give ourselves credit for the times when we *have* ridden through a bolt or *have* remembered to practice the calming techniques we learned to use when riding a hot or nervous horse. It is an all-too-human habit to repeatedly recall our failings, and refrain from remembering—and

congratulating ourselves—on the things we have done well.

One effective way of reducing anxieties is to uncover the irrational beliefs we hold, using the kinds of techniques available through cognitive behavior therapy. These approaches encourage us to examine issues such as, “What would be so catastrophic about getting run away with or getting dumped?” and “Why must riding be so safe that there is no possibility of ever getting hurt?” Such beliefs are irrational because *life* is dangerous, and insisting that it be otherwise is demanding the impossible.

I once decided to be extra careful by avoiding riding on a day when the sky was threatening to storm. Instead of taking the small risk of riding during a very unlikely storm, I went to the pharmacy to fill a prescription. At the pharmacy, I suffered the worst accident of my life when a delivery of inventory resulted in boxes being thrown in my path, sending me head first onto a cement floor.

Looking at life differently, I once risked taking an extremely nervous rider on a trail ride, using two very reliable trail horses on a well-worn, beginner trail. Since the unanticipated can happen, a bicycle rider came tearing down the small hill behind us (on a trail absolutely forbidden to bicycles), spooking both horses into an uncontrolled gallop. I worked to bring my mount down to a walk, then turned back to find both the bicyclist and my companion rider on the ground. My companion looked totally dismayed as he attempted to get up from an awkward position. But what he said was, “Wow! I thought falling off would be so much more horrible than it was! I don’t think I’m going to be so terrified anymore!”

What happened to him is called *disputing through action*. The best and safest way to dispute irrational, anxiety-producing thoughts is to find them and question how “real” they are using cognitive behavioral approaches when we are not mounted, with the assistance of a mental health professional if needed. But my very anxious friend had been unable to find the irrational thoughts that were the cause of his severe anxiety until his dump in the dirt resulted in a spontaneous revelation: His simple fall was not the tragedy he had imagined. What he actually suffered was only some dirty clothes.



Terry and her advanced mare getting ready for a winter trail ride, with no saddle, no bit or bridle, just a halter with lead ropes clipped on to signal left and right, and a blanket because of the extreme cold. And a helmet under that fuzzy cap, of course.

OUR SAFETY LINE

Each of us who rides has our own idea of what constitutes *acceptable risk*, regardless of whether we consciously acknowledge it or not. Identifying the level of risk that is comfortable for each of us can be very helpful: Knowing where we individually draw our “safety line” will help inform us about the activities in which we are or are not willing to engage at any given time—and can help us make decisions about these activities before we take on something that might not fit within our limits at the moment.

Our individual levels of acceptable risk are shifting phenomena: What we are willing to attempt today will likely change with time, as our responsibilities, and our physical and psychological states change. Riding a demanding trail with a friend who previously had been willing to engage in many types of adventures, suddenly morphed into something uncom-

While riding through something that scares us, try the technique of acting as if we were relaxed.

fortable for her when a group of rough riders galloped up behind us, spooking her horse, and tossing her to the ground in an uncomfortable but otherwise benign dump in the dirt. She looked a bit confused and shaken, then said, “I’m a mom now, with a new baby. I can’t afford to get hurt right now.” She seemed quite puzzled, as she was forced on the spot to come to terms with whether she would remount, given the circumstances that rather suddenly had changed her safety line. She chose to walk the long way back to the barn, while another rider ponied her mount. To her credit, she held to her safety line and did not give in to the taunts of other riders who criticized her for being afraid.

Many life circumstances can change the level of risk we are willing and/or able to accept in our riding. These can include permanent or long term changes that extend beyond the riding world, such as becoming more careful when we feel newly responsible for a child or for making a solid impression when we have taken on a new career position. Our safety line can move in the other direction as well, for example, when we have made the financial commitment of purchasing a wonderful new horse with whom we have established a strong and trusting bond, and have committed ourselves to riding her in high-level competitions.

Plenty of other short term, “state” changes can and probably should alter our safety line on a day-to-day or even an hour-by-hour basis. We might plan to ride on a day when we have had a really poor night’s sleep, we feel unwell, or we have one of those days during which our supply of “courage” just seems to be lacking. While we cannot always have perfect riding days, being aware of our safety line can help us decide whether we should try some challenging new maneuver with our

horse, take a peaceful trail walk, or do something like cleaning tack.

Bear in mind that if something “just doesn’t feel right,” there is a good chance that it isn’t right for us at that moment in our life. On the other hand, some “states” typically are known to raise any performer’s or competitor’s anxiety—such as the moments before being called into the ring for the tölt class we have been training for all season. This increase in anxiety is normal and to be expected, so using self-patience to accept this temporary, very human state change, and focusing on deep breathing and progressive relaxation, can be good ideas.

Riding will always involve an element of risk. If we find that we are—or have become—risk averse, we might need to hang up our boots for a while. The new mom mentioned earlier plans to return to riding, maybe even with her daughter, once the child grows up enough to sit a lead line class. Another rider, who has made a renewed commitment to competition, finds herself willing to tolerate fairly high levels of pressure from her trainer in order to vastly improve her skills, because she feels strongly passionate about becoming an accomplished equestrian.

GROWING BEYOND SHAME

As riders, we attempt to find pleasure with our horses, as well as a sense of achievement. Pleasure and achievement can be as fundamental as first finding the feel of tölt to the exhilaration of showing at a high level, public competition. Between these points are the many joys accessible only to the equestrian, such as riding vacations during which we see the world from a unique perspective on the back of a horse, or the special intimacy of quality time spent grooming, feeding, and sharing secrets with our special equine friend.

Perhaps the most common barrier to our joys and progress as riders is fear. Whether the goal is a calm and safe trail ride or a loud and well-attended international tournament, we all are apt to feel a case of “nerves” at least once in a while. Unfortunately, many of us are ashamed to acknowledge that we feel anxious about an upcoming equestrian event, or are downright fearful of our horses.

In most cultures, psychological problems tend to be regarded as somehow more embarrassing, more shame-

ful, and more likely to be kept hidden than other medical conditions. We find it easier to share the woes of a sprained ankle, a broken wrist, or even chronic medical problems such as hypertension, than to admit that we are plagued by anxiety or depression. This is particularly unfortunate because talking through our psychological issues is one effective path to alleviating them—while this kind of sharing cannot mend breaks, sprains, or most other types of medical ills.

We typically forget that *courage is not the absence of fear but rather acting in spite of it*. An old quote from John Wayne that I have chosen to hang in my barn says: “Courage is being scared to death and saddling up anyway.”

So, how do we cope with the need to set our own individual safety lines, as

*We need to give ourselves
credit for the times
when we have ridden
through a bolt.*

well as to draw upon our own depths of courage when we want to move forward as riders? A first step in managing these seemingly contradictory needs is to *own* our fears and anxieties, and begin to share them with our equestrian friends and colleagues, and mental health professionals as needed.

For the most part, riders who share their fears find that other riders, as well as farriers, vets, and other equestrian professionals have many of the same fears. I once asked a fellow competitor how she felt when we were moments away from a very high level, very stressful international competition. Her response was, “I’m sorry. I’m so terrified that I couldn’t hear what you said!”

If we persist in hiding our fears and keeping them to ourselves, we can remain stuck and isolated, unable to resolve the conflict and, sadly, we may even stop riding forever. We need to continue to practice mentally rewarding ourselves for what we are, and have been, able to do, and own without shame those things that create our anxieties.

SAFETY VS PLEASURE

How do we reconcile our need for safety, our riding anxieties, and the fundamental risks that accompany the pleasures of riding? At some points in our riding lives, we might need to take steps *backward* in our training and riding goals. If our non-riding lives have become very stressful, we are likely to want to avoid any additional stressors in our pleasure activities. Yet, for many of us, life without riding would be too empty.

Another quote from Ed Viesturs, the mountaineer, which applies to riders is the following: “I also believe that the logical antithesis of the life I’ve led as a mountaineer would be to go through your days avoiding every activity that could possibly be dangerous. You can live a life so sheltered that when you’re old and gray, all you can claim is to have lived long enough to become old. That’s not my way.”

Here are a few suggestions for those times when our anxieties seem to be getting the best of us, but we are far from ready to stop riding:

Be sure that you have the right riding teacher—or find a new one—whose goals for you are commensurate with your current goals for yourself. If your riding teacher is pushing you beyond the safety line you have set for yourself *right now*, discuss that with him or her. Either agree on new goals with which you are comfortable or find a new riding teacher.

Your ideal teacher, who agrees with your riding goals, should also be the teacher who gives you sufficient positive reinforcement when you have worked toward your goals. If you find that your riding teacher is busy developing her career by training world championship riders, and that is not your goal, avoid frustrating both of you and change trainers as soon as possible. I have seen numerous situations in which anxious riders are better served by more senior trainers, who have moved beyond the need to establish themselves and are pleased to work a more relaxed lesson.

Ride the right horse for you—do not overmount. Riding a horse at a higher level than matches your own skills can serve an excellent training purpose, when the horse is what is known as a “school master” in the dressage world. Yet, even a school master can present challenges, so



Is riding bridleless within your safety lines? Here Terry Jordan works her mare in a round pen, teaching her to find tölt and trot with just seat and voice commands, plus the “Parelli” wooden stick to signal direction.

be certain you are ready for the level of school master assigned to you.

Some years ago, I was invited to spend a wonderful week training with the Spanish Riding School in Europe. A special Lusitano stallion was reserved for me. Since these highest level dressage horses, who can perform airs above the ground, develop the incredible musculature that is their ancient legacy as war horses, while not working they are kept in the safety of their stalls. I mounted this beautiful, huge white stallion in a classical old arena with velvet drapes and balconies for viewers. After getting a strong leg up on this horse, I happily began a calm walk around the arena to get acquainted—when a gust of wind blew one of the velvet drapes against his haunches. He took off at a rocketing, carousel horse canter, the likes of which I had never felt before. After processing the yelling in multiple languages, I understood that I must keep my stallion as close to the wall as possible to avoid engaging violently with other stallions that were being brought in. I began to steer and to convince myself that I was not going to vomit on his pristine white coat. I learned so very much during that

week. But the lesson of greatest importance was that even the most experienced performance horse is still a horse and still can spook!

Develop the right friendships. If your riding friends are so competitive (or so ashamed of their own anxieties) that they treat your fears as ridiculous, talking

Our “safety line” will help inform us about the activities in which we are or are not willing to engage.

with them will probably make you feel worse about your own emotions—and may prompt you toward taking on riding challenges that can be dangerous for you at the time. Find some new people, riders or not, with whom you can have a relaxed meal and chat about your riding issues.

(Some research suggests that eating is incompatible with anxiety, so try a light meal while you talk, and see if this works for you!)

Keep in mind that Icelandic horses are real horses! Often we neglect to see our horses in their true light. Given their beautiful faces, their soft eyes, their desire to bond with us, and their relatively small stature, added to their lower likelihood of spooking than some other large breed hot-blooded horses, we riders often fool ourselves into thinking that we should never be apprehensive about riding them (or that we should be ashamed of being reluctant or cautious.)

How many of us mount our Icelandic horses after a season off in their paddocks, and expect that we will have a safe and calm ride? Keep in mind that a horse is a horse, and without proper preparation, she can buck and bolt with the rest of them! Does your training facility have a round pen for lunging? Der Wiesenhof in Germany, where I have trained, has a beautiful wooden round pen where horses can be exercised without a lunge line, in order to avoid the concerns of forcing unnatural bending on the horse. But lunging serves other purposes than bending. For one, it permits the horse to loosen her back, and to buck in order to achieve that looseness if it suits her.

On a final note, take pride in your riding, in the extent that it brings you pleasure—because finding pleasure alone is a significant accomplishment. If what you are attempting in your riding is minimized by your riding teachers and your friends, find some new people who are willing to support your endeavors, and to appreciate your equestrian life. And if your work fails to elicit the appropriate positive support from your trainer, most of all, find a trainer whose goals mesh with yours. If your anxiety levels continue to impede your joy in riding, find a mental health professional who is competent in sports psychology, and hopefully with some training in Cognitive Behavior Therapy, before you decide to hang up your boots for good!

Theresa J. Jordan, Ph.D., is a clinical psychologist practicing at the Aiken Counseling Group in Aiken, SC, where she rides her Icelandic horses and her Swedish warmblood mare. Contact her at redmares@aol.com.

LETTERS TO THE EDITORS

We welcome letters from our readers. Please send them to quarterly@icelandics.org

MAGAZINE IDEAS

FROM NANCY ROHLFS

I read with interest the comments from members regarding the magazine and its contents. I'm a new member of the USIHC, having joined after purchasing my first Icelandic mare. I'm not new to horses though, having owned and ridden Quarter horses my whole life. I've been a member of the American Quarter Horse Association for over 15 years and receive their magazine as well.

Their magazine usually covers the following: Quarter horse breeding farms and bloodlines, a profile or two of a Quarter horse and rider who've had successful performances during the year (either rodeo or occasionally English riding), a training article (such as how to prepare your horse for the trail or simple exercises to help you develop a slow can-

ter) written by a trainer, and sometimes an article on the history of the Quarter horse.

I like to receive both magazines and read them cover to cover. I like *The Icelandic Horse Quarterly*, since I like to read about other owners and their riding. It would be nice to have a training article written by a trainer. I'd also like to learn more about "foundation" horses for the breed. Which characteristics did they select for? Maybe an overview of a breeding farm in Iceland. Maybe others already know this information, but I would find it interesting.

I'd also like to work on an article for the magazine in the near future. I have one of the Cornell mares and have been training her over the past year and half with a great Parelli trainer. We've accomplished quite a lot and she is turning out to be a wonderful and sensitive mare.



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Questions? email Susan Wellington at susanleewellington@yahoo.com



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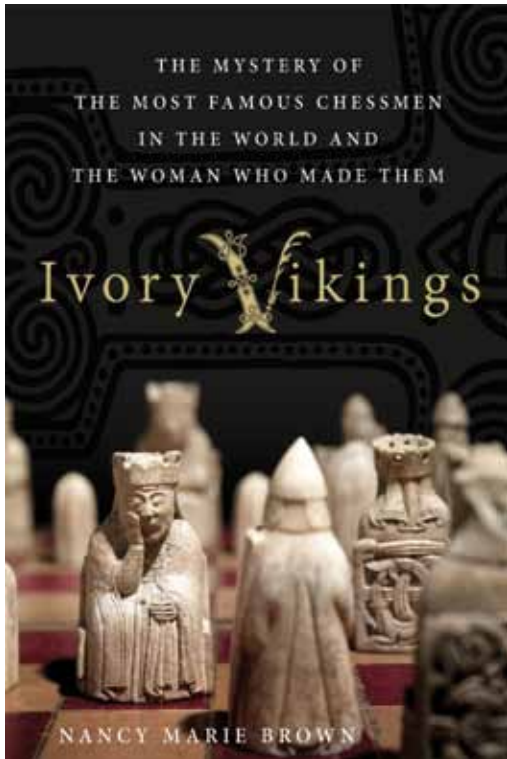
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Skuggjía frá Grafarkoti

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F Roanver frá Oddhóli M. Rest frá Grafarkoti

Skuggjía is a 14 year old, black mare with a star and strip. She comes from the farm Grafarkoti, which is well known for breeding horses with great tilt and unique and friendly characters. She is a very well-bred 5 gaited mare with very clean tilt and a solid, easy pace. She also has 3 very good primary gaits (walk, trot and canter). She has been shown successfully in tilt, 4-gait and 5-gait competitions with a youth rider. Skuggjía is schooled in all standard dressage movements (shoulder-in, haunches-in, side-pass, turn on the forehand/haunches and collected walk) and can also perform the Spanish walk. She has been trained to do bridleless work as well as some liberty. She also enjoys jumping and has great endurance on the trail. She is very secure and brave, she has no problem going out on her own. She trailers and travels well and loves checking out new places. She has also been used in performances with the Knights of Iceland Show Team and has been featured in the flying pace through fire.

Skuggjía is a very talented, friendly and well trained horse who would be well suited for an intermediate or advanced rider. She would be exceptionally good for someone learning to ride the flying pace or 5-gait. She enjoys trail riding and could also be used for gymkhana, or even just tilt and 4-gait.

Interested buyers please contact Leona Hansen: leona@valkyrieicelandic.com or Lúla Hasmann: lulastudio@gmail.com

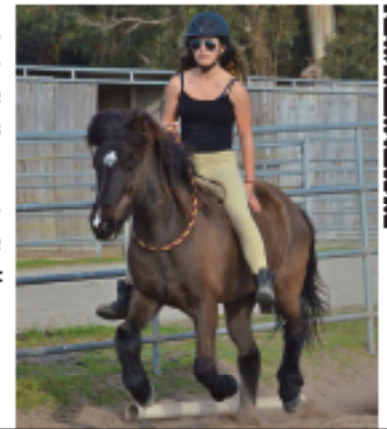


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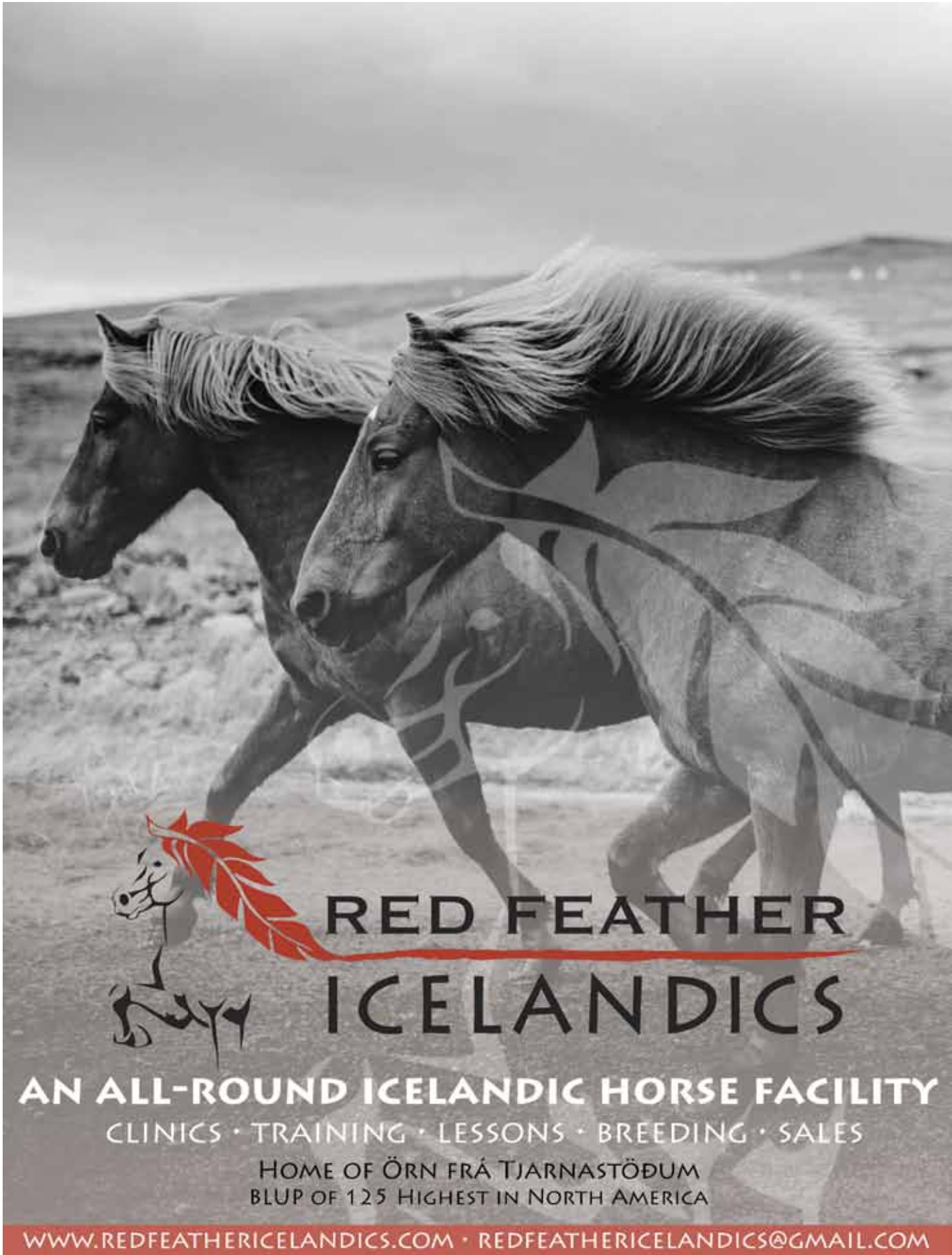
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