

Issue Two

THE

2021

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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NEW DATES!

2021 Events

For more information and updates on our plans, email Virginia@HarmonyIcelandics.com to be added to our Events List!

BREEDING SEMINAR

Sep 7-8 (Leader: Heimir Gunnarsson)

OFFICIAL BREEDING & RIDING HORSE ASSESSMENT

Sep 9-10 (Judges: Heimir & Silke Feuchthofen)

Only official assessment scheduled in the U.S. for 2021!

We will also offer a **Mock Breeding Assessment**

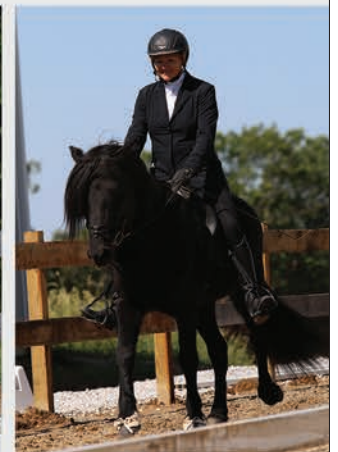
Sep 9-10 under the same judges.

SPORT SHOW

Sep 11-12 (Judges: Will Covert, Silke Feuchthofen, Þorgeir Guðlaugsson)

WEEK OF THE ICELANDIC HORSE

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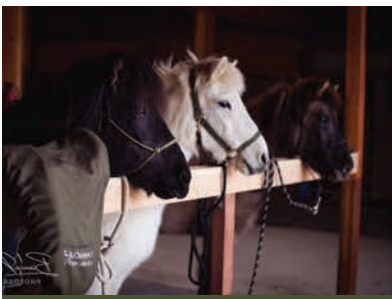
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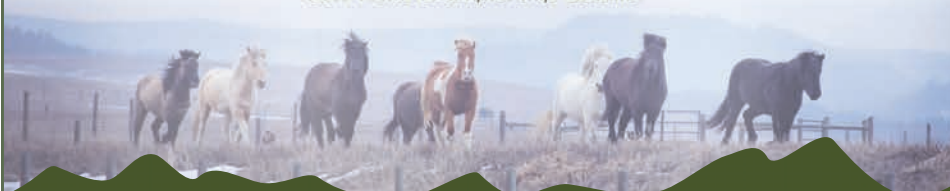
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Icelandic Horses



Strokkur

frá Syðri-Gegnishólum

IS2007187661

F. Orri frá Þúfu í Landeyum (Honor prize for offspring)
M. Grýla frá Stangarholti (Mother to Álfadís frá Selfossi)

Strokkur is a first prize, 5-gaited stallion with exceptional gaits, outstanding beauty and proven bloodlines. He also has a kind temperament and a charming, fun character which he consistently passes on to his offspring. Strokkur is standing at Avalon Icelandic in Ellsworth, Wisconsin for the 2021 season. Live cover and AI cooled shipped semen available
Stud fee: \$1350

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- *Multiple mare discount
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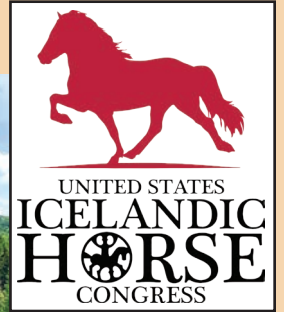
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THE USIHC MISSION

- To promote the knowledge of the Icelandic horse within the United States and its correct use as a competition and riding horse.
- To keep a registry of purebred Icelandic horses in the United States.
- To facilitate communication among all USIHC members.
- To represent the United States in FEIF.

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 21 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.



WHY JOIN THE USIHC?

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. By joining the USIHC, you connect to a worldwide network of experts to help you care for, ride, train, breed, and learn more about your horse.

The USIHC is the umbrella organization for 14 affiliated clubs: 13 regional clubs and an activity club for professional trainers. Our Registry links to WorldFengur, the worldwide database of all registered Icelandic horses (USIHC members have free access to WorldFengur), and we publish *The Icelandic Horse Quarterly*, maintaining an online archive of all issues since 2008.

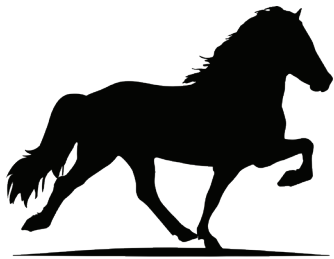
The USIHC sponsors scientific research on the Icelandic horse, helps promote the Icelandic horse at expos and through social media, supports educational seminars and events like the American Youth Cup, organizes leisure activities like the Sea 2 Shining Sea virtual ride, creates teaching tools like the Riding Badge Program, and offers practical and

monetary support to organizers of shows and clinics.

The Icelandic horse has international competition rules: You can compete in the same classes and receive comparable scores in any FEIF member country. Likewise, 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 ridden abilities. The USIHC sanctions sport and breeding shows that conform to FEIF rules.

The USIHC is responsible for the U.S. teams at the FEIF Icelandic Horse World Championships, the FEIF Youth Cup, and the FEIF Youth Camp. Through FEIF, the USIHC votes on rules and policies that affect the welfare of the Icelandic horse worldwide.

As a member of the USIHC, your dues and registration fees make all this possible. Our board members and committee chairs are all volunteers. As a member-driven organization, the USIHC grows stronger the more active and involved our members become. Please join us so that the USIHC can, as FEIF's mission states, "bring people together in their passion for the Icelandic horse."



ICELANDIC HORSE

Q U A R T E R L Y

THE ICELANDIC HORSE QUARTERLY

Issue Two 2021

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

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The Icelandic Horse Quarterly is published in March, June, September, and December by the USIHC as a benefit of membership. Renew online at www.icelandics.org.

Deadlines are January 1 (for the March issue), April 1, July 1, and October 1. We reserve the right to edit submissions. All articles represent the opinions of their authors alone; publication in the *Quarterly* does not imply an endorsement of any kind by the USIHC. Ads are accepted with the understanding that the advertiser is authorized to publish their contents and agrees to indemnify the USIHC and the *Quarterly* against any loss or expense resulting from their publication. The USIHC reserves the right to reject any ad.

Quarterly Committee:

Margot Apple, Andrea Brodie, Nancy Marie Brown (co-editor), Leslie Chambers, Alys Culhane, Nicki Esdorn (co-editor), Em Jacobs, Kate Kalan, Constance Kollmann, Gabriele Meyer, Kristin Moorhead, Anne Owen, Alex Pregitzer, Emily Potts, Chris Romano, Judy Strehler, Lynn Wiese, Nancy Wines-Dewan.

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Graphic Design: James Collins

On the cover: Birta from Icelandic Horse Farm (CA2000210011, US2000202299) with her 2021 foal, Eldvaki from Sæstöðum (registration in process), sired by Strokur frá Syðri-Geignishólum (IS2007187661, US2007105266). Birta and a foal also graced our cover in 2008, but shortly after this photo was taken she was killed in a freak pasture accident. "It was a devastating loss," says owner Heidi Benson. "She is the foundation of my breeding program in the U.S., so she was very special to me. It means so much to see her beautiful image displayed one last time in our national magazine." Photo by Heidi Benson.

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USIHC NEWS

ANNUAL MEETING

The USIHC Annual Meeting was held virtually on February 20, chaired by Martin Nielsen. About 70 members attended by Zoom or the Facebook live-stream. The program consisted of reports from the officers and committee chairs, and a Q&A session. The meeting closed with a keynote speech by trainer Carrie Brandt of Taktur Icelandics on preparing for virtual shows (see the article in this issue). Highlights of the meeting follow, along with some updates.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Outgoing treasurer Kari Pietsch-Wangard reported that "because we didn't have our traditional events, we had a \$14,000 net gain in 2020. We are in great financial shape, and the Board felt comfortable approving all the 2021 requests for funding from the committees." The approved 2021 USIHC budget can be found in the minutes of the Board's February meeting.

REGISTRY

The Registry was more active in 2020 than in 2019: 135 horses were registered and 193 were transferred, bringing the total number of USIHC-registered horses in the WorldFengur database to 6,474. "Many more horses were imported from Iceland than in 2019," noted Will Covert, reporting for Registrar Ásta Covert. "Not all of these imported horses are registered yet." (See the article in this issue on the importance of registering imported horses.)

Ásta and webmaster Em Potts are currently reorganizing the Registration section on the USIHC website to make it easier for users to find what they need.

In March, the board approved an additional process for transferring the ownership of a horse: For a \$50 fee, the USIHC will send a letter to the most recently registered owner of a given horse requesting their consent for the USIHC to issue a new Certificate of Ownership to the buyer of the horse.

DNA DATABASE

Working with the Veterinary Genetics Lab at UC Davis, the USIHC has created a genetic database for Icelandic horses in



Alys Culhane of Alaska was the Leisure Rider of the Month for February. She joined the Sea 2 Shining Sea ride to motivate herself "to get out an ride on days when I was feeling lazy."

the U.S. "This allows horses with unknown background to have their DNA run against the database to find potential matches or parentage," reported Lucy Nold, "aiding in the registration of many purebred Icelandic horses. The database can also be used in research about the genetics of Icelandic horses." DNA tests can now be ordered and purchased through the USIHC.

PARTICIPATION NUMBER

USIHC members can now apply for a participation number for DNA-verified Icelandic horses that lack the proper documentation needed for registration. "We are now able to match a DNA sample with the new USIHC Icelandic horse database to determine parentage, but there are Icelandic horses that are still not able to be registered due to lost paperwork, missing stallion reports, or lack of registration as a foal," reported Virginia Lauridsen. Horses with participation numbers are eligible to participate in clinics, the Sea 2 Shining Sea program, and any non-ranking "fun" classes offered at competitions. The one-time fee of \$250 "will be applied to the cost of registration, should a horse with a

participation number become eligible for registration in the future," Virginia said.

BREEDING SEMINARS

The Breeding committee sponsored a Virtual Breeding Seminar on March 13-14, 2021. The presenter was FEIF Breeding Judge Arnar Bjarki Sigurðarson. Topics included breeding goals, conformation, bloodlines, BLUP, and measurements. The recording was available to USIHC members for 30 days after the event.

An in-person Breeding Seminar is scheduled for the fall at Harmony Icelandics in Iowa. For participants new to the Breeding Assessment system, this seminar will also include a Riding Horse Assessment (which is not scored, but provides qualitative feedback from the judges) and a Mock Assessment (a full, scored assessment that is not entered into the official WorldFengur database). "There are fewer than 30 FEIF Breeding Judges in the world, so it's wonderful to spend time with one," said Virginia Lauridsen. "They have a special eye." Contact her at breeding@icelandics.org for more information.

BREEDING MANUAL

Copies of the new USIHC Breeding Manual have been sent to all stallion owners, to share with mare owners at the time of breeding. Any USIHC member can also obtain a hard copy by contacting the committee at breeding@icelandics.org. Or copies can be downloaded at www.icelandics.org, under "Breed".

Members of the Breeding committee partnered with equine veterinarians, FEIF breeding judges, and experienced Icelandic breeders to produce the manual, which is intended for anyone interested in beginning a breeding program.

Topics included are: breeding plan and goal, the importance of the mare, record keeping systems, insemination, care of the pregnant mare, foaling, training, Worldfengur, Virtual Mate, BLUP, the DMRT3 gene, foundation bloodlines, assessments, registering your horse, and ethical responsibilities.

TRAINER CERTIFICATION

In April 2020, the Education committee appointed a sub-committee to begin work on a U.S. Trainer Certification system. "FEIF tasks each country with developing a unique system for certifying trainers that is appropriate to its culture," noted Will Covert.

The sub-committee worked on the logistics of setting up exams, a scoring system and matrix, where tests would be offered, what horses would be used, and the requirements to qualify for a "Fast Track" to Level 1 testing. The Fast Track is intended for individuals who are already working as trainers in the U.S. but are not "certified."

Said Sport committee chair Martin Nielsen, "When Will Covert and I attended the FEIF Delegates Assembly, we got a shout-out on this effort." For more information, contact education@icelandics.org

DRESSAGE AWARDS

The USIHC is a 2021 USDF All-Breeds Awards participating organization. Said Janet Mulder, "We will be recognizing USDF Champion and Reserve Awards in Training Level through Grand Prix levels in the Open, Adult Amateur, and Youth

Divisions." Designed to recognize the accomplishments of specific breeds in dressage, these awards are presented to horses declared for a participating registry/organization with the United States Dressage Federation. For information, see <https://icelandics.org/usdf-all-breeds-awards> or email Janet at awards@icelandics.org.

SEA 2 SHINING SEA

The Leisure committee had 58 riders compete in the 2020 Sea 2 Shining Sea virtual ride, clocking a total of 42,000 miles, or an average of 201 hours in the saddle each week. Two teams completed the 5,000 mile virtual ride, and one—the Ice Trekkers—completed over 10,000 miles in the year. Four individual riders recorded over 2,000 miles for the year: Raven Flores, Anne Owen, Amy Bedell, and Claudia Salzer.

By February, over 100 riders had signed up for the 2021 ride. Said Martin, "This program has been a major asset to the USIHC. It's amazing to see this level of excitement."

RIDERS OF THE MONTH

The Leisure Riders of the Month for this quarter are Emelia Stewart, Alys Culhane, and Christine Snyder.

Emmy, of Veneta, OR, owns eight Icelandics with her family and rides several others at Five-Gait Farm. Among her goals is to "ride eight different horses in one day" and to "ride 100 times in one month; so far my highest is 81." Emmy won the youth division in the No-Stirrup November freestyle competition hosted by Gæðinga Dressage. Of trail riding, she says, "I love being outside with my horses, seeing different things in nature, and being with my friends."

Alys, of Palmer, AK, is well known to readers of the *Quarterly* for her adventurous wilderness treks, agility training, Centered Riding instruction, and positive reinforcement training. She owns four Icelandics, ranging in age from 7 to 31. "When I decided to get a horse, in 2002, I envisioned myself exclusively doing dress-



Emmy Stewart of Oregon was the Leisure Rider of the Month for January. Sea 2 Shining Sea is "a fun way to keep track and work as a team," she says.

sage in an arena,” Alys writes. “I acquired Rauðhetta from Alaskastaðir in 2003 and soon realized that her preference was going to be trail riding. I went with the program and have never looked back.”

Christine, of La Habra Heights, CA, owns two Icelandics. She is a certified rider with a Mounted Assistance Unit through the Department of Parks and Recreation. “Every ride is a different adventure,” she says of trail riding. “I like the challenge of becoming a team with my horse by overcoming obstacles together. Trail riding brings me to amazing, beautiful places where I discover God in nature. It is better than therapy.”

PROMOTION

In 2020, the Promotion committee distributed stickers with the new USIHC logo, opened a Zazzle store of USIHC merchandise (see https://www.zazzle.com/store/usihc_store), organized partnerships with USIHC sponsors Scootboot, Flying C Ranch Tack Shop, and Smartpak, and placed an ad in *Horse Illustrated* (using funds set aside for clinics and events canceled by Covid-19).

WEBSITE STATS

In its first full year, the new USIHC website and membership database received 16,000 visitors in 26,000 sessions, for 75,000 total pageviews. The top five pages visited were Registered Horse Search, Sea 2 Shining Sea Ride, Farm List, Registry, and Quarterly Magazine.

SPORT

Sport announced a change of terminology: As “USIHC-Sanctioned Show” implies the USIHC is liable, the new term will be “National Ranking Show.” The committee also reported on the success of the 2020 Virtual Shows. “The Virtual Shows have been a tremendous experience for us,” Martin added. “These shows are here to stay.”

JUDGING

The Sport committee has set up a Judging Education task force, led by Alex Pregitzer. In discussion with Þórgeir Guðlaugsson, who has presented previous USIHC judging seminars, the task force is developing an outline for a new



Christine Snyder of California was the Leisure Rider of the Month for March. Sea 2 Shining Sea “sounded fun and challenging,” she said. “I also liked the idea of forming a team with my friends.”

educational matrix. They will develop entry-level modules, taught online by U.S. judges, for people interested in learning about Icelandic horse sport competitions and how they are judged. They will also expand the current in-person judging seminars by moving some of the modules online, freeing up more time for actual judging and discussions.

SPRING VIRTUAL SHOW

The 2021 USIHC Spring Virtual Show was to have incorporated the tryouts for the Icelandic Horse World Championships. In late April, however, FEIF decided to cancel the championships due to Covid-19 restrictions.

As we went to press, the USIHC Sport Committee was deciding whether to extend the deadlines for the Spring Virtual Show. See <https://icelandics.org/virtualshow/> for the latest news. Scores from the 2021 Spring Virtual Show, and links to the submitted videos, will be posted there. The website also includes detailed information on the Virtual Show format and how to make the best video. See the article in this issue for tips on preparing for a Virtual Show. Whether you’re looking to practice for future events or compete in the USIHC National Ranking, the Virtual Show format is a great opportunity to receive feedback

on your riding.

The USIHC Virtual Shows are divided into two sets of classes. The National Ranking classes are judged by five FEIF International Sport Judges. For the Spring Show, these were: Þórgeir Guðlaugsson (from the Netherlands), Nicolai Thye (Denmark), Lutz Lesener (Germany), Hulda Geirsdóttir (Iceland), and Asa William (Sweden). The Schooling Show classes were judged by FEIF International Sport Judge Alexandra Dannemann, USIHC Sport Judge (A) Freija Thye, and three USIHC Sport Judges (B): Alex Pregitzer, Jana Meyer, and Lucy Nold.

YOUTH

Two new programs being discussed for 2021 are a youth pen pal program and a series of virtual clinics that would be available to youth members each month on Zoom. The Youth committee is currently putting together proposals.

BOARD MEETING

The USIHC Board of Directors met by Zoom call on February 9, March 9, and April 13. Complete minutes, including the monthly Treasurer’s and Secretary’s reports, committee reports, and the annual budget, can be found online at icelandics.org/minutes. USIHC members are encouraged to listen in on board meetings. The agenda and information on how to connect are posted on the USIHC website the weekend before.

In addition to the projects discussed above, the Board discussed a funding plan to help defray costs of organizing breeding shows across the country; Virginia Lauridsen will develop the proposal. Em Potts agreed to develop a Facebook advertising campaign to encourage Icelandic horse enthusiasts to join the USIHC or to renew their membership. Finally, the Board approved a new anti-discrimination policy.

CORRECTION

In Issue Three 2020 of the *Quarterly*, Nicki Esdorn wrote about “Another Way to Lunge.” The information given in the article’s resource section is no longer correct. See www.lungeing.com for Babette Teschen’s new English-language website.



DELEGATES ASSEMBLY

For the first time ever, the FEIF Delegates Assembly 2021 took place as a virtual meeting. Seventeen of the 21 FEIF member countries entitled to vote were present in this meeting.

Apart from presentations by each board member, the Trainer of the Year and Youth Country of the Year awards were presented. Congratulations to Malin Schön from Sweden as Trainer of the Year 2020, and to Switzerland as Youth Country of the Year 2020!

A long list of candidates and issues were up for voting during the Assembly. Gunnar Sturluson, FEIF president, and Gundula Sharman, FEIF Director of Youth Work, were re-elected for two years. Christian Eckert was elected as FEIF Director of Leisure Riding. Tone Kolnes was re-elected as member of the Arbitration Council (for 3 years), Ólafur Arinbjörn Sigurðsson as a member of the disciplinary board (for 3 years) and the delegates confirmed the state authorized accountant for the current year. To flip through the presentations or see the results of the voting (handled via an online voting tool that was specially developed for FEIF), go to <https://www.feif.org/feif/delegates-assembly-2021/>.

RULES & REGS

The 2021 FEIF Rules and Regulations are now online on the FEIF website. Further documents, such as the Approved



Information for FEIF Breeding Shows, an overview of changes to sport and breeding rules relevant for 2021, and more can be found in the Documents section of each respective department's web pages. In addition, a summary of the rule changes is published together with the minutes from the Delegates Assembly.

YOUNG MEMBERS

Along with the other candidates elected during the Delegates Assembly, three new young committee members will start their two-year positions on FEIF committees: Lena-Marie Baltés (LU) will serve on the Education committee, Katharina Haider (AT) on the Leisure Riding committee, and Maja Borg (SE) on the Youth Work committee. Lisa Kroon (NL) on the Sport committee, and Johannes Armplatz (IT) in Breeding will continue serving for another year. By appointing young people to the FEIF committees, FEIF aims to promote the voices of young riders in all the work we do and introduce a wider range of different viewpoints.

YOUTH COUNTRY

The FEIF Youth Country of the Year 2020 award goes to Switzerland! IPVCH has put youth work at the very heart of all its committee work, with a wide variety of activities offered to children and young riders across the country and a good growth rate in participation. Some of the more unusual activities include an



introduction to shoeing (using the legs of dead horses), a course on how to fall off safely (and elegantly), and a new emphasis on learning how to present a horse at a breeding show. In spite of Covid-19 restrictions, the youth team managed to organize a four-day camp and a further 11 training days for their national youth sport team. The preparations for the 2022 FEIF Youth Cup, which will take place in Switzerland, are already well on the way. You will find this and all other Youth Work reports submitted for 2020 on the FEIF website.

BEAT IN MOTION

The first public FEIF online seminar, "Competition Tunes: Beat in Motion," was hosted by Henning Drath and organized by Kirsten Schuster on behalf of the FEIF Youth Committee. The virtual event went without a glitch: The participants were active and engaged, and Henning both convinced and inspired. The evening started with a short introduction on what to think about when selecting music for a competition class. The aim is to enhance the strengths of the rider/horse combination, impress the judges, and fire up the spectators. After that participants could immediately practice what they had learned, and were invited to suggest suitable music for show videos supplied by a number of volunteers. It is amazing what else you learn to see just by focusing on the music for a particular combination.

CLUB UPDATES

There are 13 Regional Clubs and one Activity Club affiliated with the U.S. Icelandic Horse Congress. To find the Regional Club nearest you, see the USIHC website at www.icelandics.org. The following clubs filed updates on their activities this quarter.

ALASKA

by Janet Mulder

Improvise, adapt, and overcome: A common mantra and relevant to us all over this past year. While most of our AIHA in-person events were canceled, we adapted and offered virtual opportunities—and we will continue to adapt as things improve.

As I write this in March, the snow is not yet gone, but we are all ready for the flip of a switch to a different season.



Remember snow? In Alaska, frosty noses and buried fences will be back before you know it. Photos by Lois Rockcastle and Brenda Richard.

Spring will mean longer days, lots of sunshine, the occasional dumping of snow, and horse hair flying around. Then a busy summer is right around the corner, and we can take advantage of all the lessons and other work we did over the long winter.

Our updated calendar of events can be found on alaskaicelandics.org, and you can also find us on Facebook, under Alaska Icelandic Horse Association.



FLUGNIR

by Jackie Alschuler, Dave Loftness, and Ellen Parker

Flugnir riders and horses have been enjoying the winter and early spring, with favorable outdoor riding weather.

One of our usual spring events, the Minnesota Horse Expo, held annually at the Minnesota State Fairgrounds in late April, has been rescheduled to July 23-25, which will have our participants trying to keep riders and horses “Icic Cool” throughout. Flugnir Icelandics is a perennial contributing breed club at the Expo, providing informational sessions, clinic riders, and, of course, the fast-paced drill team that is a crowd favorite. Flugnir is looking forward to the 2021 Expo and hope the summer heat and humidity are not too intense for our Viking horses. Speaking of Vikings, we’re already



Kydee Sheetz took her best show horses on a 10-day trek in North Dakota. Photo by Stephanie Surbey.

planning to incorporate a well-established local authentic Viking re-enactors group as part of our Expo shows.

Looking back to last year, in August Kydee Sheetz of Aslan's Country Icelandics trailered her young stallion to Colorado to participate in a two-week training course with the talented Mark Rashid. In September she took two of her best show horses trekking in a remote area of North Dakota, with her friend Stephanie Surbey of Klakahross Icelandics. They rode up to 28 miles per day, carrying all of their camping gear, food, and horse feed for a 10-day trek. They were so proud of their horses, as they faced steep cliff-side trails, river crossings, and free-range cattle with courage and enthusiasm. Icelandic horse breeders truly create versatile, tough, and enthusiastic horses.

In October, Jackie Alschuler, Dave Loftness, and Eve Loftness rode in a Hunter Pace sponsored by Long Lake Hounds. The fall colors were in full splendor, and although it was windy and brisk, the ride was breathtaking. The team of Icelandic horses—Vordis, Kátína, and Paskar—placed fifth out of more than 20 teams running the jumps-optional course. Flugnir members will be looking forward to 2021 Long Lake Hounds Hunter Pace events.

We've plotted many of our own events for 2021, including a Flugnir ride and picnic at River Brink Stables in River Falls, WI. We are planning to hold our Flugnirkeppni show August 14-15 at the Olivers' lovely Tolthaven Farm in Pelican Rapids, MN.

In addition, Heidi Benson of Sæstaðir Icelandics, in partnership with Ellen Rose Parker of Avalon Icelandics, is coming to the upper Midwest for the summer of 2021. Heidi is bringing her stallion, Strokkur frá Syðri-Gegnishólum, for breeding, and she will be offering several clinics in Minnesota over the summer.

Finally, we are happy to say that a couple of local breeders will welcome new foals.

Please check our website at www.flugnir.org and our Flugnir Icelandics Facebook page for more information on our upcoming events.

FRIDA

by Suzi McGraw

After all of the challenges of 2020, members of the Frida Icelandic Riding Club greeted 2021 with open arms. Many took advantage of the relatively mild January weather in our mid-Atlantic region to ride together informally in small groups and to continue their virtual learning. Some spent time virtually shopping for new equine partners and several eagerly took the plunge. When the February shipment of horses left Iceland for the U.S., three of those on board were bound for new homes with our members: Julia Hutter purchased Ögri frá Bjarghúsum, Flavia Lepene bought Mídas frá Lindarholti, and Suzi McGraw bought Erla frá Hraf-nagili. All of the horses arrived safely and are now happily adjusting to their new lives in America.



Above, Suzi McGraw with Erla; photo by Sandra Newkirk. Below, Mídas and Julia Lepene; photo by Flavia Lepene.

Our club's formal season began on March 7 with our annual membership meeting. For the first time in the club's history we were not together for the event. In spite of the change to a virtual platform, the attendance and participation were terrific. Our guest presenter was Caeli Cavanagh, who gave an introduction to and overview of liberty training. Her lecture was outstanding. Since her topic is highly visual, Caeli provided an accompanying video to demonstrate many of the concepts she discussed. Knowing that the Zoom platform has problems delivering video content, the video was uploaded to a private YouTube channel. Members were sent the link to the video before the Zoom session began, so that they could watch the demo prior to the presentation if their bandwidth was not good enough to support watching it during the presentation. Afterward, Caeli answered questions from Frida members.

The club plans to switch from virtual activities to in-person events in the early summer. Excited by our expanded youth membership, we are actively planning for a special youth clinic/camp in July.

Young riders Hunter and Serenity Perigo enjoying a summer day on the trails. Photo by Ashley Perigo.



Brave Dynur from Creekside Farm shows no fear of these moose visiting his paddock in Alaska. Photo by Terri Mielke.

HESTAFOLK

by Lisa McKeen

We are excited about our Covid vaccines—now we can visit in person with other vaccinated folks! At last! We have been able to gather in small groups over the last year and have kept in touch through emails and our Facebook page. We have huge hopes for a meeting this summer, at some point, and have been invited on a horse trip to Mazama Horse Ranch, which is near Twisp, WA. We are hoping for lots more riding trips this summer as the Covid restrictions are lifted.

Meanwhile, we have been busy ordering club sweatshirts from 1st Iceland. RJ West found the website and we have been happily supporting them. For our membership meeting, we had a drawing with donated prizes. Doreen Shoda won the headstall with nose band from Ice-



Above, the horses at Island Haven, a sanctuary on San Juan Island owned by Julie Duke. Below, Lauren Murphy and RJ West ready to ride with the Woodbrook Hunt Club.

land, donated by Kathy Lockerbie. Janet O’Connell won the club logo sweatshirt, donated by Lisa McKeen. Ashtyn McGuire won the youth prize of a glitter hoof package, donated by RJ West.

This year we’ve expanded and re-started our Hestafolk Youth Club. They report, “We have five members so far, and are very excited to have fun with our Icelandic horses and to learn so much. We are raising money for our club by selling Mothers’ Day flower baskets. We have sold over 70 baskets so far. We are excited to get club shirts and to set up some riding clinics this summer. We are also going to be doing the USIHC Riding Badge program. Three of our members are doing the Sea2Shining Sea ride. We are having lots of fun keeping track of our hours riding our horses.”

Here’s some great news: Hestafolk has three teams and a potential fourth one in the USIHC’s Sea2Shining Sea Virtual Ride. Hestafolk Team 1 is Mary Chamberlin, Susie P. Johnson, Lisa

McKeen, Lauren Murphy, Judy Skogen, and RJ West. Hestafolk 2 is Alys Culhane (who is individual rider number 1 in S2SS at this writing), Patti Erikson, Terri Mielke, Serenity Perigo, Monica Urrutia-Sheehan, and Linda Wallitner. Hestafolk 3 is Lisa Hart, Layla Schuitema, Ashley Perigo, Doreen Shoda, and Chris Serrato. We are waiting on one more! The Sea2Shining Sea encourages us to ride and helps us to stay in touch.

Speaking of Hestafolk member Alys Culhane, we’re proud to announce that her horse Tyra was the 2020 Reserve World Champion in a walking agility competition. “We came close to coming in first. I am so proud of her,” Alys says. “She’s an equally good riding horse. Now if I’d had my heart set at the time on getting a horse that showed tölt, I would not own her. I often wonder, how did I get so lucky, to have four such wonderful horses? Wish I could have more!”



KLETTAFJALLA

by Coralie Denmeade

The Crystle Feldner Memorial Award is our club's new annual award, celebrating the joy of Icelandic horses. As many of us experienced first-hand, Crystle brought an overwhelming sense of joy and enthusiasm to all the horse events she attended. Crystle passed away in November 2019. To remember the joy Crystle brought to so many, we created an annual award to give out and rotate among our membership.

After receiving nominations, the Klettafjalla Board is thrilled to present the 2021 Crystle Feldner Memorial Award to Quinn Denmeade of Larkspur, CO. Congratulations, Quinn! Keep on loving life!

Crystle Feldner (right) brought joy to all she did. The 2021 memorial award in her name was given to Quinn Denmeade (below).



NEIHC

by Jennifer Bergantino and Phebe Kiryk

This past year we discovered that surviving and even thriving is thanks to our horses and our horse friends. Now we are looking forward to resuming training together, töltung through the woods, and planning excursions to Iceland, finally!

As is often the case in New England and the Northeast, we enjoyed an extended fall, with excellent riding conditions well into January. Then winter hit and reminded us where we live. February into early March brought snow and ice. In response we



bundled up, got creative, headed to open beaches, and worked on our training goals indoors.

As spring arrived things slowly began to look a bit more normal. Lessons resumed at Merrimack Valley Icelandics in Massachusetts, and the MVI drill team started practicing again. Since we couldn't have clinics

with our favorite trainers from Iceland, Ebba Meehan of MVI organized a series of clinics with local experts in a range of riding disciplines. The first was "Jumping Basics for Icelandics" with Kathy Borylo (Springtide Farm, Boxford MA), a professional Hunter-Jumper coach and trainer. Next was "Dressage Intro Level USEF Test Prep" with



NEIHC members bundled up to practice their drill riding in February. Left to right, Samantha Tuttlebee, Heleen Heyning, Brigit Huwyler, Cindy Dunne, and Amy Goddard. Photo by Alexis DeBoschnek.



Welcome to new NEIHC member Suzy Graf, on Lila from Deerfield Farm.

Erika Tighe (MVI Instructor and Two-Phase and Dressage competitor), and the third was “Dressage Basics for Icelandics” with Steph Andreottola Brightman (Endicott College Equestrian Hunter-Jumper Coach). Participants learned that the basics are the same across disciplines and that our horses are incredibly versatile!

Several NEIHC-based teams have joined the USIHC’s Sea2Shining Sea Virtual Ride. The Solheimar Dream Team (Vermont & Block Island), Merrimack Valley Icelandics Team 1 and Team 2 (Boxford, MA) and Girls from Vermont Icelandics Horse Farm are all in the top 10 of the S2SS rankings!

NEIHC continues to expand, and we welcome several new members: Suzy Graf from Moosup, CT, Katherine Forrest from Brooktondale, NY and Anita Kreiner from Boxford, MA! We also welcome new horses with their owner-members. Suzy Graf, like many of us, came to Icelandics after a long career of riding “other” horses; she has owned and trained Arabians and Arabian crosses, including two from birth until they passed away at age 27 and 31. Suzy, now 62, has discovered her passion for Icelan-

dic horses. “I bought Lila the same day I rode her. I needed an uncomplicated calm confident horse and Lila was perfect for me.” Well, why stop at one? Last fall, Suzy saw a photo on the internet of Hlein frá Kaldakur, a beautiful foal, and her Icelandic herd increased by one! Hlein will attend local all-breed shows for halter classes, while Lila competes in leadline classes with Suzy’s

grandkids. Suzy and Lila are learning western dressage and competing in virtual trail obstacle classes.

NEIHC reconnected as a club at our annual meeting via Zoom, and it was wonderful to simply see unmasked faces, old friends and new! Amy Goddard supplied this report: “This was the very first year, since 2006, that we were unable to hold our Annual Meeting and Thorrablot in person! So on March 6, our meeting was held via Zoom. Thirty-three members participated. Topics covered were finances, membership, promotion/education, virtual shows, quarterly reports, the USIHC Riding Badge program, and the Sea2Shining Sea program. Since most 2020 club events had been cancelled due to Covid restrictions, we had no fundraising or youth activity last year. Many thanks to our special guest speaker, Þórdís Anna Gylfadóttir, who presented ‘Knapamerki: Learning Through the Levels,’ an informative overview of the Icelandic Horse Riding Level courses, testing, and books.”

Due to Covid travel restrictions, we will be unable to hold our annual sport show at Thor Icelandics in Claverack NY, in June. However, we do hope to host some clinics and perhaps a schooling show this summer or fall. Currently, Equine Affaire is scheduled for November 11–14 in East Springfield, MA. We look forward to seeing members there, and volunteers are always needed to help set up and attend our NEIHC booth.



Professional hunter-jumper instructor Kathy Borlyo gave a jumping clinic to NEIHC members at Merrimack Valley Icelandics.



Above, a dressage clinic with coach Erika Tighe. Below, Annamaria Wallstrom enjoys a sunset ride at Crane Beach in Ipswich, MA.



SIRIUS

by Janet Kuykendall

The Sirius Ohio Kentucky Icelandic Horse Club is proud to announce that two teams are participating in the USIHC's Sea2 Shining Sea Virtual Ride. While there may or may not have been some smack talk between teams, all the Sirius team members are looking forward to chalking up riding miles.

The Sirius Trail Tölter's Team 1 covers a large geographical area: Deanna Parker lives just south of Traverse City, MI, and had to wait for the snow from the Polar Vortex

to pass through to begin riding in earnest. Deanna rides her horse, Kleopatra from Sand Meadow, off-property. Deanna and Kleopatra have been together for a year and are working on relationship-building.

Colleen McCafferty, our Kentucky team member, came to Icelandics after having a crazy Arabian. (Her words!) She has collected three Icelandics so far: Trilla from Northstar, Kolfaxi from Beat'n Branch, and Tobbi from Unicorn Valley. Although she has ridden far and wide, Colleen mostly rides at her own farm and is lucky enough to have trails, a large round pen, and an



Chris Feldner was one of several Sirius Club members who attended the three-gait clinic at Léttleiki Icelandics.

indoor arena. Colleen would like to take a trip to Iceland, but meanwhile she is teaching the older two of her nine grandchildren to ride. Hopefully, Colleen will share her love of dressage, liberty work, and ground-work with them.

The four remaining team members are from Ohio. Frances Rospotynski loves riding in Ohio, Kentucky, and Pennsylvania. She really enjoys the club trail rides and clinics. Frances usually attends the Léttleiki Icelandic horse shows and often lends a helping hand.

Ron and Sherry Hoover, also from central Ohio, have several Icelandics. Sherry says Ron puts in the most winter riding hours. He has several young horses that he is starting, and he likes to introduce them to trail riding around the farm when there is snow on the ground to hide the scary objects. He tries to ride at least three times a week. Sherry, however, waits for warmer weather. Both Ron and Sherry like to trail ride at the local, county, and state parks and enjoy all club activities.

Shellie Greyhavens, of southeastern Ohio, is the final member of Team 1. Shellie boards her horse, Bjarmi from Cytraas, at a facility that has an indoor arena



Jaime Jackson rides Holly at the Léttleiki Icelandics three-gait clinic.

as well as trails and a huge hay field with a track around it. Off the farm, she often rides at Lake Snowden, Strouds Run, and Hocking Hills. In addition to trail riding, Shellie and Bjarmi participate in obstacle challenge, trail challenge, liberty, and

groundwork. She attended adult camp as well as the club obstacle clinic. Shellie now has a trailer, and she's planning even more adventures!

The Sirius Trail Tölter Team 2 has five Ohio team members and one Pennsylvania member. Shawn and Jaime Jackson are the most-traveled trail riders. While based in northeastern Ohio, they have ridden their Icelandics in 15 different states. Their favorite places to ride and horse camp are the Allegheny Mountains in Pennsylvania and Big South Fork in Tennessee. They, too, have participated in the club trail rides and clinics.

Jane Coleman, who was diagnosed with an autoimmune disease, was encouraged by her husband to get back into horses as part of her recovery. As a result, she lost a lot of weight as she regained her health. This led Jane to believe that something good can come from something bad. While she lives in southwestern Ohio, she rides mainly at Miami Whitewater Bike or Wooded Trail and at Whitewater Memorial in Indiana. Although, if invited, Jane will ride just about anywhere, including the Sirius rides and clinics.

Kerstin Lundgren, also of southwestern Ohio, rides her horse, Galdur from Unicorn Valley, around the farm where she boards.



Clinician Paetra Hennigar instructs Kersin Lundgren and Thunder at the Léttleiki Icelandics three-gait clinic.



Shawn Jackson and Kolbein manage the poles at the Léttleiki Icelandics three-gait clinic.

Galdur's name means "the wild one," and sometimes he lives up to his name. Most of the time, however, he is the happiest and friendliest horse you would ever know. Kerstin enjoys learning and attends many clinics.

Kathy Rekers, the last teammate from Ohio, has owned Icelandics since the 1990s. Kathy is fortunate to board at a facility that has access to nearby riding trails. Since Kathy recently moved, she will be back on the trails as soon as she has everything unpacked.

The final team member is Constance Wilmoth, who lives in Pennsylvania. Elding, her 29-year-old Icelandic, has been her favorite horse since she was 14! Together, they ride mainly around their own property and on adjoining state game lands.

We wish all the S2SS riders safe miles and wonderful memories as they enjoy their Icelandics.

On March 6, Sirius members Chris Feldner, Shellie Greyhavens, Jaime and Shawn Jackson, and Kerstin Lundgren attended a three-gait clinic at Léttleiki Icelandics in Shelbyville, KY. Clinicians Paetra

Hennigar and Carly Conley of "Team Léttleiki" are also Sirius members. They presented an outstanding clinic, with emphasis on exercises to correctly set up the transition from walk to tölt, as well as exercises on loosening the horse laterally in tölt to clean up the beat. For example, one exercise involved spiraling in and out laterally in tölt to help with the beat. Riders also navigated a course of cones and poles which helped to clean up the beat in pacey horses. These are only a few of the many topics Paetra and Carly covered. In addition, they worked individually on issues with the participants. Everyone enjoyed the clinic and learned a lot! Host and Sirius member Maggie Brandt made a delicious lunch for everyone and topped it off with her world-famous chocolate cake!

Sirius Ohio Kentucky Icelandic Club also has many riding and camping activities planned for this summer. June 11-13, we

will be riding and camping at Shawnee State Forest, near West Portsmouth, OH. From southern Ohio, we head to central Ohio to ride and camp at Pleasant Hill Lake Park, near Perrysville, July 30-August 1. On August 13-15, you can join us at Barkcamp State Park, near Belmont, OH. For our ride September 10-12, we will be leaving Ohio to go to the Allegheny mountains of Pennsylvania for riding and camping at Summers Allegheny Trail Ride, near Marienville, PA. More details are available on our new public Facebook page, Sirius Ohio Kentucky Icelandic Horse Club. You can also contact Sirius President Sherry Hoover at 890hoover@gmail.com for riding and camping information. Everyone is welcome to join us for the day or for the weekend. Ohio has beautiful trails, and the Pennsylvania mountains are spectacular! We look forward to riding with you!



Shellie Greyhavens on Kadall is watched by clinician Carly Conley at the Léttleiki Icelandics three-gait clinic.

TOPPUR

by Roxanne Antisdal and Liz Appel

We held our Toppur annual meeting in February on Zoom. It was a great platform to get us all together, seeing friends we haven't seen during the long Iowa winter. New officers were elected and horse shows and trail rides were discussed.

Due to Covid restrictions, we learned we could not secure judges for a June National Ranking show. Therefore we have rescheduled the show for September 11-12 in Truro, IA. Preceding the show we are planning to hold a breeding seminar on September 7-8 and a riding horse assessment on September 9-10. Registration forms and information will be available on our Toppur.org website or our Facebook Toppur Icelandic Horse Club page in July.

In anticipation of future shows and activities, some of our members and their horses participated in dressage clinics, lessons, and trail rides. At the end of March, we attended the Iowa Horse Fair. Our theme consisted of Icelandic culture and the versatility of the Icelandic horse. Informational posters and videos were displayed. Individuals could pose with an Icelandic horse and get their photo taken—wearing the Viking helmet, with fur and horns, was optional. Our demonstrations included a drill team, a broodmare assessment, dressage, jumping, and suitability for all ages. Last but not least, we showed the beer tölt—quite the crowd pleaser. Fun was had by



all! In addition, there was a stall decorating contest, and Toppur won first place, with a \$200 check for our club.

As the pleasant summer weather continues, we will be spending more time with our friends and horses. We hope you are able to do the same.

Cindy Niebuhr of Toppur poses at the Iowa Horse Fair. Club members show off their booth (below left) and the prize they won for best-decorated stalls. The beer tölt, as usual, was a crowd favorite.



A MODEL HORSE

by Paetra Hennigar

Numerous horse-crazy kids spend countless hours playing with Breyer model horses and many grow up to become collectors—it's fun. But to have a horse you own, ride, or train scouted to be a Breyer model horse—that's priceless.

In February 2020 Maggie Brandt, the owner and business manager of Léttleiki Icelandics in Kentucky, arrived at the farm rather excited. She waited until everyone else had left the staff lounge for the day before telling me that she had some news. Of course I was curious as to the nature of this news, since she clearly didn't want anyone else to hear it yet! That was when she told me that someone from Reeves International, Inc. had contacted her about our stallion, Sporður frá Bergi, becoming the 2021 Icelandic horse model for Breyer.

They had been hunting online for an Icelandic horse to fit their "Horse of a Different Color" theme for 2021 and came across Sporður's page on our website. With his striking red dun pinto coloring and his traditional strong Icelandic horse build, he fit what they were looking for perfectly.



Sporður and Paetra pose with the first model, which arrived in February.



Sporður is strong, friendly, and trustworthy—as well as colorful—making him an excellent ambassador of the breed. Here, Paetra and Léttleiki student Abby Crusier show him his mini-me.

I was sworn to secrecy about this information, as Breyer did not want any leaks before the models hit the shelves. Maggie had told them that only a couple of staff members would be informed, as we would be needed to help facilitate the creation of the model.

For instance, right away we needed to help create the content for the writeup on the back of the Sporður model box. On several afternoons, I sat in the Léttleiki lounge, strategically placed so that no one could walk up behind me and see my computer screen, and wrote about my favorite stallion's character, temperament, and achievements. A few times other staff members popped into the lounge and I quickly hid my stack of information under a book, trying not to look like I was up to anything sneaky.

Here's part of what ended up being printed on the package: "This five-gaited stallion has show-stopping gaits, incredible bloodlines, and a friendly personality to back it all up. ... An athlete and breeding stallion, Sporður is passing on his unique coloring and powerful build to his offspring in the U.S. and Iceland. Like their sire, many of them have been rated 'first prize'—the highest breed evaluation ranking available to the breed, which is based on

conformation and movement."

In April, Breyer requested a thorough set of photographs documenting Sporður from all angles, so that they could begin painting a test model. At this point Maggie and I sat down with Carly Conley, who directs the Léttleiki Riding School and is our breeding manager, and broke the exciting news to her, because I would need Carly's help with the photographing. Carly is an avid Breyer model collector. I knew the look on her face would be priceless—and, sure enough, she did not disappoint! Her jaw may have actually touched the floor, and then she expelled, "Shut Up!"

The next warm day Sporður got the best bath of his life, and Carly and I took as many photos as possible to make sure all his pinto markings were documented. Breyer sent us photos of the test model they had made so that we could approve of the mapping of his markings. Since I knew Sporður best, I noted two changes that needed to be made: A small marking on his lip was missing, and the marking on his right flank was missing the roaning. Unfortunately Breyer could not produce the roaning in that one marking, because of the way the models are painted for production. But they amended the one lip marking, and the rest of his markings were spot on—right down to the

markings on his belly and the small dun stripe near his tail.

The final step was getting a photo of Sporður for his model box. When Maggie told me I would be the one riding him for the photo, I'm pretty sure my inner eight-year-old child was jumping up and down clapping her hands. Local photographer Cheryl Van Stockum came out to the farm, and I toltoed Sporður around the track to get the photo that is currently on his model box.

Then came the long wait until one day in mid-December, when Carly messaged me to say she had just seen that the 2021 Breyer models had been released! The news was out! We informed the rest of the Lettleiki staff, and they were shocked that we had been able to keep this secret from them all year. I posted the announcement of Sporður's model on social media, and many fellow Icelandic horse enthusiasts and Breyer model horse fanatics were as excited as we were!

Two boxes of Sporður's models arrived at our farm a few weeks after the 2021 models were released, and Carly and I took one over to Sporður's stall so he could meet himself in plastic form. He had just finished his morning grain, so he inspected the model eagerly, hoping that there may have been more grain or cookies involved.

Of course, he did get a cookie. That's one thing that could never be captured in a model: his adorable cookie-begging face. He



Breyer was looking for a "horse of a different color" when they chose Sporður frá Bergi as the newest Breyer model. Here's hoping he inspires a new generation of horse-crazy kids to ride Icelandics. That's Paetra riding the real Sporður on the package.

lifts his head up, tips his nose slightly away, opens his jaw a little and then wraps his lips around his teeth so he looks like an old man who isn't wearing his dentures, then he gives you the most begging eyes ever, in hopes of getting a cookie of any kind.

He also enjoys Pop Tarts, though his

most favorite treats are molasses cookies.

Another thing that can't be captured in his model is his willingness. Whether it is pacing on the oval track, hacking bareback around the farm, participating in a dressage schooling show, or playing with liberty work, Sporður always tries his best and does

SPORÐUR FRÁ BERGI
Icelandic Stallion

Many boast of being the complete package, but few can back it up like Sporður frá Bergi can! Pronounced, "Spor-dihur from Bear-gie," this Icelandic Stallion's friends call him Sporður. Imported from Iceland in 2013, he now calls Kentucky's Lettleiki Icelandics at Swallowland Farm home. This five-gaited stallion has show-stopping gaits, incredible bloodlines, and a friendly personality to back it all up! Sporður also sports a flashy red dun pinto coat that makes his high-quality movements stand out even more in the show ring.

An athlete and breeding stallion, Sporður is passing on his unique coloring and powerful build to his offspring in the U.S. and Iceland. Like their sire, many of them have been rated "first prize" – the highest breed evaluation ranking available to the breed, which is based on conformation and movement.

With his winning ways and high-quality offspring, Sporður is leaving his colorful mark in the world of Icelandics!

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Breyer

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it with enjoyment.

Sporður is a wonderful example of what the Icelandic horse is: strong, friendly, athletic, charismatic, and trustworthy. All of us here at Lettleiki Icelandics feel so fortunate that Breyer Model Horses saw those qualities in him as well and chose him to be the 2021 Breyer Model Icelandic Horse.

AFTER THE LONG JOURNEY

by Helga Sveinsdottir Thordarson

Each year, more Icelandics arrive in North America to begin lives in a world strikingly different from their rugged homeland. There is much to gain from reflecting on how dramatically life changes for the imported horse, because the initial months after importation offer a window of opportunity that can lay the foundation for a happy and successful adjustment.

With a thoughtful, proactive approach, you can help your horse grow into his new life with confidence. Failure to work on the basics or rushing the horse, however, will make the adaptation more challenging for horse and owner alike.

This article was originally written in 1998, after I imported my first Icelandic horse. I have updated it for this issue of the *Quarterly*, drawing upon my three decades of experience in helping new imports adjust after arriving from Iceland. I hope these practical steps will help you and your horse settle in during this critical period.

STEP 1: GROUNDWORK

Groundwork is the foundation. Hand-walk your horse and show him the sights.

Stop a moment and think about the land your horse came from. Iceland is largely treeless, with green hillocks, vast stretches of barren tundra, and big skies. Your import is accustomed to inclement weather, wide open spaces, and unobstructed vistas. He will likely tolerate blasting wind, rain, blizzards, and water crossings with aplomb.

Do not be surprised, however, if other aspects of your environment are unsettling. The U.S. presents novelties that require acclimation. Don't let your import be surprised by his first train, strutting peacock, or automatic sprinkler with you on board and no trust or rapport built between you.

First show him that this new world is okay. Anticipate the new sights your environment presents and begin a deliberate, stepwise program to introduce your horse in a controlled, positive way.

For example, because we will encounter cyclists on the trails, I have sometimes arranged for a young neighbor to ride his bike around my paddock when a new horse arrives. We start slowly and gradually up the



Lysingur frá Hvalnesi and Helga in the old days. When he first arrived from Iceland, he looked “sorrowful and lost.” Months later, he had transformed: He was brave, friendly, and “comically personable.”

intensity, with wheelies, dramatic pratfalls, and skidding the bike so that it tosses rocks and dust. This early, controlled “inoculation” helps my new horses take speeding mountain bikers in stride later on, out on trail. It also increases my confidence, as I have reason to believe that my horse will keep his cool when it matters most.

Make all such introductions a positive experience and endeavor to keep your horse under his threshold for anxiety. Hand-walking paired with treats (used judiciously!) can be helpful—but take care to reward only the desired behavior (politeness and calm curiosity). Be sensitive to his needs, but do not to reinforce or mirror your horse's worry.

Convey confidence as you encounter new sights to help your horse develop trust in you and his new environment. Smile, sing aloud, be self-assured, connect, and explore the world together.

Your setting may have its own novelties, but here are some of the usual suspects:

- Any claustrophobic setting: narrow lanes, busy highways, tall buildings, or trees overhead.
- Fast or noisy things: trains, firetrucks, helicopters, leaf blowers, drones, cyclists, e-bikes, electric wheelchairs, remote control cars, rifle fire/hunting season, etc.
- Strange footing: slick pavement, slippery manhole covers, brightly painted roadway lines (hand-walking can make this one-time only learning).
- Strange animals and plants: llamas, peacocks, cactus, snakes, skittering squirrels and other small mammals (there are many birds in Iceland, but few land mammals).
- Miscellaneous oddities: umbrellas, balloons, flags, banners, etc.

STEP 2: BUILD TRUST

Establish the relationship. Talk to your horse, guide him, and don't rush things.

Your import has been pulled from his herd and surroundings, shipped in a crate for days or weeks, and placed in a world with new sounds, sights, food, rules, and demands. Give your horse time to find his bearings. Provide ample rest as he seeks a new place in the social order.

Focus on building a connection with your horse based on trust and partnership. This will take time. Because your Icelandic is herd-raised, he has a social language you can tap into to help this process along.

Build connection with brief, daily sessions of grooming, leading, and voice cues. He may understand "brokk" or "fet" (Icelandic for trot and walk) but you will need to teach him your new language. Teach simple cues via groundwork.

Speaking gently, touch the horse, beginning with easy areas like shoulders and back, working up gradually to sensitive areas like ears and mouth. The horse will become increasingly attuned and accustomed to relaxing and orienting toward your voice. This teaches him to look to you for guidance when uncertain. He will learn that you are trustworthy. Over time you will be gifted with his respect and cooperation.

Remember also that a five- to seven-year-old Icelandic (the age at which many are imported) is a young horse and not one well into middle age, as is true for some breeds. Your horse may have only been tamed and trained for a short while. Be present for initial vet/farrier visits and aim to make all new experiences as stress-free as possible. If your horse is inexperienced or insecure, seek out a trainer knowledgeable about Icelandics and ride with others. If you have no Icelandic trainers nearby, seek out online courses and coaching, or consult with a solid, open-minded non-Icelandic trainer.

STEP 3: GROOMING

Approach grooming as a new experience and go slowly.

Your import has probably not experienced intensive, American-style grooming. He may not have had a bath or clipping, and fly spray may come as a surprise. As with other new experiences, follow a stepwise process to acclimate him to the new routines. Don't overwhelm him in the first days. He has enough on his plate with his recent

travels, new feed, and a new setting.

If your horse is unsure about the water hose, introduce the routine in steps, beginning with the hose running at low pressure, near but not on him. When he no longer pays much attention to the hose, go to the next step: Approach slowly and confidently from his shoulder, gently announce your intentions, and let the water run onto a hoof. Reward him with a praising voice and end the lesson there. Repeat this process, going as slowly as your horse needs, each time running the hose a little higher on the leg.

The same graduated process works wonders for clipping. Begin by lightly touching him with the clippers turned off. Work up to gentle massaging with the clippers over the whole body (again, unplugged). Then turn them on but leave the clippers at some distance. Next, place the running clippers onto the horse so that he can feel the vibration. After these steps, most horses accept clipping without undue alarm.

Always tell the horse what you intend to do: This builds trust in you and makes his new world predictable. Run through the routine until he is relaxed and accepting a full bath, body-clip, or fly spray, without fear or distress.

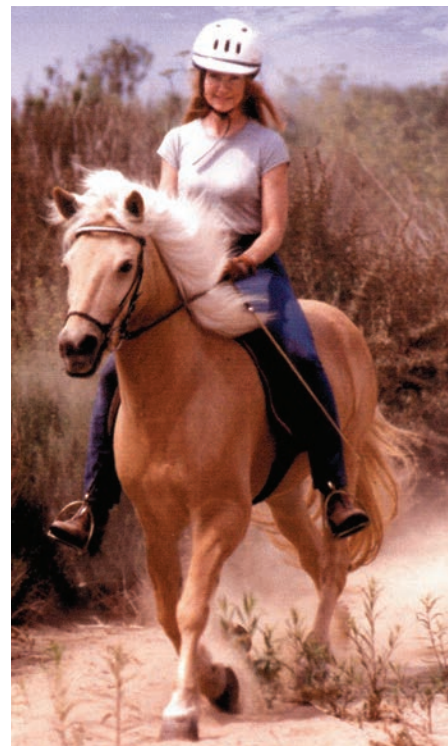
With some Icelandics, this whole process may take only a few minutes to an hour. With others, the introduction is best done over a week or two. The point is to teach the horse to trust in his new environment and to avoid developing a phobic or resistant horse. Make learning pleasant and you will earn his faithful friendship with every step.

STEP 4: BE CLEAR

Tell your horse what you want and don't expect him to read your mind: The rules are different in America.

Anticipate some culture shock and perhaps moments of miscommunication between you and your new horse. This is a natural part of the process and can be understood in terms of the horse's previous life experience.

Your horse may come from Iceland with trail experience and solid gait training, but his ground manners may not have been a top priority: Standing still for mounting, for example, is often not expected in Iceland. This is where you get the pay-off for initial groundwork. Communicate your expectations by spending a few weeks teaching him to walk politely on a lead, stop lightly, and proceed in response to verbal cues. A



Lysingur and Helga took part in an Endurance Clinic hosted by John Parke in California in 1999. "We rode a fast 20 miles," Helga says. "Lysingur adjusted to California's climate and excelled! He finished in great condition. We tied with the famous Remington and rode into camp side by side with John—way ahead of the rest of the pack."

long dressage wand (used as an extension of your arm) is helpful, allowing a gentle, butterfly-light touch as a prompt, when needed.

Teach him to halt, walk, trot or tölt, back up, and do lateral work in response to your cues. There are excellent online resources for teaching this kind of basic groundwork. This is the foundation upon which the riding relationship can be built.

After a period of rest and hand-walking, your horse will begin to know what is expected and to trust his environment. The lines of communication will be open. Your horse will now probably stand patiently when mounted—and, if not, you have established voice cues to instruct him. Most importantly, he will not have to be a mind-reader to please you.

A similar important point can be made about ensuring that your new horse has good brakes. In Iceland, a high priority is placed on willingness to go, and in that open and unpopulated terrain, an unquestioning, and absolutely non-negotiable instant whoa is not, perhaps, so critical. Such is not the case in North America, where horses are ridden in highly congested, urban, or

complex environments (think railroad crossings, busy highways, eye-level branches, rattlesnake-infested cactus, cliff-side trails shared with racing mountain bikes).

Most importers go to great lengths to select horses with the skills and temperaments best suited for the American market, but it is wise to check the brakes and to tune them up to suit your needs. Build on the groundwork exercises by emphasizing that good whoa until it is second nature to your horse.

Start out slowly. Work on a nice, fluid stop at the walk and trot before you go out on the trail for a high-speed adventure. Ride actively and keep the horse's mind engaged. Make speed changes, circles, and stops a normal part of your trail-riding routine to keep your horse attuned and listening. Practice stops at the trot and tölt before you move on to canter. If your horse speeds up without your asking, circle and use voice cues to tell him what you expect. Do not canter your horse toward home until you've gone through all these steps, the two of you are working in harmony, and his brakes are in perfect, working order.

My point is that it is wise not to presume, as some of the rules have changed for your import. He has much to learn and a new world to navigate, so do not expect him to be a mind-reader. Teach him how to be. Your horse will want to please, so invest time in building a mutual language that bridges the gap between you. You will be rewarded amply for that initial patience.

STEP 5: KNOW YOUR HORSE

The Icelandic breed is unique in some ways. Take the time to get to know and understand your new partner.

Icelandics are novel in the U.S. and are still misunderstood at times. Several aspects of their temperament should be kept in mind if you are new to the breed. The Icelandic horse is calm, brave, and independent, and it is with good reason that many people consider them to be unmatched as trekking, pleasure, and competition horses.

That said, there is natural variability within the breed. Some are nearly unflappable; others are more high-strung and sensitive. Many Icelandics are not well-suited for small children or total beginners.

Icelandics are, on the whole, less spooky than many breeds, but it is not true that Icelandics lack the "fight-flight response," as is sometimes claimed. This kind

of overstatement encourages complacency and inattention. Unchallenged, such claims can damage a breed's reputation, because problems are more likely to develop if misinformed owners do not adequately anticipate and attend to their newly imported horse's needs.

All animals with advanced central nervous systems, predator and prey, have the fight-flight response. This remains true for the Icelandic horse despite centuries of life on an island without large predators. In fact, your horse's strong, inborn sense of self-preservation has contributed to his survival over centuries of threat from blizzards, bogs, glacial rivers, ice crevasses, starvation, and volcanic activity. The term "bomb-proof" should be retired and not applied to Icelandics—or to any prey animal.

What is notable in Icelandics is their inherent stoicism—a trait that likely helped conserve energy in a harsh and unforgiving environment. This reserved nature can mask distress that is more obvious in other breeds.

The stalwart Icelandic will demonstrate few signs of building anxiety and will not typically froth, jig, sweat, or look wild-eyed when frightened. Instead, he will quietly assess a threatening situation and (without trusted direction from you) will act decisively in the face of perceived danger.

A new owner (especially one switching from another breed) is smart to really get to know her horse and recognize when the quiet wheels in his head are turning. The Icelandic is a complex and "thinking" horse: We must look beneath that composed exterior for signs of disquiet. These may be as subtle as a tightening up of the haunches or a shortened stride.

An Icelandic horse may not advertise his concerns—but do not mistake stoic for simple. He may not wear his sensitivity on his sleeve/foreleg, but a newly imported horse will be quietly uncertain in the early months. Be alert to his signals and use voice cues to settle and reassure him in moments of insecurity.

Check out and build up his confidence level, as needed. Do not presume he will be exactly as he was before. Even a horse that was rock solid in Iceland may not be so here, for a time.

Another important point relates to the native-born Icelandic's upbringing. Your imported horse has spent his life in a natural environment and in a herd. He needs

the company of other horses. Some North American horses are raised alone in pipe stalls or backyards, with virtually no contact with other horses. Isolation will not work for your highly socialized import.

A group of Icelandics kept together in a large paddock or pasture is ideal, but at the very least provide a companion and seek surroundings that are as natural as possible. Without enduring bonds, play, and a place in the social hierarchy, an Icelandic may become depressed, withdrawn, or resistant. Isolation in a box stall is strongly discouraged and may lead to cribbing and other nervous behaviors considered highly unusual in this breed. Being kept alone is one adjustment an imported Icelandic will likely be incapable of navigating successfully.

STEP 6: GO SLOW

Make lifestyle changes slowly.

This applies to many aspects of your horse's care. Introduce new feeds gradually to let your horse's digestive system adjust. A newly imported Icelandic is used to a diet of low-protein grass hay (no more than 8% protein); alfalfa hay is much too high in protein for him.

Grain supplements are not advised, as a rule, though some trainers recommend feeding a small cup of vitamin-based pellets or balancer once a day. Hay in Iceland is rich in selenium, so you may want to feed a vitamin E and selenium supplement if your hay or pasture is deficient. Have your hay tested and consult with Icelandic horse trainers and your importer to learn what has worked, and not worked, for Icelandics in your area.

Another consideration is sandy soil. Icelandics are aggressive foragers; they may ingest sand in high amounts where it is present. Consult with your veterinarian about whether psyllium or other supplementation is needed. Slow feeder tubs placed over mats or platforms can prevent feed from mixing with sandy soil.

Your horse's immune system may be compromised by the stress of a long journey and by exposure to a host of bacilli and viruses absent in his isolated homeland. Follow your vet's advice for recommended vaccinations and worming. If your horse is very taxed after transport, your veterinarian may suggest a few weeks' recuperation (with isolation from local horses) before full vaccinations. If a few weeks' rest doesn't seem to help, ask your vet to check for ulcers, which

can be caused by the stress of traveling. Ulcers often go undetected and can cause the horse great discomfort. Depending on where you live, your region may also present other health concerns; for example, owners in some areas need to read up on how to prevent or deal with summer eczema (an allergic reaction to bug bites); again, stress can exacerbate this problem.

Your new arrival may be out of condition. He may have stood in lush green pasture through the Icelandic summer or been housed in tight quarters with little riding during the dark winter months. Build up his stamina gradually and be mindful of the need to condition him to hot weather. Gradually increase your demands and do not exceed your horse's current abilities.

Icelandics are tough and adaptable, but they need time to acclimate to dry heat and humidity; this process should be carried out over many months. Consider investing in a top-notch shedding tool. Body-clip or half-clip your horse if the weather requires it. Always offer salt and ample water. Consulting with other Icelandic owners in your area will help you avoid some trial-and-error learning about how and when to clip, and so on. Given time to adjust, most Icelandics prove tough and hardy in warm climates.

STEP 7: PREPARE FOR JOY

In conclusion, my best advice is to go slowly for the first six months to a year: The reward is worth it.

Your horse is adapting, mentally and physically, to new demands and a new life. Security in a novel environment does not come overnight, and some Icelandics will be quietly fretful for a time. Traditional American horse-keeping practices present a dramatic lifestyle change that may be reflected in changed behavior.

Life in a small paddock or box stall, mild weather, and rich feed can turn a "poky" import into a more willing and energetic horse. Conversely, a horse that was "go-ey" in Iceland can evolve into a lower energy mount. Other horses will settle quickly and be much the same as they were before.

My beloved heart-horse, brought from Iceland many years ago, illustrates the dramatic transformation that can take place in the months after importation. Many moons ago, we traveled to beautiful Flying C Ranch in Santa Ynez to see a newly arrived batch of horses.

Most of the horses were settling in, but



Illustrator Margot Apple imagines what a newly imported Icelandic might be thinking in this pencil sketch. Where are the wide-open spaces? What is this dark tunnel I'm being asked to enter? What's that rustling in the undergrowth? Getting inside your horse's head is a good way to help him adapt to America after the long journey from Iceland.

Lysingur frá Hvalnesi had taken the long trip from Iceland to California hard. He was withdrawn and sad looking. Lysingur was ostracized and rejected within the herd hierarchy: He stood alone in the corner, head low, facing the wall. He looked tired and flaccid, with a hang-dog facial expression. He was, we thought, no great beauty. He was strong and steady, nevertheless, and an absolute delight to ride. Under saddle, he seemed to grow wings, and days later the memory of his buoyant, floating tölt was hard to shake. So, after trying far more "friendly" and beautiful horses, it was Lysingur that we came to call our own.

Once home in our paddock, Lysingur remained worried and withdrawn. At the risk of anthropomorphizing, it appeared that he was going through a grieving process—missing his homeland, his former herd, and the open expanse of Northern Iceland, where he'd been everyone's favorite mount for the exhilarating, annual sheep roundups. Lysingur looked sorrowful and lost. He sweated heavily in the California heat, refused to have his ears touched, and regarded the clippers and water hose with horror.

This boy needed my help. I mapped out a deliberate, stepwise acclimation plan like the one I've outlined above and began the process. And ... over a matter of months, Lysingur transformed from inse-

cure sad sack into a brave outgoing, opinionated, and comically personable horse. No longer shy, he was bold, brave, friendly, self-assured, and full of himself.

Lysingur came to accept a massage and hosing down after a hot ride with pleasure. He met everyone with bright, intelligent eyes and a cheerful expression. His courage, charisma, stamina, and luminous curiosity were unmatched. Knowing the changes an Icelandic can undergo in their first year, we were nevertheless gobsmacked by the incandescent personality hidden there and how he blossomed.

Lysingur became a radiant presence in my life. Over time, our partnership grew strong as iron and our connection as soft as Icelandic summer light. He filled my life with immeasurable joy for many years.

Until truly settled, a new import is something of a "work in progress." It may take months for the full adaptation to take place and for your horse to blossom. It is deeply satisfying to watch this process of becoming unfold. Lifelong rewards accrue when we actively pave the way for our new partners through understanding, connection, and abiding patience.

Editors' note: Helga Sveinsdottir Thordarson, Ph.D. is an amateur rider in Trabuco Canyon, CA. She dedicates this article "to my beloved Lysingur, who gave his all and taught me everything."

REGISTERING IMPORTS

by Andrea Barber



Vifill frá Glæsibæ was imported in December 2017. Photo by Andrea Barber. Chart below by Steve Barber.

After quite low numbers for several years, 2020 saw a boom in the number of Icelandic horses being imported from Iceland to the U.S. This dramatic increase was driven by a number of factors: scarcity of suitable domestically bred horses, increased interest in “nature-centric” activities such as horse ownership due to the pandemic, the regular availability of direct cargo flights to the U.S. due to the pandemic, reasonable exchange rates, etc. Each flight to the U.S. was eagerly anticipated by enthusiastic new owners.

For me, the arrival of each flight was also exciting. First and foremost, of course, for our own new horses, and horses for our clients: at Sand Meadow Farm, we imported 18 horses in 2020. But also, because as a former USIHC Breeding Leader and a breeder myself, I’m always excited to see new stallions and mares ready to add diverse genetics to our small U.S. gene pool. Plus, as an Icelandic horse owner and USIHC member, more horses means more people involved, which means more participants for regional clubs, shows, trail rides, etc. The more the merrier!

I love looking up horses and their bloodlines in the international database,

WorldFengur, which comes free with my USIHC membership. However, this year my WorldFengur addiction started to uncover an issue. Many of the horses being imported weren’t being registered here in the U.S. in our registry. This included not only geldings, but mares, and even evaluated stallions. Some had even been used for breeding here in the U.S. without first being registered. Being a staunch advocate of registration for over 20 years, I found this deeply troubling and decided to look into it in greater detail.

DIGGING INTO THE DATA

First, I contacted our USIHC Registrar, Ásta Covert. While Ásta was able to provide me with the total number of imported horses she registered in a year, she could not separate them by year of import.

I then turned to Hrefna Hreinsdóttir of the Icelandic Agricultural Advisory Centre in Iceland. For the last few years Hrefna has been in charge of much of the export paperwork for horses leaving Iceland. She was kind enough to provide me with a full list of all the horses exported from Iceland to the U.S. for the years 2017 through 2020. I then individually looked up each horse on WorldFengur (291 in total – phew!) to check on its U.S. registration status.

The results are as follows: In 2017, 52 horses were imported and, to date, 35 of them have been registered. So, 67% of those horses imported from Iceland to the U.S. in 2017 have been registered with the

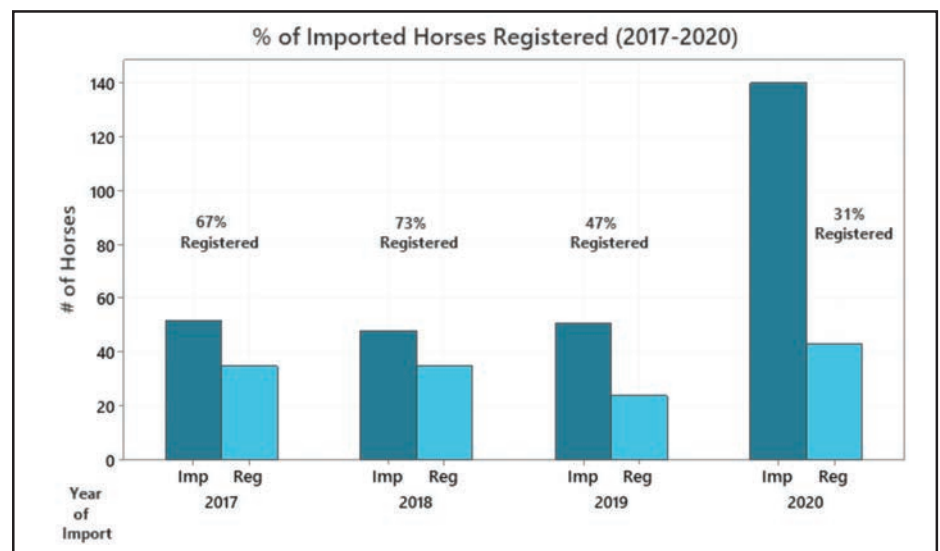
USIHC. 2018 was similar—48 horses were imported, and 35 have been registered, for a 73% registration rate. However, things start to change in 2019. In 2019, 51 horses were imported, but only 24 were registered for a 47% registration rate. For 2020, my fears were confirmed: While we had a huge increase in the number of horses imported, 140, the number of those horses registered is only 43, for a registration rate of 31%.

So the percentage of registrations from 2018 to 2019 dropped 34% and the number of registrations from 2019 to 2020 again dropped 34%. This means that from 2018 to 2020 the percentage of imported horses registered here in the U.S. dropped a whopping 58%. This is a sad and disturbing trend.

WHY IS THIS HAPPENING?

Well, that would probably be a good question for a follow-up survey if we were actually able to locate the owners of the unregistered horses (quite difficult if not impossible). But here are some reasons I have personally uncovered:

First, some individuals believe that since their horse is in WorldFengur (and in some cases already in their name, as they purchased the horse in Iceland) it’s already registered. While it’s true that it’s registered in Iceland, after export it also needs to be registered in its new FEIF country of residence. This does not happen automatically, despite the fact that the horse’s location is listed in WorldFengur as “US.”





The stallion Strákur frá Vatnsleysu was imported in June 2019. Photo by Andrea Barber.

The second and more common reason I've seen is that the individual who helped them import the horse (either in Iceland or here in the U.S.) either hasn't made them aware of the registry here in the U.S. and why it's important to register the horse, or hasn't provided them with enough direction or assistance in doing so.

Lastly, some people know about the registry here and just don't see the point or value in registering their new horse, especially if it's a gelding.

WHY IS IT A PROBLEM?

In the future, now that the USIHC owns the genetic database of Icelandic horses in the U.S. (see the Breeding Focus in this issue), having an accurate registry may have value for researching potential health issues that are genetically linked.

But let's stick with the obvious reasons: The USIHC registration provides a document stating who actually owns the horse and that the horse is indeed a purebred Icelandic horse. It's the registration that makes the horse a purebred Icelandic horse. This is true of a stallion, gelding, or mare.

A purebred Icelandic horse is highly desired and thus has significant value. Without registration papers, the horse is nothing more than a grade pony with a potentially sketchy ownership history. While people often plan on having their horses "forever," things can and do happen. The fact is that Icelandic horses with papers usually end up in much better situations than those that do not have them. From the horse's perspective, its USIHC registration papers are its

insurance policy—they are a promise of a better life.

Unregistered stallions and mares represent a greater risk to the breed than geldings do, because stallions and mares are potential breeding animals. Having breeding horses that aren't registered leads to larger numbers of horses that are not and can not be registered. As more and more generations are bred, it becomes almost impossible to trace the line back to Iceland—and thus have any hope of registering future offspring. This again leads to horses that may be very nice animals, but which have little value, and are thus more prone to being passed around and potentially mistreated.

Having an accurate registry means that the USIHC can locate owners of particular horses, if needed, and trace the horse's ownership history. Doing so may be needed to assist with other registration issues from parents or offspring. Of course, this means that people who buy an already USIHC-registered horse need to remember to transfer the ownership into their own name.

An accurate registry also helps the USIHC understand where concentrations of Icelandic horses are located within the U.S. This data may be of interest to regional clubs and for potential programs and events.

USIHC registration opens up the ability for the horse to participate in a range of USIHC sponsored activities. Sport competitions (including National Ranking shows, the U.S. World Championship team, the Youth Cups, and the new virtual shows), the Sea2Shining Sea Ride, etc., are just some of the current possibilities. USIHC-registered Icelandic horses can now compete in USDF events and become eligible for all-breed awards. Undoubtedly more interesting programs for USIHC-registered horses will be introduced in the future. (Yes, USIHC members can now apply for a participation number for DNA-verified Icelandic horses that lack the proper documentation needed for registration. But this doesn't apply to horses that can be registered and simply haven't been—it's also much more expensive.)

One can probably extrapolate that if these new owners aren't interested in registering their horses, they probably aren't interested in becoming USIHC members either. In fact, if they were never made aware of the registry by their importer, they probably weren't made aware of the USIHC's existence either. These individuals lose out on the wealth of information and support the

USIHC can provide, and the USIHC loses valuable members and the membership and registration fees that come with them.

WHAT CAN BE DONE ABOUT IT?

I think this is where we all have a role to play. As we come into contact with new Icelandic horse owners, we should all try to help them out.

Encourage them to join the USIHC, a local regional club (if one is in the area), and to register their horses. If they need help, guide them to the appropriate resources.

Many people, such as myself, are willing to lend a helping hand to get people started with registrations and to shepherd them through the process. Stress that registration is not difficult—in fact, for imported geldings no DNA testing is even required—and that it's not expensive. An adult Quarter Horse costs approximately \$550 to register, an Arabian is \$350, for an imported Icelandic it's \$25 for a USIHC member. A bargain!

People who sell imported horses should be encouraged to register horses before they sell them, or to assist with registration after the sale. With many imported horses now selling for well over \$15,000, the USIHC registration fee is a very small burden for the seller.

Buyers should be educated to ask for the horse's USIHC registration, or if none exists, for the proper documents from Iceland (Certificate of Ownership and Passport) so they will easily be able to register the horse here in the U.S.

Care should also be taken by all parties when breeding. Both mares and stallions should be USIHC registered before any breeding takes place.

If a horse's registration status is unclear, the horse can be looked up either in WorldFengur or on the USIHC website to see if it has a USIHC registration number. Mares that are imported from Iceland pregnant should have the proper documentation (either in WorldFengur or in paper form) of the breeding having taken place in Iceland. These steps ensure that any foals born here in the U.S. can also be registered.

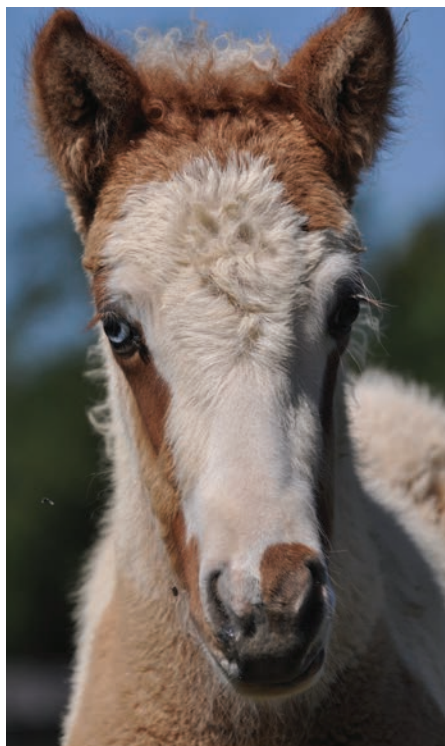
It's exciting to see the numbers of Icelandic horses here in the U.S. continue to grow. However, USIHC registration of all imported horses is critical. The USIHC registry is an important record of our horses' proud Icelandic heritage. We must strive to ensure that it is both accurate and complete.

FOCUS ON BREEDING 3

by Virginia Lauridsen

There has never been a better time than the present to breed quality Icelandic horses in the United States. In recent years, Icelandic horse owners have imported several highly assessed breeding stallions and mares. There are now numerous excellent stallion choices available to potential breeders. It is possible to see the horses in person and get to know their attributes first hand. This enables an informed decision and more predictable outcome.

In addition, the new USIHC Breeding Manual is hot off the presses! All stallion owners who submitted a stallion report for the 2020 breeding year should already have received a printed copy for their clients to peruse. If you are a stallion owner who did not submit a stallion report this year, contact the Breeding Committee at breeding@icelandics.org for your copy. All USIHC members can access the document on the USIHC website (look under the "Breed" tab) and print their own copy. If you would like a hard copy (and it is beautiful!) contact us. The cost for a hard copy is \$15 (including shipping to locations in



Birta's foal Nikita from Sæstöðum (US2015205087) was sired by Sporður frá Bergi (see story on page 25) of Léttleiki Icelandics. Photo by Shaila Sigsgaard.



Birta from Icelandic Horse Farm (CA2000210011, US2000202299) with her 2021 foal, Eldvaki from Sæstöðum (registration in process), who was sired by Strokur frá Syðri-Gegnishólum (IS2007187661, US2007105266). "Birta was my first Icelandic horse that I ever trained, competed with, and bred, and she is the foundation of my breeding in the U.S., so she was very special to me," says breeder (and photographer) Heidi Benson.

the U.S.), and all proceeds will go to the USIHC Breeding Fund.

The USIHC Breeding Committee is now working on an updated studbook to assist breeders. There will be a link to the document on the USIHC website. Again, stallion owners who submitted a stallion report last year will be contacted directly; other stallion owners can contact the breeding chair to have their stud included.

IMPORTING VS. BREEDING

The breeding of quality domestic horses is a huge boon for our community. While it will always be fun to visit Iceland and choose a horse, having more domestic-bred horses available will enlarge our community and help the diversity of the breed here. Buyers can now find domestic-bred Icelandic horses with quality gaits, robust health, and good minds. There are also financial and health-related benefits to a domestic-bred horse.

It currently costs a total of about \$6,000 to import a horse from Iceland, which makes the initial purchase price much higher. What are you paying for? You need to pay an exporter in Iceland to handle the paperwork, as well as an importer in the U.S. The flight itself (depending on the time of year and the

number of horses imported) may run close to \$3,000. All horses are required to be quarantined upon arrival in the United States, which may cost upwards of \$2,000. Icelandic horses are usually released after 48 hours. From the quarantine facility, the horse will need to be trailered to its final destination, which can be quite expensive, depending on the distance to be traveled.

After being discontinued for a few years, direct flights from Iceland have now been reinstated by Icelandair. They transport horses in containers on cargo planes; four horses to one container, and up to 13 containers, for a maximum total of 52 horses per flight. The horses travel with an experienced handler who flies with the animals. There are currently four APHIS (Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service) approved facilities in the U.S. for the import of horses by air: New York, Chicago, Miami, and Los Angeles. Each airport charges a landing fee, which varies by location. Icelandair generally flies from Keflavik to New York, where the horses can be quarantined at either the ARK facility near JFK airport or in Rock Tavern near the Stewart airport. Quarantine costs are higher at the ARK facility, but it is newer and has more stalls. The Chicago facility has far fewer stalls, which limits the



Birta's foal Nina from Sæstöðum (US2017205267), like Nikita, was also sired by Sporður frá Bergi. Photo by Coralie Denmeade.

number of horses transported and raises the fee per horse. Arriving in Los Angeles would likely require an additional flight, which would greatly increase cost.

Suffice it to say, the whole process is expensive and stressful for the horse. While some horses adjust more easily, it is reasonable to expect horses will be distressed upon arrival. It can take a year for a horse to adjust to its new surroundings, and importers should be prepared for this.

Even introducing imports to a farm with trees (there are very few trees in Iceland) can cause unease in the horse. (See the article in this issue on how to acclimate your horse "After the Long Journey.")

In Iceland, there is virtually no horse disease, meaning imports from Iceland will have developed no antibodies or immunity to common illnesses in the U.S. Imported horses will need to be vaccinated upon arrival, usually in two doses. There is also a



Nikita from Sæstöðum (US2015205087) kicking up her heels. Photo by Shaila Sigsgaard.

greater chance that an imported horse will develop summer eczema or "sweet itch," which is caused by an allergic response to the saliva of the *Culicoides* fly. These tiny insects do not like wind and therefore do not like Iceland! While sweet itch can occur in any breed, including a domestic-bred Icelandic horse, it is much more common in horses imported from Iceland, due to the lack of developed immunity to the allergen.

For Icelandic horse enthusiasts unable or unwilling to travel to Iceland, buying a domestic-bred horse gives the rider an opportunity to meet and try the horse in person. If you are looking for an equine partner, it is nice to have the opportunity to spend time with the animal before purchase. If the horse is a good fit, you will know it. Unfortunately, we need more domestic-bred horses to meet the demand, as the recent pandemic illustrated by decreasing the ability of many buyers to travel. We hope that situation improves in the coming years.

ASSESSMENTS

The Breeding Committee is committed to increasing the number of annual breeding horse assessments in the U.S. Ideally, we would like to see three to four assessments per year, in different areas of the country: East, Central, West, and Alaska. We also plan to hold educational seminars in conjunction with each event.

The USIHC has established a Breeding Fund to help potential hosts cover the substantial expenses associated with presenting an assessment. Priority for funding will be given to first-time hosts and to events in areas of the country which have not been previously served. Anyone interested in hosting a breeding assessment should let the breeding chair know and we will help as much as we can.

More participation in assessments will give both breeders and buyers first-hand knowledge about the characteristics of our domestic-bred bloodlines. These events can be very educational and hopefully fun! A breeding assessment is much more than a "number." Just because a stallion is highly evaluated does not mean it is the ideal mate for every mare. Breeders can learn how to make the best choice of mare and stallion to meet their own breeding goals through educational seminars and discussions with trained judges. There are

fewer than 30 FEIF breeding judges in the world. Having the opportunity to talk to one of them and see them judge horses in person is invaluable.

SELLING

Most breeders prefer to sell foals after they have been trained. It is impossible to have an accurate knowledge of the horse's ridden abilities until that time. Sometimes it takes years of training for a horse to reach its potential. Buyers look-

ing for a domestic-bred horse should start with the USIHC Farm List printed in each issue of the *Quarterly*, and also online. Not all farms listed sell horses, but the Farm List is a good place to discover Icelandic owners and breeders in your area.

Many breeders use their farm website for marketing. Photos and video are also great tools for potential buyers and sellers, and 2020 taught us all about virtual meetings, which can be utilized for horse sales. If

a buyer is interested in a horse, you can do a virtual meet and greet. If the horse looks like a good possibility from the meet and greet, you can arrange a visit to the farm.

You can also find Icelandic horses advertised through groups on Facebook and equine sales websites, such as dreamhorse.com and equinenow.com. Buyers should be wary of purchasing unregistered horses, as they may not be 100% Icelandic (see the sidebar on Registration Changes).



Birta from Icelandic Horse Farm (CA2000210011, US2000202299) with her foals Ljósvalki from Sæstöðum (nursing; US2019105430), Nína, and Nikíta. Ljósvalki, like Eldvalki, was sired by Heidi's stallion, Stokkur frá Syðri-Gegnishólum (IS2007187661, US2007105266). "I have always dreamed of having a part in building an excellent line of domestic-bred Icelandic horses," says Heidi Benson, "and Birta was my beginning. In the coming years, it is my highest wish that her offspring will do justice to that dream and she will live on."

REGISTRATION CHANGES

The USIHC has recently taken "ownership" of the Icelandic horse genetic database, held at the University of California at Davis. This is a win/win for everyone.

We can now offer genetic tests through the USIHC and the fees will not increase.

Icelandic owners can now easily check the database for a genetic match. If a horse is unregistered, the first necessary step is confirming parentage. A horse must be 100% Icelandic to be registered. Confirming parentage through a genetic match will not guarantee that it is possible to register the horse, but it is the first step.

In an effort to help members who are having difficulties changing ownership of registered horses in our database, the USIHC has adopted some new policies:

Although we cannot give out the personal contact information for an owner of record, if a buyer has purchased a registered horse from that owner, we can contact the owner on your behalf. If the owner agrees to an ownership change, we

can proceed with the paperwork. There will be a \$50 fee for this service, along with any other applicable fees.

If the owner of record does not respond to our communications, but the buyer has a signed bill of sale from that owner along with proof of payment, we can proceed with the official change of ownership in the registry.

If a buyer has purchased a horse from a person who is not the owner of record, we can ask the owner of record if they are willing to have their contact information released. Then, where practicable and reasonable, the USIHC will attempt to help re-create the chain of title, so that the buyer can try to have the ownership officially changed. There will be a \$50 fee for this service.

There are numerous possibilities for why a horse might not be registered, or why the owner of record did not transfer ownership. It is possible that the fee wasn't paid, or one of the parents might not have been registered. As an organization, the USIHC cannot resolve these types of disputes, but we will try to open lines of communication when appropriate.

TOP TIPS FOR VIRTUAL SHOWING

by Carrie Lyons Brandt

Editor's Note: Carrie Lyons Brandt of Taktur Icelandics in Kentucky was the featured speaker at the 2021 USIHC Annual Meeting. You can listen to her original talk on the USIHC Facebook page. It begins at 2:30 on the recording of the Annual Meeting.

Last year, when the Covid-19 pandemic shut down all in-person shows, the USIHC decided to embrace virtual showing. I had felt for many years that our small numbers, in comparison to our expansive geography, present a unique challenge and that a virtual show would be one of the best ways to increase competitive participation.

While everybody I spoke to seemed to agree that this was a great idea, it took Covid-19 to get the idea off the ground. By the time you read this, the USIHC Sport Committee will have organized three virtual shows, in Spring and Fall 2020 and Spring 2021. Another is scheduled for Fall 2021, and we plan to continue offering two a year.

Virtual shows are here to stay in part because they're so simple to enter: You record a video of your performance (I use a regular iPhone) and upload it to the USIHC website. The judging is the same as in our traditional, in-person Icelandic horse shows—though virtual shows can afford to have more judges, which gives you more feedback.

But some things are very different. In this article, I'll share my top training tips for peak performance in a virtual show.

OVER AND OVER?

True or False: "You should film your program over and over until you get the perfect performance to submit."

False. We have throughout the years occasionally filmed certain programs multiple times, and it is very rare that after the second video things get any better.

Of course, if you get the wrong lead canter, you stop and start over. That's the wonderful thing about a virtual show. But generally speaking, filming again just tires the horse and frustrates the rider. It doesn't result in a better overall performance.



Train when you're training, and show when you're showing. When showing, present where you are at that moment as best as you can. When you're training, dream of what you can be.

AM I READY?

Before you decide to compete virtually, get to know the game. A lot of resources are available to you on the USIHC website (see <https://icelandics.org/virtualshow/>). You can read descriptions of all the different classes. You can read all about the judging guidelines. And there are very detailed instructions on how to make your video.

I am a huge fan of competing in general. I think it does good things for your horsemanship to have clearly set goals. Having the goal of competing at a show helps motivate you to go out every day to work with your horse.

And now you have more flexibility because of the wonderful way the USIHC Virtual Shows are set up. There's both a Nationally Ranked Show and a Schooling Show. Let's say you haven't quite met the goal of where you and your horse want to be by the show deadline. You can still participate in the Schooling Show and get feedback from the judge.

WHAT CLASSES?

When picking your classes, keep in mind your challenge-skills balance. This is a term from sports psychology.

Think about what is going to challenge you and engage you, push you a little bit and bring excitement to your virtual show experience. Then think about what is within range of your own and your horse's skills. You want to pick a class that isn't going to push your horse too hard and that isn't beyond your own capabilities.

What I do a lot in the virtual show format is to aim high—and have a back-up plan. For example, I had one client this year who was very interested in competing in loose-rein tölt for the first time. We started by filming a T6, which is the easiest loose-rein tölt class. Later we filmed a T4 class, which is the next level up. She chose to submit only the T6 video, but the virtual show format allowed her to push herself and her horse a little bit further.

THE TIME FRAME

The USIHC shows span several months, so it's good to select a week to be your filming week—your show week.

When you're selecting that time frame, keep in mind your horse's strength and stamina. Many of us give our horses time off in the winter, and then we build up their conditioning throughout the spring. So for a spring show, you may want to film closer to the deadline, because that's when your horse is going to be in peak physical condition.

Another thing to consider is access to a track. You do not have to compete on an oval track. In the Schooling Show you're allowed to compete on a straight track, so a gravel road or a large arena will do just fine. But the owners of oval tracks here in the U.S. love for them to be used. They'd love to have you film your videos there if you schedule ahead of time. You can find a list of tracks on the USIHC website on the Virtual Show page.

Access to coaching may also influence your time frame. One of the neat things about creating a video is that you have something you can share. One of my mentors is Guðmar Pétursson in Iceland. He reviewed some of my videos for the Spring 2020 show and gave me feedback as I was working toward my competitive goals.

Then there's the negative side of making a video. I had a horrible thing happen last fall. My iPhone crashed and I lost videos that were supposed to be backed up to the Cloud—but weren't. So, speaking from personal experience of tragedy, be prepared to deal with tech issues! You don't want to be filming on the day you need to submit your videos, because you might not have enough time to deal with those challenges.

Finally, if you're entering more than one class, pick a different week to film each one. At an in-person event, you might compete in loose-rein tölt and five-gait on the same weekend. It can be hard, setting your horse up for two different disciplines at once. In a virtual show, you can film your loose-rein tölt class, then shift your focus and take a week to train for the five-gait class before you film it.

TRAINING

In that week before you film your program, work toward having a horse that wants to give you everything. The performances that stay in my memory are the ones where the

horse has a certain sparkle and expressiveness. That is only going to happen if the horse is positive and wants to work with you.

Training for stamina should happen well before the week of filming. Now you want to train in shorter sessions. You want to keep things positive, but you want to make sure that your system of communication is working.

Think about when to place days off. Some horses do really well on Monday, after having had a weekend off. Other horses need a couple of days in training mode to be at their best. You need to notice, in the months leading up to the show, what day and time your horse is at his best and create that scenario for your filming day.

PLAN YOUR PROGRAM

Which direction will you ride in? For the four- and five-gait classes, you do all the gaits in the same direction. So it may be a tough decision. Maybe your horse's tölt is better going right and his trot is better going left. But in five-gait classes, tölt counts double. Taking that into consideration, you'll want to go right if you're in a five-gait class.

In the tölt classes, you perform in both directions. But you still want to consider which direction to start in. Maybe your horse is better to the left when he's really fresh, so you start that way. When you turn and go to the right, your horse will be a little more settled.

Think about where you want to start your program. On your video, you must

show your entrance onto the oval track. Then you nod in the middle of one of the short sides to signal the start of your performance. Which short side you pick depends on how long a distance from the gate you want. Maybe you want a long stretch to the short side before you start your program, because that lets you do a little bit of fine-tuning before you actually start to be judged.

Then there is the "plus-minus" direction. The "plus" direction is going toward other horses, toward the gate, toward the barn. That's the direction you want to be riding if you're looking for speed. The "minus" direction is away from the gate, away from the barn, away from other horses. That's the direction you want to use when you want the horse to be calmer.

Thinking about these elements, as you're training in the week before filming, is really important so you can set yourself and your horse up for success.

WARM UP

When you're warming up your horse for your filming session, your goal is to connect with the horse. This is not the time to introduce new training techniques or to pick a fight with your horse. Just double-check that your aids are working the way you expect them to work.

You also want to warm up the horse's muscles so that they're ready for peak performance, but remember you don't want to tire your horse. We need the energy and the power. That's something we value in



What direction will you ride? What side will you start on? "Thinking about these elements, as you're training in the week before filming," Carrie says, "is really important so you can set yourself and your horse up for success."



Frame your video so 40% of the screen is in front of the horse, 30% is the horse, and 30% is behind the horse. Hold the camera level, so the horse doesn't look uphill or (worse) downhill. For more filming advice, see icelandics.org/virtualshow/.

Icelandic horse competition.

Have your team ready—the person filming, the person doing the gate—so that you can say, “Okay, let’s go!” as soon as you and your horse are ready.

A really important part of preparing for a virtual show is your mental warm-up. I’ve found it more challenging to get pumped up without the show atmosphere. The people watching, the music—all these get me in the right psychological state for competing. For some people, though, the challenge is about getting calm and not being nervous about being filmed. So whether it’s pumping yourself up or taking deep breaths, being in the right mental state before you ride onto the track is absolutely key.

SHOW TIME

One challenge in a virtual show is that you have to memorize your program for all the classes. There’s no announcer. You’re by yourself on the track and you have to initiate all the transitions.

Although in the group classes these transitions are not judged, you still want to make sure they are harmonious and beautiful. Because the judges are watching you the whole time, your transitions give them an impression about your horse and your riding. So you want to focus on preparing your horse for each transition. You can use changes of direction to do this. Changing direction is your moment to make sure the horse is bending and supple and to set him up for what’s coming next.

If something goes wrong in your video—say you get the wrong lead canter,

or you forgot to nod—just stop. You don’t want to ride a whole program with a huge mistake in it and then ride it again, because that will tire your horse.

And if you do need to redo your video, beware of anticipation. If you made a mistake in your first video and you stopped and started over, that mistake will be in your head. So take a moment. Take a deep breath. Resituate yourself. Ride off of the track, and start again from a fresh perspective.

TAKE 1 OR 2?

Remember we’re not filming over and over again, but I usually do take two videos per horse. Which one should you submit? It has happened to me multiple times that my favorite video may not actually be the higher-scoring one. So definitely get some outside eyes. Someone fresh, who maybe doesn’t know you or the horse well, if you’re having trouble deciding.

Once again, take a peek at those judging guidelines and know which gaits count double. For example, if you’re in a loose-rein tölt class, the loose-rein section counts double. So picking the video that has a better loose-rein section, over the one where the slow tölt is better, is more advantageous scoring-wise.

Finally, you should always prioritize presenting horsemanship you are proud of, while accepting where you and your horse are at in that moment.

One of my guiding principles for showing is to train when you’re training, and show when you’re showing. When you’re training, you need to love the moments that

are imperfect. You need to dive deep into them, because that’s where you have to put your heart and soul and your work.

But when you’re showing, you cover over those imperfections and just ride through them. That’s not a bad thing. It’s a performance. You’re presenting where you and your horse are at for this one moment in time. You’re not where you were two months ago or where you might be next year, you’re right where you are at this moment.

When you’re showing, you’re presenting one moment as best as you can. But when you’re training, you’re dreaming of what you can be and working toward it.



Competing, says Carrie Lyons Brandt, “does good things for your horsemanship. Having the goal of competing at a show helps motivate you to go out every day to work with your horse.”

THE HEART OF ICELAND

by Rebekah Godek



The views surrounding Saltvík Farm, where Rebekah rode, captured her imagination: This mountain she nicknamed the Bundt cake.

I was awestruck and inspired by the country of Iceland—its scenery and its people. And those horses!

Their beauty is wild and somehow different from our little girl horse dreams. Copious manes and forelocks, unimaginably thick, seem to cloud their vision but can't hinder their mission of carrying travelers as they've been meticulously trained to do. As riders, we're aware of the power simmering beneath the saddle—power bred through centuries of rugged conditions. Our arms ache from holding the reins, guiding their gaits as though we have any say in their seamless way of going.

And yet, they make us imagine that we do. We are accomplished. We are powerful. We are the consummate equestrians. When our mounts slide into the natural *paka-paka-paka-paka* of the tölt, we beam with pride and glance at our companions to see if they recognize our prowess.

So many impressions fill my mind from only four days of riding. The snow-capped mountains ringing the sky at the edge of the Arctic Ocean, painted unfamiliar hues of purple, blue, and gray. The hardened hooves of our horses turning up red clay under the black lava sand; a soft sucking sound from each footfall reminding us that winter was not far gone. The rhythmic sound of the tölt—the heartbeat of Iceland—conjuring up sentiments of an ancient breed thriving in a harsh landscape

for over 1,000 years.

Many years ago, the wise parliament of Iceland outlawed the import of horses into the country.* This hardy breed exemplifies the heart of the people and their land—and Icelanders are unwilling to taint the ideal. When we think of majestic horses, our thoughts turn to Friesians and Arabians, but no breed can rival the purity and integrity of this robust Arctic animal. They're majestic in their ability to survive harsh winters and thrive year-round in harsh landscapes. They're majestic in their ability to tölt tirelessly for miles across varied and difficult terrain where wheeled vehicles dare not venture. They're majestic in their ability to connect with the herd for strength and security.

Toss out the images of noble steeds towering over the landscape and galloping thunderously across the fields. These noble steeds hug the ground and tölt furiously across the fields, snow, ice, mud, sand, pavement, brush, and any other part of the dynamic Icelandic landscape that emerges in front of them; without slowing a single rhythmic step.

In Iceland, emotion and creativity welled up inside me at every turn. Back home, I desperately aspired to find words to capture the majesty and ancient feeling. But there is neither picture nor word that can capture that place. How can a picture give you air scented with ocean and sand and

the pungent sweat of shaggy horses? How can words describe an ancient heartbeat gliding smoothly beneath you? How can either impart the heart of a horse never missing a step, as though his soul is somehow connected to the land that has been his home for centuries? I hope I can return some day and feel it all again.



Rebekah with one of the riding horses at Saltvík Farm in northern Iceland.

**Editors' note: While legend says Icelandic laws banned the import of horses soon after the island was fully settled in the tenth century, "In fact no such law existed in the Viking times," notes historian and breeding judge Þorgeir Guðlaugsson on his "Icelandic Horse History" Facebook page (December 15, 2012). "The first legal restriction on horse import to Iceland didn't see the light of day until 1882."*



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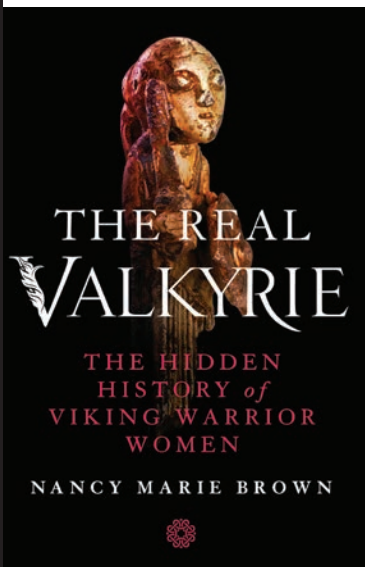
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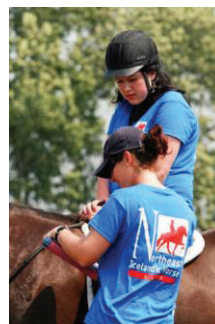
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F A R M L I S T

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

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m.meier@hestar-ranch.us
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Lough Arrow Icelandics
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Tolt Mountain Ranch
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MASSACHUSETTS

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www.fourwindsicelandics.com

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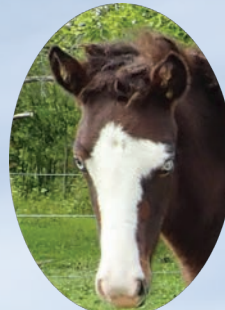
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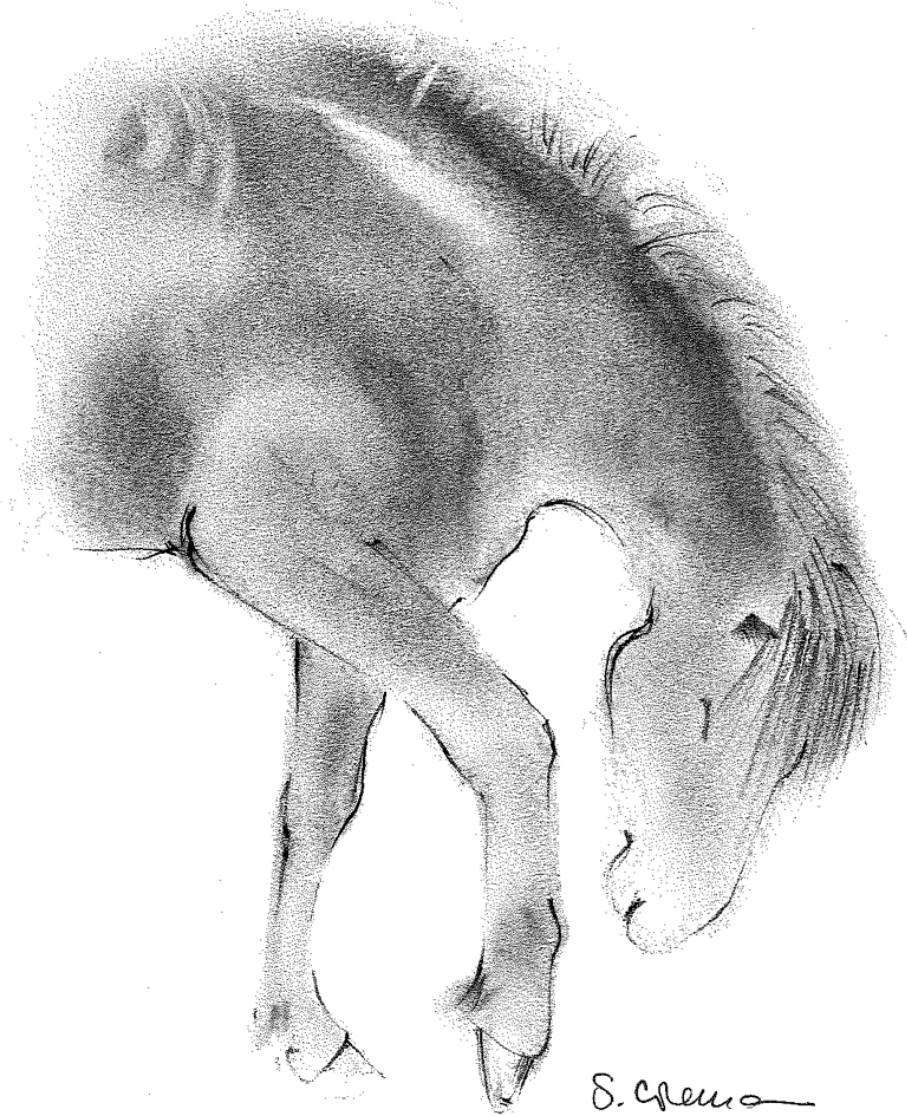


Contact: Kristina Behringer
Tel: 307-757-7915
Email: gyetorp2@gmail.com

"Þröstur really is a truly complete package of talent, temperament & elegance. His gaits are well-separated & fluid. His temperament is that perfect mix of being forward but in control. These are attributes he has passed on to his offspring. No stallion in this country has a more impressive record with an Icelandic Champion & the highest evaluated four year old of 2015 counted among his offspring".
Caell Cavanagh BSci Riding and Riding Instruction, Hólar University, Level 3 FEIF Trainer

Assessment Total: 8.59
F: Þorri frá Þúfu í Landeyjum (Honor Stallion)
M: Löpp frá Hvammi (Honor Mare)

Just a few of his talented offspring:
Trausti frá Þóroddsstöðum, Total: 8.66
Hátíð frá Hemlu II, Total w/o pace: 8.69
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