

Issue Three

THE

2021

ICELANDIC HORSE

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Official Publication of the United States Icelandic Horse Congress

Member Association of FEIF (International Federation of Icelandic Horse Associations)



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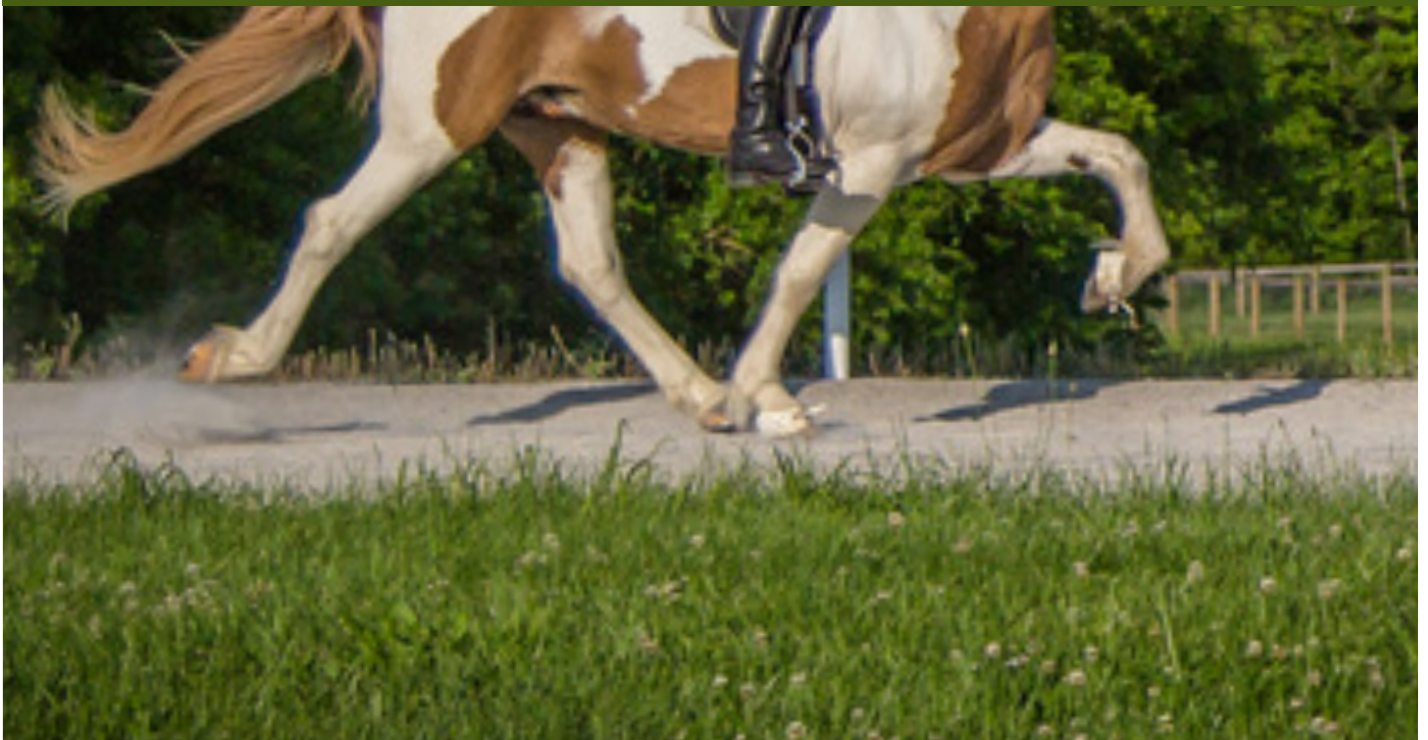
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THE USIHC MISSION

- 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 Three 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.

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On the cover: Laura Benson and her stallion Lykill frá Stóra-Ási (US2010105299) have won the Harmonious Rider Award two years in a row at the USIHC Show at Montaire in Virginia. It is easy to see why, in this beautiful photo by Heidi Benson of the pair in perfect fast tölt. Lykill and "Lala" have a special bond and also perform together for the Knights of Iceland. They are bridleless champions three times over in liberty green horse. Lykill is currently being prepared for breeding evaluations in 2022. Please contact Laura at invaderlala@gmail.com and look for them on Instagram @Gingerarmyofficial.

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USIHC NEWS

VIRTUAL SHOWS

In response to the cancellation of the 2021 Icelandic Horse World Championships (see the FEIF News in this issue), and there being no need for WC tryouts, the USIHC Sport Committee extended the registration and video submission deadlines for the Virtual Spring Show. The final deadline for submissions was June 25.

The Virtual Spring Show included both National Ranking classes and Schooling Show classes (for which no oval track was required).

The National Ranking Show was judged by a panel of five FEIF International Judges: Þorgeir Guðlaugsson (the Netherlands), Nicolai Thye (Denmark), Lutz Lesener (Germany), Hulda Geirsdóttir (Iceland), and Asa William (Sweden).

The highest and lowest scores were dropped and the middle three scores were averaged to give the rider's marks.

In an effort to give more opportunities to our U.S. licensed judges, Alex Dannenmann agreed to head a five-judge panel for the Schooling Show. The other four judges were Alex Pregitzer, Jana Meyer, Lucy Nold, and Freija Thye.

As of late June, there were 152 total entries (SS = 38 and NR = 115). For the results, see <https://icelandics.org/national-ranking-show-results>. For more information on the show format—and deadlines for the 2021 Fall Virtual Show—see <https://icelandics.org/virtualshow/>.

FALL SHOWS

There are a number of live competitions coming up this fall, including National Ranking Shows at Harmony Icelandics

(Iowa), Sept. 11-12; Flying C Ranch (California), Oct. 16-17; and Montaire Icelandics (Virginia), Oct. 23-24, as well as the Triple World Ranking Show at Léttleiki Icelandics (Kentucky), Oct. 1-3. Watch the USIHC events calendar at <https://icelandics.org/events/> for more information.

BREEDING SHOW

A Breeding Assessment is scheduled for September 9-10 at Harmony Icelandics in Truro, IA. Judges are Silke Feuchthofen and Heimir Gunnarsson. The event 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).

A breeding seminar will be held



The June S2SS Rider of the Month, Sabrina Drake of California (on the left), and her friend Linda Hepp.



Arianna DeForge of Vermont is the April S2SS Rider of the Month.

before the assessments, on September 7-8. Topics will include breeding goals, conformation, bloodlines, BLUP, and measurements. “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

The new USIHC Breeding Manual is now available. Any USIHC member can 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, train-

ing, Worldfengur, Virtual Mate, BLUP, the DMRT3 gene, foundation bloodlines, assessments, registering your horse, and ethical responsibilities.

S2SS VIRTUAL RIDE

More than twice as many riders have joined the 2021 Sea 2 Shining Sea Virtual Ride, compared to last year: 118 riders so far have logged their riding hours with this very popular program designed by the USIHC Leisure Riding Committee.

Youth member Arianna DeForge of Warren, VT was the April S2SS Rider of the Month. She rides Friða frá Akranesi and other horses at Mad River Icelandics. Her goal is “to become just as good a trainer as my trainer,” Jessica Haynsworth, with whom Arianna has ridden since she was six. About the S2SS, she says, “I like riding with my team because it’s always something new.”

Jennifer Bergantino of Lexington, MA was the May S2SS Rider of the Month. She rides Katrín from Mill Farm. In addition to trail riding, Jennifer and her horses have completed mounted police

training. They also enjoy swimming, drill team riding, hunter paces, riding bare-back and stirrupless, and trick training. “I’ve ridden horses all my life,” she says. “Five years ago, I knew very little about Icelandic horses—only their reputation for wonderful dispositions. Now I love showing off my Icelandic’s power and personality to people riding big horses.” Of S2SS she says, “I found the challenge a fun way to connect with friends, riding together to accumulate miles, of course, but mostly through our group text chat, where we encourage each other and remind each other to log our hours. It is a fun way to be part of the larger Icelandic riding community.”

Sabrina Drake of Aguanga, CA was the June 2021 S2SS Rider of the Month. Sabrina owns three Icelandic horses: Assa from Slettuni, Disa from La Vida Ranch, and Elska from Rancho D Icelandics. She joined S2SS, she says, “for the team spirit—the camaraderie of Icelandic horses and their owners.” Her goals are to be in harmony with her horses and to blend with nature. “There is no better way for me and my horses to relax and unwind than on a trail.” Sabrina has a rare bone disease. She thought her days of riding were over after her last Quarter horse died. Then she tried an Icelandic horse at Sunland Ranch. “They are safe, speedy, smart, and hardy, all wrapped up in an incredibly friendly and beautiful package. I realized I didn’t have to give up riding. They are so smooth, I actually feel better after I ride. Icelandic horses give me my wings.”

Look for S2SS logo gear in the USIHC’s Zazzle store at https://www.zazzle.com/store/usihc_store.

JUDGES TASK FORCE

Last spring, the USIHC formed a judges task force to serve as a platform for exchanging information among and providing support to U.S. sport judges. Members of the task force are Will Covert, Alexandra Dannenmann, Freija Thye, Lucy Nold, Jana Meyer, Deborah Cook, and Alexandra Pregitzer, who also chairs the group.

“The judges task force is developing



Jennifer Bergantino of Massachusetts is the May S2SS Rider of the Month. Photo by Shawn Tinkham.

concepts for an improved judges' education matrix in the U.S.," Alex Pregitzer explains. "Currently, we are working on a basic judging seminar to be presented virtually or in-person, or in a mix of formats. This seminar will be tailored to people who are interested in learning about the basics of Icelandic horse sport competition and how it is judged, but who may not be seriously interested in becoming judges themselves. The basic course, however, will also prepare people for the next step: the judging seminar developed by Þorgeir Guðlaugsson, which is currently the only judging seminar offered in the U.S."

The task force is also developing continuing education programs, as well as increased judging opportunities, for our current U.S. judges, starting last spring with coaching sessions offered by FEIF International Sports Judge Alex Dannenmann.

YOUTH

The Youth Committee is working on a penpal program. Contact Lucy Nold at youth@icelandics.org for more information.

TRAINER CERTIFICATION

The Education Committee's Trainer Certification sub-committee is hard at work. The sub-committee is focusing on the logistics of setting up exams, developing a scoring system and matrix, deciding where tests can be offered and what horses can be used, compiling a study guide for the "Fast Track" to Level 1 testing (for individuals who are already working as trainers in the U.S. but are not certified), and developing a Code of Ethics for trainers.

WEAR YOUR PASSION

USIHC logo clothing, stickers, mugs, and other merchandise is for sale at the

USIHC Zazzle store at https://www.zazzle.com/store/usihc_store

BOARD MEETINGS

The USIHC Board of Directors met by Zoom call on April 13, May 11, and June 8. 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 reported on above, the Board continued its review of the USIHC's Policy and Procedures documents and discussed adding a life-time membership option to its dues structure. It also created a subcommittee to develop a USIHC Stallion Registry.



NO WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS

In April, FEIF made the difficult decision to cancel the 2021 Icelandic Horse World Championships. They wrote: "Due to the general uncertainty caused by the ongoing Covid situation and the high probability that not all FEIF member countries will be able to participate, FEIF and the organizing committee have reached the conclusion that the World Championships 2021 cannot be held in the true meaning of a fair competition among the world's best horses and riders. Concerns include health-related conditions and safety for all parties involved, equal accessibility for teams from all countries, and financial security for the organizers, participants and FEIF."

All tickets and payments for exhibition stands were to be refunded, minus an administrative cost. For more information, see www.vmdenmark.com

AROUND THE WORLD

With the cancellation of the World Championships, the FEIF Virtual Ride set a new goal. Instead of riding to the site of the championships in Herning, DE, riders were challenged to circumnavigate the globe by Sunday, August 1st, 2021. "Having collectively covered ca. 38,000 km so far," the organizers noted, "there are 6,000 km more to go. Will they make it? Happy töltning everyone."



RULE CHANGES: NOSEBANDS

Changes to the 2021 Rules & Regulations clarify how tight is too tight for a horse's noseband. The new rule states: A space of at least 1.5 cm for Hanoverian/drop nosebands and at least 1 cm for English/combined nosebands must be kept between the noseband and the front of the horse's nose (nasal midline). The tightness of the noseband is measured in the equipment check using a Noseband Taper Gauge or similar. A noseband found to be too tight will result in an elimination from the test if this happens in the preliminaries and from the finals if this happens in the finals. In pace events the combination will be eliminated from the round.

Riders are not allowed to loosen the noseband prior to equipment check. Unfortunately, as there are no tests, no preliminaries nor finals at breeding shows, the consequences stated in the rule cannot be implemented at breeding shows. If the noseband is found to be too tight at a breeding show, the consequences are however stated in B11.1.6 (If illegal shoeing or equipment is found). As this does not affect the assessment or the performance of the horse directly, it is suggested for this first year of implementing this rule that on the first offence, the rider will only receive a warning, but the assessment will be valid. On the second offence, the rider should receive a public reprimand and the assessment invalidated according to the rules.



LOOSE REIN IN TÖLT

There has been much discussion about the demand of seeing the rein loosened in order to get 9.0 or higher for tölt in these classes. It is clear that there has been much confusion regarding this topic, and clarification is clearly needed. In order to receive a 9.0 or higher for tölt, the horse must, according to the new guidelines, be well balanced and carrying itself. This simply means that the balance of the horse is not carried by the riders' hands/reins, and that the body function of the horse is not forced by the rider's hands.

This is why it is now asked that the rider loosens the rein for three seconds as a requirement for the highest marks (9.0 or higher). What happens for these first three seconds after the rein is loosened gives valuable information about the balance and the body function of the horse.

If the horse is in good balance and carrying itself, the balance and body function of the horse will not change for the first few seconds after the rein is loosened. The horse's carriage, regarding its head, neck, and back, remains the same as it was before the rein was loosened. This means, as well, that the horse is able to maintain the required quality in order to receive 9.0 or higher for these first few seconds after the rein is loosened.

Horses that are able to maintain the required tölt quality for 9.0 or higher on a



loose rein for a longer period of time are extremely rare, especially when it comes to the younger horses. It is not required to show the horse on a loose rein longer than three seconds.

Loosening of the rein and taking up contact again can, in addition, provide valuable information about the rideability of the horse. The rein must be loosened in the 100-meter section in the middle of the track so that it is clearly visible to the judges.

BREEDING SHOWS

There has been some discussion about the workspace for judges at breeding shows. A few years ago, it was standardized that the judges should present the results from the conformation assessments as soon as they have reached a conclusion. Until they have reached a conclusion, however, it is important that the judges are undisturbed. They must have sufficient space to have an unrestricted discussion about the horse. This means that horse owners, riders, and their assistants must keep their distance from the judges during the assessment of the horse. Organizers of a show must put up markings to make it clear where the restricted area is.

It is of increased importance that where the horses are measured has a solid and level floor, and that the ringmaster is experienced, as the new guidelines put more emphasis on the measurements in the conformation assessment.



It is also important that all parties keep in mind that the marks for neck-withers-shoulders, back and croup, and proportions in the conformation assessment are only preliminary marks that can be adjusted based on the functionality of these traits under the rider. This applies at all times and for all horses.

WORLDFENGUR AT 20

It is now 20 years since WorldFengur, the global database for Icelandic horses—a cooperative project between the Icelandic government and FEIF—was opened up for public use. From the outset, this extensive database was developed to become an essential tool for breeders of the Icelandic horse and to be a key factor in achieving the breeding goals set internationally.

The process of registering the data on each horse has placed a heavy demand on each of the subscribing FEIF member associations. Outside of Iceland, the registration of horses is performed by volunteers. It takes time—and every new day means new horses and new information needing to be entered into WorldFengur.

Dive into the history of this unique database at <https://www.feif.org/2021/05/27/20-years-of-worldfengur/>

HALLVEIG MISSED

Hallveig Fróðadóttir passed away on April 13, 2021 after a hard fight with cancer.

She leaves a big gap at the WorldFengur team and also in the entire Icelandic horse community.

Hallveig played a major role in the development of the WorldFengur database. She was Iceland's main contact for registrars in all FEIF member countries. Whenever there was a question or problem, Hallveig was there to help and to find solutions. Many people remember Hallveig as a good friend, always smiling and gentle, hardworking and conscientious—and she always gave good advice.

FEIF TOUR RIDER CUP

The FEIF Leisure Riding Committee is happy to see a large number of participants have signed up and ridden quite long distances and hours in the FEIF Tour Rider Cup.

But we would like to invite more people to participate! Currently we have participants from Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, and Sweden—but FEIF has 22 member countries! Let's make this competition more thrilling and way more fun!

Do you know anyone who wants to join this outdoor-riding competition? It is not too late to join the Tour. To learn more about the FEIF Tour Rider Cup, go to <https://www.feif.org/leisure-riding-dept/tour-rider-cup/>

NEW WORLD RECORD

Congratulations to Daniel Ingi Smárasson [SE] and Hulda frá Margaretehof [SE2002201834] for setting a new world record in the second heat of P1 (250m Pace Race) with a time of 21.07" at the World Ranking event ÖSM2021 Stenholmen in Linköping, Sweden on June 4.

EDUCATION SEMINAR

The 2021 Education Seminar was the first online event for instructors and trainers organized by FEIF in cooperation with Gait Academy and the Norwegian Icelandic Horse Association (NIHF). Bent Rune Skulevold, a FEIF International Sport Judge, and Stian Pedersen, a FEIF level 4 instructor and World Champion rider, focused on "Good and Harmonious Riding." See the article on page 30.

CLUB UPDATES



ALASKA

by Jane Wehrheim

As Alaskans, we all anticipate the start of summer and soak up as much of the midnight sun as possible. The versatility of the Icelandic horse allows our members to participate in numerous activities and clinics. This year, it feels so good to be back in person for these events!

We had our first in-person clinic on Memorial Day weekend, when Janet Mulder offered a hybrid virtual/in-person clinic with Trausti Guðmundsson (see the article in this issue). During this and the follow-up session in June, we took a young horse from beginning ground work to being ridden on the oval track. Other riders developed their relationships and communication systems with new mounts. Still others worked on inside/outside communication with legs, seat, and reins.

At mounted archery competitions, the Alaska Icelandics once again are doing extremely well. Our members are also taking part in backcountry events, doing trail building and maintenance. Later this summer, some will take part in a Competitive Trail Ride. Others are logging their riding time for the FEIF and USIHC virtual rides.

We have new members and new horses, which we are thrilled to have joined us in our dedication to this sturdy breed. Updates and more information can be found on our website, alaskaicelandics.org.



Clockwise from top left: Alaska club member Beverly Heffernan and Drynur from Pegasus compete in mounted archery. Karli Schmutz rides Minjagripurinn from Triple D at an AIHA clinic. Misty Bohnert and Kolfreyja frá Auðsholtshjáleigu at an AIHA clinic. Alaska club member Nicole Beck and Kolfinna frá Selfossi prepare for the Virtual Show.

FLUGNIR

by Dave Loftness and Jackie Alschuler

After an early spring tack swap and the first annual Flugnir Spring Ride and Picnic at River Brink Stables, many of our riders got out to tölt on the trails. The land of Flugnir riders—Wisconsin and Minnesota—was unseasonably dry and hot for most of the spring, although this didn't halt our horse adventures. Quite the reverse. With the dry spring, many parks opened earlier than in years past. The bug population was minimal, without even a cricket chirping—however, we all knew the humidity and pests of summer were not far off.

Two beautiful horses from Iceland, Grunur frá Kjarnholtum II (a pinto gelding), and Dorrit frá Lambastöðum (a dappled grey mare) are settling in to their new homes in western Wisconsin. Pam Hansen imported Grunur in May to be a sweet new partner in her numerous camping and trail riding adventures. Dorrit was imported in November by Virginia Lauridsen of Harmony Icelandic. Liz Stimmeler chose this brave yet calm mare and brought her home in June. Liz is looking forward to riding the trails and possibly showing her gorgeous girl.

Flugnir members' Icelandic horses continue to stand out at the Long Lake



The Flugnir team of Jackie Alschuler, Eve Loftness, and Dave Loftness (left to right) placed first at the Long Lake Hounds Hunter Pace.

Hounds Hunter Pace, which allows teams of up to four riders. Two Flugnir teams had outstanding placements in the Spring 2021 Hill Topper class: Jackie Alschuler on Katina from Klakahross, Eve Loftness on Vordis from Moondance Acres, and Dave Loftness on Galsi Fellibylur from Windy Hills Farm placed first, just two minutes off the optimal mark set by the ride hosts.

Ann-Sofie Kruger on Viska from Tolthaven and Katie Livingood on Undrun from Nordurstjarna placed third in their spirited country ramble. Both teams are looking forward to future Hunter Pace events, and welcome other Icelandic riders to join them. Our teams enjoyed compliments and questions about the breed from many other riders and event helpers. One trainer made plans with Eve Loftness to bring her pony club students to River Brink Stables to meet and learn more about these fantastic horses.

The Minnesota Expo in July will launch our riders into the upcoming breeding and sport shows scheduled at Tolthaven in Minnesota and Harmony in Iowa.

Flugnir Icelandic Horse Association would like to extend sincere gratitude to Barb and Dan Riva of Winterhorse Park for their selfless contributions to our club over the years. Winterhorse was a perennial favorite for shows, and the Rivas' breeding has proven very successful. They have decided to enjoy a much-deserved retirement. Gangi þér vel to you, Barb and Dan!

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



Flugnir members Ann-Sofie Kruger and Katie Livingood competing in the Long Lake Hounds Hunter Pace.

FRIDA

by Carrie Laurencot

The Frida Icelandic Riding Club of the mid-Atlantic region started the spring season with a virtual presentation by Carrie Lyons Brandt of Taktur Icelandics. Carrie discussed “Riding and Training Outside,” which was quite timely for those of us who enjoy trail riding during the beautiful mid-Atlantic springtime. Carrie provided great advice on incorporating training techniques while riding on the trail. This well-attended event was very interactive, and Carrie answered many questions with expert advice and humor.

Frida’s first in-person event in over a year was a drill team practice at Montaire in Virginia in April. Eight Frida members joined in the fun, and we had a great time riding together again. Our second drill



Above, the Frida Drill Team was happy to resume practices after a year’s hiatus. Photo by Pat Carballo. Left, the Frida Club congratulates youth member Gray Strausser on her acceptance to Hólar. Photo by Hrafnhildur Guðmundsdóttir.

team practice in June was attended by ten members, including one youth member. Bob Shoemaker, who provided grooming and other support, commented that by the second practice the precision riding of the team approached the Baroque riding excellence of the legendary riders of the Spanish Riding School in Vienna, albeit with more colorful and smaller horses. Lunch followed both practices, which gave us all a chance to catch up on events over the past year and make plans for additional get togethers in 2021.

Frida congratulates Gray Strausser on her acceptance to the equestrian program at Hólar University in Iceland! Attending Hólar is a dream come true for Gray, as she has diligently pursued knowledge and training of Icelandic horses since her early teenage years. After spending the past year in Iceland learning Icelandic and expanding her riding skills, Gray is excited to continue her Icelandic horse journey at Hólar.

HESTAFOLK

by Lisa McKeen

Yay for vaccines! We have been getting to ride together this spring, utilizing the awesome parks in the Pacific Northwest.

Mary Chamberlin shared her horse, Ljúfa from Fitjamyri, with the Meridian High School agricultural science class. The students relished the opportunity to learn about B and B Stables as a business

that must maintain a variety of horses and facilities. Ljúfa is a great ambassador for the Icelandic horse.

On May 8, a Hestafolk group gathered at Danville-Georgetown Open Space near Maple Valley, WA. The trails were wide, the footing was great, and there was shade for a hot day. Lisa Heath and Greg Mendel were our guides.

On May 22, Dor Shoda and Chris

Cerrato took a group on the amazing trails of Redmond Open Space and Ferrel McWhirter Park for a beautiful ride. We had nine riders. Like typical Icelandics, ours were sweet to the park goers, and we were all pleasantly impressed with most of the bikers and hikers who stopped and made sure all was safe as we traveled along.

Club members have also enjoyed Sunset Farm Park in Ferndale, WA. It has



“The Ebonies and the Ivories” (left to right): Hestafolk members Lori Birge, Deb Mathieu, Lisa McKeen, Lauren Murphy, Linda Wallitner, and Sherry Murphy. Photo by Brechelle Ware.

a large arena, a cross-country jumping course, and a short trail ride area, with ups and downs to season both riders and horses before they take on bigger challenges. The Hestafolk Club donates to the park's upkeep every year, and we try to go there a couple of times when the weather is good.

In June, we were excited to have finally pulled off a meeting of half Cascade Club members and half Hestafolk members at the Mazama Ranch House in Mazama, WA. The place has a house with rooms to rent, paddocks for horses at no extra charge, and trails connected to the ranch. We also hauled down the road one day to find more trails at Big Valley, between Winthrop and Mazama. The horse folks staying at the ranch were friendly and willing to share trail information and to help us find suitable trails for a variety of rider-horse skills. The first day we hired Brechelle Ware of the Bunch Barn to guide us. The Bunch Barn is a homestead ranch in Waconda, WA. You can stay there too and ride on their 69 acres, or haul out to the many trails available. The best thing is that they have Icelandics! Brechelle was riding Thundi from Point Roberts, and her friend, Spurlin Soya, was on Trausti from The Icelandic Horse Farm in Ver-



Linda Wallitner on Logn from Extreme Farm and Lauren Murphy on Andi from Evan's Farm follow their leader, Brechelle Ware on Thundi from Point Roberts. Photo by Lisa McKeen.



Hestafolk members Greg Mendel on Gandalf from Wellington, Lisa Heath on Rökkvi from Lone Cedar, RJ West on Glóinn from Rivendell, and Lauren Murphy on Andi from Evan's Farm on the Danville-Georgetown Trails. Photo by Lisa McKeen.

non, BC. It was nice to have local people who could find water and a spot to stop for a lunch break, as well as interface with any bike riders or hikers we encountered. The trails were blessedly shaded in many places, and traffic was very infrequent. There were eight Icelandics, and it was fun to ride with horses that move out like ours do. As is often the case, riders discovered that many of our horses are related or their former owners are known to the group. It was a week full of horses, horse talk, and horse women. Just the right thing to kick off summer!

While we were riding in Mazama, Lisa Roland took Falki from Eichenhof and Krakatindur frá Hæli to a scent training clinic and mock search in Oregon. Horses have extremely acute senses of smell and can be trained and used for scenting, just like we use dogs for search and rescue. Terry Novacki, the man behind www.airscentsinghorse.com, is a fantastic instructor. Falki has been to a couple of clinics and will complete his mounted search and rescue (MSAR) certification by the end of July.

In June, we were very proud to have Alys Culhane as the first place rider in the USIHC's Sea 2 Shining Sea Virtual Ride, with Susan Johnson also in the top 10, at number 9. Our S2SS teams are doing

well: Hestafolk II was in third place, and Hestafolk I was in fourth place. Hestafolk III is doing fine at 13, even without the full six riders,

Our youth group has been getting together often. Two members are participating in Sea 2 Shining Sea on Hestafolk II. In individual scores, Serenity Perigo is 21st. The recent heat wave found the youth discovering how to help their horses enjoy cold water from hoses—we are not used to 100+ heat on the west side of Oregon and Washington.

This summer Hestafolk members plan to go to Lord's Hill with Susie Johnson, to the Tree Farm in Arlington, and to other places close to our various homes. We are always looking for ideas and things to do with our equine partners.

Members received stickers with our logo, as designed by Christine Vowles, and are proudly displaying them on our trucks, cars, trailers, and barns. Whatever you do with your Icelandic horse, the clubs and USIHC are there to acknowledge and support members. Our horses prove themselves over and over to be versatile and willing partners in learning and growing. What a gift these marvelous horses are! And good examples for how we should be with other humans.



Hestafolk youth member Serenity Perigo and Bjarki from Extreme Farm. This horse was tense under most adult riders, but once he met Serenity things changed. Photo by Ashley Serenity.



Askur, a Thröstur frá Hvammi foal born this summer at Gyetorp II. Photo by Kristina Behringer.

KLETTAFJALLA

by Florie Miller

Summer is well on its way in the Rocky Mountain region as I write this, and we can look back on a successful first half of the

year. Klettafjalla members far and wide are enjoying their Icelandic horses. Our numbers are growing—and another shipment of horses from Iceland is expected later

this year.

It's always a challenge to get people in a vast region together for rides, but there are several initiatives for club rides in the making. In the meantime, members are getting together in smaller groups.

The first clinic of 2021, which took place at Gyetorp II in Wyoming, was a liberty clinic with Caeli Cavenagh of Álfadans Equestrian Arts. She presented a fun and well-designed curriculum, and a good time was had by all. Gyetorp II, as always, was a wonderful host. Lots of activities are always going on at this farm, which is owned by Klettafjalla member Krista Behringer and her family and is the home of the magnificent stallion Thröstur frá Hvammi.

As we look forward to the second half of the year, we can see lots of fun and exciting things on the calendar, such as a clinic with Guðmar Pétursson at Tamangur Icelandics in Colorado in the fall. Happy töltung to all and don't forget to check our social media for up-to-date information.



John and Susan Burns on their horses, mother Gló and daughter Lukka, who is out of their own breeding, on a lovely trail ride in New Mexico. Photo by Ulla Hudson.

NEIHC

by Jennifer Bergantino and Phebe Kiryk

During the spring we got vaccinated and everything changed! We rode together and socialized on trails and in our barns! In June, while we weren't able to have our full annual National Ranking Show, we held a clinic, a fun show, and a barbeque at Thor Icelandics in Claverack, NY. It felt like home to hug old friends and to meet new ones with an unmasked smile.

On behalf of the 12 horse-and-rider pairs, the auditors, and the spectators, we'd like to give a huge thank-you to Jóhanna Guðmundsdóttir and Kristján Kristjánsson for letting us enjoy their beautiful farm; to Leslie Chambers for her amazing organizational skill and ability to adjust to ever-changing demands; to Ellen Meagher and Frost White for keeping us extraordinarily well fed; to Jean Ervasti who photographed us, applying the "Jean-screen" so that we all looked like movie stars; and to our clinician, Carrie Lyons-Brandt, who tirelessly provided individualized coaching, training, and encouragement.

Carrie created a program to meet the needs of each horse-and-rider pair. Everyone's experience was different and, I dare say, just right. Brigit Huwyler and Leslie Chambers worked on show prep and creating a video entry for the USIHC's 2021 Virtual Spring Show. For Jean Ervasti, it was an event of "firsts": first time traveling with her horse, first time on an oval track, first time entering an Icelandic competition, and many firsts under saddle. Samantha Tuttlebee, not yet an Icelandic horse owner, had five full days of true Icelandic horse immersion. Amy Goddard used both ring and track. Charity Simard and Claudia Burnham delighted those watching with fast, powerful tölt and gallop, with Carrie's guidance unlocking the hind-end engines and creating what felt to the riders like a "rocket ship." Carrie had Nancy Rolfs and Andrea Smith work on tandem exercises, where one horse's strength balances the other's challenges. Nancy's Soley slowed down and engaged, while Andrea's Eldrun became forward-thinking as the pairs played Leap Frog and Wind-Sprints. Joan Pfeifer reports, "I have to say that it was probably

the best lessons I have had on any breed of horse!" I (Jennifer Bergantino), being without a sound horse, found even more of Carrie's talents: I learned the basics of Liberty Training, carrot stretches, spine-loosening exercises, and how to pull a shoe. (I am officially not ever going to be a farrier.) Susan Wayne summed it all up: "It was a fabulous experience. The people, the horses, Thor as a location, Carrie! As a newbie, it was beyond my expectations. I learned so much and, better yet, can see even more ahead of us to work on and master so we can thoroughly enjoy riding these magnificent horses!"

In other news, Ebba Meehan's Merrimack Valley Icelandics in Massachusetts held a clinic with Jana Meyer—one that will definitely be repeated. Ebba also ran her annual "Kid's Camp," with instructor Erika Tighe, for seven aspiring Icelandic riders aged 4 to 13. In addition to riding, the kids learned about the history of the Icelandic horse, tack cleaning, grooming, ground manners, horse management, and yoga for riders. Several MVI riders also prepared videos for the USIHC's Virtual Spring Show.

Fire and Ice was also very busy. Their "Icelandic Tack Shack" continues to do well, providing Icelandic tack, barn supplies, and riding apparel. Alicia has been home from Iceland since the end of April, training horses, giving lessons and clinics, and helping clients find and import quality horses. With her partner, Halldór, Alicia is breeding their mares in Iceland, with the first foal born in early June. Meanwhile, Lee Flanigan has been busy building the much-anticipated track. The NEIHC looks forward to clinics, shows, and more at this new facility in Maine.

At Moonlit Farm, Leah Greenberger and her crew have mostly been riding on trails, enjoying friends and the glorious spring weather. Leah is preparing her new stallion for evaluations in 2022. She reports that Blær from Sand Meadow is "a gelding in stallion form—extraordinarily well behaved and drop dead gorgeous!" We look forward to future clinics and schooling shows at Leah's great facility, which is centrally located in Massachusetts.



NEIHC newbies (to showing) Susan Wayne on Sólfari, Jean Ervasti on Sigursól, and Joan Pfeifer on Thokki at the NEIHC Fun Show.



Erika Tighe talks about tack at the MVI Kid's Camp in Massachusetts.



Charity Simard on Sigerlin were the champions of the Beer Tölt at the NEIHC Fun Show. Photo by Jean Ervasti.



At the NEIHC Fun Show in June, Leslie Chambers and Krummi practice canter on the oval track. Photo by Jean Ervasti.

SIRIUS

by Janet Kuykendall

Sirius Club members in Ohio and Kentucky planned an exciting summer of activities. It was so nice to finally be able to get out and participate in horse events and to socialize with our friends. The club scheduled trail rides all summer long. Here are highlights of just a few!

Our first Sirius ride and camping event, at Taylorsville State Park on April 24-25, was rainy. Mount Eden, KY is beautiful, but the April showers made it a challenge. On Saturday, President Sherry Hoover and her husband, Ron, who camped there, rode the rainy trails in an attempt to find the driest, most fun terrain. On Sunday the showers moved out, and six additional club members joined the ride at the day parking area. Off they all tölted, up and down the muddy Kentucky trails and across storm-swollen streams.

The May 21-23 club ride was at Sycamore State Park, near Dayton, OH. The weather was beautiful, but Ron and Sherry Hoover were the only club members camping and riding. Some previous unfortunate horse and human injuries sidelined some of our members. Also, the warm, dry weather was perfect for baling hay, and we all know how those Icelandics like to eat! This park will be a repeat for a club ride and camping in 2022. The well-marked trails meandered through fields, woods, water crossings, and a historic farm. You won't want to miss this one!

The June club ride moved from Shawnee State Forest in Ohio to Marien-



Sirius Club members at the Indy Run endurance ride were (left to right): Shawn Jackson, Jaime Jackson, Paetra Henningar, Carly Conley, and Molly Stotts.

ville, PA. This was due to extremely hot weather and the availability of electric hookups at Marienville. Jaime and Shawn Jackson hosted.

While we'd love to see all of our members at every ride, we realize that everyone doesn't have a trailer—and every trailer doesn't have living quarters. Plus we're scattered across multiple states, primarily Ohio and Kentucky, but we do have a few members from other states, such as Wisconsin and Pennsylvania. Please know that everyone is welcome at all the rides. If you don't have a trailer, make friends with someone who does and invite that friend to come along and ride with us!

Additionally, some of our members

shared their experiences at worthwhile clinics and rides.

Sirius members Jaime and Shawn Jackson braved the Wild Dog Trail Ride in April. The Wild Dog is a five-day extravaganza with challenging trail riding through the Daniel Boone National Forest, including rough, rocky terrain; steep mountains; deep water (halfway up your saddlebags); lengthy trails; and a fast pace. As always, the other riders thought the Icelandics were "cute," but there were questions about their ability to "keep up." Jaime's horse Holly is a seasoned five-gaited trail horse, and Kol is new to Shawn this year. Both horses not only kept up, but Holly lit up a flying pace and passed the fastest horse there! After each day's



Twelve Icelandics and their riders took part in the DBDR Indy Run Ride in Hoosier National Forest, Indiana.



Shawn and Jaime Jackson of the Sirius Club take a waterfall break during the Wild Dog endurance ride.

ride, the organizers provided a catered meal and live entertainment. One of the highlights of the Wild Dog was “Moonshine Mike,” who lives back in the holler and makes his own special flavors of moonshine in the family still. Not pointing any fingers, but Shawn did buy all the sassafras moonshine that was left!

In May, Kerstin Lundgren, Colleen McCafferty, and Paetra Hennigar attended a one-day Liberty clinic featuring Jesse Westfall at Léttleiki Icelandics in Shelbyville, KY. Kerstin was grateful to be able to lease Prinsessa from Winterhorse Park for the clinic, while Colleen McCafferty worked with her horse Tobbi from Unicorn Valley, and Paetra Hennigar worked with Sporður frá Bergi. The indoor round pen set-up was perfect and allowed for individual lessons for all the participants from beginner to more advanced. Everyone also had the opportunity to benefit from watching others. Kerstin said she felt

that everyone learned a lot while having fun, whether the exercises were very basic or quite advanced.

A different May adventure started when Chris Marks, Icelandic horse owner and veteran endurance rider, put out an invitation on the Icelandic Distance Riders North America Facebook page for anyone interested in finding out about endurance riding. Paetra Hennigar, Carly Conley, and Molly Stotts (aka The Léttleiki Gang) signed up for the clinic right away. Not needing much encouragement, Jaime and Shawn Jackson registered, too. Our five club members joined seven other Icelandic owners for a new record total of 12 Icelandics participating in the endurance clinic and ride.

Sponsored by American Endurance Ride Conference, the DBDR Indy Run Ride took place at Midwest Trail Ride, Hoosier National Forest, in Norman, IN. The clinic featured a beginner endurance race and was followed by two regular-length endurance rides. Officials briefed the riders the night before the ride regarding the vet check, heart rate, lameness check, hydration skin pinch, and overall condition/soreness check. There was no time requirement, since this was an intro ride. The terrain was rolling and well-maintained, and all five of our members finished the ride!



Sirius Club president Sherry Hoover and her husband, Ron, enjoy camping with their horses and exploring new trails.

ST SKUTLA

by Deb Callaway

The Saint Skutla Icelandic Horse Club of Central and Western New York lost an old friend this year. Sproti frá Skarði was Stephanie Sher’s horse for a long time, passing into our hands when she was no longer able to care for her horses.

I considered it an honor to walk him up the hill one last time. After all, we’d been friends for a long time. The buttercups were waving in the breeze, monarch butterflies flitting among them and the other flowering plants, the breeze unable to keep them from their task. Late spring, not quite summer. Early morning, dew still on the grass. Sun was warm, not too hot, but threatening to get that way.

The hill is not really steep, but enough to make us both huff and puff a little. I’m old. At 35, Sproti was very old for a horse. We slowed our pace a bit, picked our way. No rush. Nothing to do but wait when we get to the top. Wait and remember...

He noticed and sniffed the freshly turned dirt. It was of no concern to him, but I recognized it for what it was. I had a pair of very sharp scissors and a rubber band in my pocket, I didn’t want him getting to horse heaven without a bobbed tail—that way all the friends that have gone before him can see at a glance he was loved to the very end. I hope to use his hair for a fly swisher. I have the handle all ready to be attached.

The vet arrived at the farm and came up to where we stood. We had an appointment. This was not urgent nor an emergency but necessary. I certainly wanted nothing to do with an emergency call to the vet, in the middle of the night, nor in the dead of winter. No. I made the appointment while he could still make that short walk to the top of the hill overlooking the farm and stable where he had lived with his friends for ages.

I can see his resting spot from the house. That is to say, I can see it if I look. There’s room for the others when it’s their time. And again I will lead them up the hill, with scissors and a rubber band in my pocket.

THE SHOWS GO ON

by Leslie Chambers
photos by Jean Ervasti

The Covid-19 pandemic prompted many changes in Icelandic horse competitions around the world. In the spring of 2020, FEIF announced the suspension of all World Ranking events—and a year later made the hard decision to cancel the 2021 Icelandic Horse World Championships.

The USIHC followed FEIF's lead, suspending all scheduled National Ranking Shows (previously known as USIHC-Sanctioned Shows) in early 2020.

That left a huge void for those of us who like to show.

Competition means different things to different people. Personally, I like having a goal to strive for: It keeps me moving forward in my riding.

Nancy Rohlfs likes the chance for both herself and her horse to experience a pressure situation with other horses and extra excitement. She also likes riding on an oval track, as she feels her horse shows her best gaits there.

Brigit Huwyler said, "In riding, we always learn together as a horse-rider team. I started to compete because I wanted to learn the classes and to get feedback on my riding from an international team of judges."

THE VIRTUAL SHOWS

A year without competition being unthinkable to many of us in the USIHC, the idea of holding a virtual show—which had been floating around for years—quickly became a reality.

Those of us on the Sport Committee, led by Martin Nielsen, got to work, and the USIHC offered its first virtual show in the summer of 2020. This event would not have come together if it hadn't been for the technical expertise of USIHC webmaster Em Potts! Other vital team members were Ásta and Will Covert, for their work on IceTest, and, of course, the judges.

The 2020 Virtual Summer Show had Schooling Show (SS) and National Ranking (NR) Show options. Both were judged by FEIF International Sport Judge Þórgeir Guðlaugsson (from the Netherlands). There was a total of 123 entries (SS = 27 and NR = 96). Encouraged by this level of participation, the Sport Committee decided to offer a second show.

The 2020 Virtual Fall Show also offered both SS and NR options. The Schooling Show was again judged by Þórgeir Guðlaugsson and had 29 entries. The National Ranking Show was judged by a panel of five FEIF International Judges: Þórgeir Guðlaugsson (the Netherlands), Nicolai Thye (Denmark), Lutz Lesener (Germany), Hulda Geirsdóttir (Iceland), and Asa William (Sweden). It had 79 entries, for a total of 108 in both options.

Entering 2021, with Covid-19 still restricting travel and gatherings, the Sport Committee came to the conclusion that live competitions were unlikely in the first half of the year—but we were optimistic about the second half of 2021. We were also pleased with the level of participation

in the two 2020 virtual competitions and so committed to continue offering two virtual competitions each year.

The 2021 Virtual Spring Show will be complete by the time this article is published. As of late June, it looks like we have 152 total entries (SS = 38 and NR = 115). The additional entries look to be mostly in the Novice and Green Horse classes. We were able to keep the same panel of five international judges for the National Ranking Show. In an effort to give more opportunities to our U.S. licensed judges, Alex Dannenmann agreed to head a five-judge panel for the Schooling Show. The other four judges are: Alex Pregitzer, Jana Meyer, Lucy Nold, and Freija Thye.

GOING LIVE AGAIN

Virtual competitions give an opportunity for more USIHC members to compete—gathering for live competitions can be challenging because of distance, weather, and the availability of a regulation-sized oval track.

However, live competitions carry an energy that cannot be duplicated virtually. Many of us could hardly wait for live shows to make a comeback.

The third week of June has long been when the Northeast Icelandic Horse Club (NEIHC) usually holds its annual National Ranking Show, preceded by a competition clinic, at the beautiful Thor Icelandics facility near Hudson, NY.

The 2020 event was cancelled, of



The NEIHC clinic participants, left to right: Leslie Chambers, Andrea Smith, Nancy Rohlfs, Charity Simard, Claudia Burnham, Jean Ervasti, Amy Goddard, Kristján Kristjánsson, Brigit Huwyler, clinician Carrie Lyons Brandt, Susan Wayne, Joan Brandt, and Samantha Tuttlebee.



Carrie Lyons Brandt of Taktur Icelandics reintroduced NEIHC members to the fun of in-person clinics with three days of lessons, a fun show, and Virtual Show tapings at Thor Icelandics in June.

fully vaccinated against Covid-19. We were outdoors the entire time, so we were confident that our risk level was extremely low.

This was Carrie's first live event away from home since the pandemic began. We both wondered how people would feel about getting together again and how live shows would be impacted as we move forward.

I am happy to report that the week could not have gone better. Our 12 riders formed a very positive and supportive team as the week progressed, and everyone met with success on a variety of levels. We had just about perfect weather, and a new foal was born—who could ask for more?

A couple of our riders were committed to entering the Virtual Show, and a couple more jumped in. Many of our clinic participants had never been on an oval track before, let alone compete on one. One

course. And when our 2021 plans needed to be made, we were unable to commit to an event as it was unclear when CDC guidelines would be favorable for large groups to gather and when judges from outside the U.S. would be allowed in.

The event requires the NEIHC to bring in about 40 temporary stalls, restrooms, and a large tent for about 80 people (riders, helpers, and guests). We usually have five full days of activities, including lessons, a Fun Show, a Dressage Test, and the National Ranking classes).

Instead, we decided to plan a scaled-down event for 2021. It was still a five-day event, consisting of three days of lessons with Carrie Lyons Brandt from Taktur Icelandics in Kentucky, a fun day complete with a Fun Show (thanks to Kristján Kristjánsson of Thor Icelandics for judging), and an NEIHC club picnic, to which we were able to invite all club members to come and socialize in person, many for the first time out since the start of the pandemic, due to relaxed Covid rules in June. On our last day, the riders could opt for either having a one-on-one consultation with Carrie or making a video for the USIHC's 2021 Virtual Spring Show.

We did require all participants (including all of our auditors and guests) to be



Leslie Chambers and Krummi after a beautiful performance in the NEIHC Fun Show.



Please attend as a rider or a spectator—nothing is better than a large gathering of Icelandic horse lovers.

I would also like to take a moment to congratulate all the riders who made the best of the virtual opportunities the USIHC has made available—not only the National Ranking and Schooling Shows, but also the Sea 2 Shining Sea Virtual ride. Despite Covid-19, USIHC members found a way to gather in small groups (bubbles) or teams to participate, thereby really making both events hybrids of live and virtual. Well done everyone!

Amy Goddard and Baldur enjoying their lesson with Carrie Lyons Brandt.

of our riders, who had just started riding last fall, stepped up to the challenge. She earned the respect of everyone attending by doing so. By the end of the week, enthusiasm was running high for both the Virtual Show and the upcoming live shows (some people were even booking their lodging for the NEIHC June 2022 event).

As we were planning this event, I think we were all wondering whether or not we had become too used to staying home and visiting friends and family via Zoom. Everyone's final assessment was that it felt so good to be out and about with friends again, enjoying a good tölt (and the occasional gallop).

EVENTS THIS FALL

There are a number of live events coming up this fall, including:

- Harmony Icelandics (Iowa): Everything from Breeding to a National Ranking Show, Sept. 7-12.
- Léttleiki Icelandics (Kentucky): Triple World Ranking Show, Oct. 1-3.
- Flying C Ranch (California): National Ranking Show, Oct. 16-17.
- Montaire Icelandics (Virginia): National Ranking Show, Oct. 23-24



Claudia Burnham and Hrund won the Gæðingakeppni class in the NEIHC Fun Show.

THE HYBRID CLINIC

By Janet Mulder



Cirrus Bunn riding Gjölf from Vindsdalur, Dagny the Icelandic sheepdog, and instructor Janet Mulder during the first Hybrid Clinic.

Last year was a challenging and uncertain one for all of us. Here in Alaska, all but one of the many clinics and shows scheduled by our local club, the Alaska Icelandic Horse Association, were cancelled because of the Covid-19 pandemic. With the support of a local riding instructor, we were able to hold a fun show in September 2020 for the young riders who had been taking lessons all summer long. But that was it.

Desperate for feedback, during the winter I took videos of myself riding and sent them to friends and trainers around the world who were gracious enough to review them and send me their comments. This process got me thinking. Could we do something like this for clinics in 2021?

Trausti Þor Guðmundsson had traveled to Alaska every year from 2016 to 2019. A master riding instructor and one of the developers of the “Tölt in Harmony” approach to riding Icelandics, Trausti runs a breeding and training farm in Iceland. Before the pandemic, he flew regularly to Europe and North America to teach. (The *Quarterly* reported on two of his clinics in Issues One and Three 2015.) Unable (like all of us) to travel in 2020, Trausti agreed to collaborate with me to develop a hybrid virtual/in-person clinic for 2021.

In May 2021, we held our first hybrid

event. Riders brought their horses to Arctic Arrow Farm in Wasilla, AK, and Trausti met with us via Zoom from Iceland. He presented a theory lesson on Saturday morning, then the riders had private or semi-private lessons with me and we recorded a short video of the work each rider was doing.

These videos were uploaded to Trausti’s computer and—while we slept—he reviewed and commented on each one. There is an eight-hour time difference between Iceland and Alaska, so our morning was his evening and our night was his morning.

On Sunday, Trausti had specific notes for each rider and included these in the morning theory session. In the afternoon, we continued with semi-private lessons and worked on the elements that Trausti had identified.



Janet Mulder giving instructions at the virtual/in-person Hybrid Clinic. While Janet was in Alaska, Trausti Þor Guðmundsson joined the clinic via Zoom from Iceland, giving feedback on videos uploaded overnight.

A second clinic, scheduled a month later, had the same format and nearly all the same riders. With a month to practice, we hoped to see improvement in our videos and in the notes from Trausti.

Teaching this hybrid virtual/in-person clinic was a rewarding experience. Working with a trainer like Trausti, whose philosophy has helped develop my belief and support of Good and Harmonious Riding (see the story in this issue of the *Quarterly*) makes me a better instructor and trainer. While I was teaching and making videos, I also had to actively participate in the theory lessons to be sure I was understanding and seeing what Trausti was sharing with us. My notes then helped to bring Trausti’s expertise to the arena during our lessons.

I have been a FEIF Level-I Trainer since 2008 and teach mostly private lessons to young riders. My continuing education as a horse trainer over the past few years has included many hours in Zoom meetings and online courses, reading books, and working with a local dressage trainer. Although we had to adjust our “normal” activities over the Covid year, being isolated in Alaska I feel that the opportunities created from having everyone stuck at home has made our small Icelandic horse community more connected. We are looking forward to having clinicians travel to Alaska later this year for the camaraderie and enjoyment only an in-person clinic can provide. But when that’s not possible, our hybrid clinic model is one we’ll try again.

RIDING IN HARMONY

by Janet Mulder

For Icelandic horses to be ridden in a manner that promotes healthy horses and good horsemanship—and that creates beauty—is an important goal for FEIF, the International Federation of Icelandic Horse Associations (and the USIHC's parent organization).

FEIF is dedicated to encouraging equestrians to continually improve their art. Their commitment to this goal is shown in the Good and Harmonious Riding Award, given yearly to riders nominated by their



Kari Pietsch-Wangard attended the Good and Harmonious Riding Seminar. Here, she rides in the opening ceremonies of the Icelandic Horse World Championships in 2009.

judges at World Ranking competitions in all FEIF countries.

This spring, FEIF took another step by inviting certified trainers and instructors to attend the first Good and Harmonious Virtual Trainers Seminar. This seminar was organized in cooperation with the Norwegian Icelandic Horse Federation (NIHF) and GaitAcademy Online. It was taught by Stian Pedersen, a well-known World Champion rider and FEIF Level-4 instructor; and Bent Rune Skulevold, a trainer and International FEIF Sport Judge.

BEAUTIFUL

The seminar focused on three questions about Good and Harmonious Riding: What is it? How do you recognize it? And how can it improve your performance and results?

Advertising it on the FEIF website, Bent Rune explained, “This is a topic close to our hearts, because horses are so beautiful—and they love to show us how beautiful they are, if we just let them.”

“I think this is the foundation for communicating with horses,” added Stian, “for taking care of them and letting them develop their talent.”

The seminar offered three virtual learning spaces: the lecture room, a social space, and the riding arena, with the riding arena being double in importance to the lecture room and the social space. Said Bent Rune, “This is very much in accordance with our principle belief that riding is a praxis”—the exercise or practice of an art.

“The approach we have,” he explained, “is to first approach the praxis, and then to create theories around the practical work. We create the learning process by integrating use of theory and praxis with dialogue, workshops, and building a community.”

The seminar was held over five weeks, from April 7 to May 13, and included Zoom sessions, videos of virtual lessons, and an online community space to discuss the different topics, such as the educational frameworks to use when schooling a horse; communicative, psychological, and anatomical factors in training; and the role of the riding instructor. In the community space, all the lessons and discussions were collected so that the participants could work through the information at their own speed at any time



Trainer Janet Mulder practicing good and harmonious riding with Njáll from Flugumýri II at her farm in Alaska.

and re-watch the training sessions.

Attendees could apply to receive virtual lessons, riding their own horse at home as part of the seminar. Five horse/rider combinations each rode four virtual lessons. These lessons were recorded for the seminar participants to watch and ask questions. Then they were discussed during the Zoom sessions.

In total, almost 90 Icelandic horse trainers and instructors from around the world attended the seminar. USIHC members who attended were myself (Janet Mulder), Kari Pietsch-Wangard, and Alex Pregitzer.

MUTUAL TRUST

Good and Harmonious Riding is a combination of physical, mental, and emotional strength and expression. There is a suppleness in both horse and rider, along with energy, relaxation, beauty, and willingness.

When the rider and the horse move in harmony it is captivating to the bystander, appearing magical. Bent Rune and Stian encouraged us to think of our thoughts as

being part of our natural aids, along with our seat, hands, legs, and voice.

When the rider and horse have mutual trust and understanding it appears that the horse moves without aids, the two individuals are a partnership. The ability to ride with thought and to make it look magical is attainable when riders learn to “feel” and aim to be a true partner to their horse.

In the community space Good and Harmonious Riding was described in the following ways:

“The rider is responsible for their own balance, physically and mentally. The rider is able to influence the horse to improve its balance and strength when necessary and has awareness to not disturb it when the horse is moving well. You recognize this when the pair works together in an apparently effortless way.”

“The cooperation between horse and rider. The riding is executed in a way so it is adjusted to the horse’s educational, physical, and mental level.”

“Health and longevity of the horse is a result of good and harmonious riding. When a horse is able to perform at a high level with good biomechanics for over a decade, it has been ridden well and cared for physically and psychologically.”

FEELING, NOT THEORY

During the introductory lecture Bent Rune introduced us to several models of skill acquisition and progression in learning, to help us understand how teachers teach and



“When the rider and the horse move in harmony it is captivating to the bystander, appearing magical,” says Janet Mulder, who attended the FEIF Good and Harmonious Riding Seminar to learn more about teaching the art.

how students learn.

Instructors need to teach students from the students’ point of view, he stressed. Before you begin each lesson, take time to ask your students questions to learn what they believe regarding their communication with and expectations of their relationship with their horse. Having common ground to start from makes for a much easier beginning.

Bent Rune challenged us to teach our students to feel—not to fill their lessons with theory that they couldn’t use. To teach them to feel we need to give them enough information and encouragement to try something new, without being too precise.

As he said, “Just to tell the riders the exact use of the anatomy will not get them there, because it is more complex than that.”

To learn to feel you must understand the horse: You cannot only copy the outline from another rider. For instructors to teach students to feel, we must set them up in a way that lets them experience the correct feeling for themselves.

Understanding the natural tendencies of the horse, and how our weight and balance influence it, can be used to create situations in which the horse moves in the desired way. When the riders experience their horse in these situations, they will learn the correct feel and will be able to more easily find it in other situations.

For example, in the virtual lessons Bent Rune and Stian asked the riders to use a weight shift to maintain the rider’s weight on the inside of the bend of the horse. They had each rider lift their seat off the saddle and sit back down with the seat bones offset from the middle of the saddle toward the inside. The riders rode a diamond shape with four distinct turns, instead of a circle. At each turn the riders would readjust their weight to the inside and straighten the horse, so that the shoulders and hindquarters of the horse were aligned. The horses began to move in better balance and flow, providing the riders with a feeling of correct movement.

MICRO-STEPS

Bent Rune and Stian placed emphasis on micro-steps as the path to success, using many half halts and “half goes.” Asking the horse occasionally to “put a little more heart and soul into it” was repeated by both clinicians throughout the virtual lessons.

Watching the horses and riders through



Alex Pregitzer, shown here with her gelding Sváfnir, was one of three USIHC members who attended FEIF’s Good and Harmonious Riding Seminar. Photo by Janine Köhler.

a series of lessons, and receiving a debriefing on these lessons from the instructors themselves, was a valuable tool for the rest of the attendees. Similar to attending weekend clinics to learn from others, this virtual format allowed us to have more time to process the ideas and to ask questions when they arose.

At the end of the course, Stian summarized his idea of Good and Harmonious riding this way: “to ride in a way that you are not only repairing the symptoms, but riding to correct the cause of the problems.”

He continued, “There is so much talk about having enough tools to repair the horse. I think it is more important to talk about riding the horse in a way that you are not going to destroy the horse when you are in the saddle. We need to establish the very most basics as a habitual thing. If you are sitting well and have the horse well into your hands, relaxed, straight, and forward, the other things will come.”

Bent Rune concluded with the statement, “Good and Harmonious Riding is the fastest way to success. It may be the only way.”

Added Stian, “We hope for the future that we can make the world a little bit of a better place for the horses.”

ASK GUDMAR: STUMBLING?

by Guðmar Pétursson

Editor's Note: When the Covid-19 pandemic hit in early 2020, Guðmar Pétursson of Hestaland in Iceland was among the many Icelandic horse trainers and riding instructors who found their clinic schedules up-ended by travel bans and limits on group sizes.

Characteristically, he chose to view the disruption as an opportunity.

As he noted at the time, "I've dreamed of starting an online educational community for many years, and given the situation in the world today, I've finally gotten the downtime to get it going. For a while now, I've been unable to fulfill all of the clinic requests I receive, and across the world, education is moving online. By complementing my clinic schedule with online teaching and coaching, I'll be able to help more riders more regularly than ever before."

One of his online offerings is the popular



The "Ask Gudmar" set-up requires a good camera and videographer, an indoor arena (to combat Iceland's unpredictable weather), horses with a variety of weak and strong points, and a new question from the members every week—and Guðmar, of course.

"Ask Gudmar" series of weekly videos and Facebook discussions, which he started in March 2020. Meant to be "a fun, interactive, educational project involving a community of people who are passionate about horsemanship," the group has grown to 123 members, as of June 2021, with participants from several countries.

The topic of each video is chosen by the members, who submit a question for Guðmar to answer or vote for a question someone else has asked. The questions, he says, are what keep the group interesting for him. "People come up with questions I'd never think of myself. It's a challenge."

As Sandie Weaver wrote in Issue Three 2020 of the Quarterly, "It doesn't matter whether you are a beginner or an advanced rider, or if your horse is young or old, the training techniques apply to everyone."

The full collection of 20- to 30-minute videos (and their accompanying hour-long question-and-answer sessions) are archived on the Ask Gudmar Facebook page in topical "guides" that members can access and watch again and again. The guides range from "All About Groundwork" to "All About the Topline" and "All About Tölt" to "All About Trail Riding," among many others. Administrator Anja Schröder explains, "The guides are organized in an order that Guðmar finds useful—where to start, then getting into special topics, with side aspects further down—that will give new members a chance to catch up."

With Guðmar's permission, this article begins an occasional series based on the Ask Gudmar videos.

WHY DOES A HORSE STUMBLE?

Any horse can stumble, trip, or fall down. It's rare, but it happens.

But occasionally we meet horses for which stumbling seems to be a chronic problem. It happens quite a bit. You can't figure it out, and it's annoying.

It is possible that something is physically wrong with the horse. I've talked with veterinarians, and they had some suggestions. First, are there any sore muscles or soreness in tendons or ligaments? This can be hard to check, but I have heard of vets giving horses anti-inflammatory medicines to try to see if sore muscles are causing the stumbling. It may be

something to consider. If the tripping is chronic, it's worth ruling these things out.

It can be due to sore feet, sore soles, or too long feet. Often you see more stumbling when horses are due or overdue for a shoeing.

It can also be a shoeing issue: Some horses need a rolled toe, so if you have a stumbling problem, tell your farrier about it. They can do things to help.

A TRAINING ISSUE

But I think most of the time—90% of the time, if not more—stumbling is a training issue.

What we need to think about here are three points:

1. *Focus and forwardness:* The horse that stumbles is not forward-thinking. He's lacking focus and is not putting much effort into his work. This is often the basic problem, I believe. In my clinics I meet horses where, if the rider is not active enough, then the horse is not active enough, and we see stumbling. As soon as the horse is working and focused and forward-thinking and energetic and is putting some effort into what he is doing, the stumbling problem disappears.

2. *Stiffness:* A horse that is very stiff in his body is more likely to be stumbling and shuffling his feet. You want him to be supple and bendable.

3. *Balance:* Stumbling is a lot about the horse's balance. Horses are differently built, differently put together. Some horses are more forward-leaning or have naturally soft backs or their backs slant downward at the withers. These things can fight against the horse a little bit, and sometimes it takes quite a bit of work on the trainer's part to work through this balance problem. I think in almost every case it can be done but, generally speaking, if the problem of stumbling is not just a matter of focus and work ethic, then it takes a long-term training program to work through it.

THINKING FORWARD

Forwardness and focus are things we should be thinking about all through a horse's training.



Guðmar Pétursson of Hestaland started his online educational community, “Ask Gudmar,” at the beginning of the Covid pandemic. It now offers dozens of training videos for members to learn from.

Look at how he walks: Does it look like he’s going somewhere? Like he’s on a mission? Then he’s forward-focused. He’s putting energy and effort into those steps.

The steps might be differently good. Some of the steps might be pacey, but I’m going to forgive that for now, because I want the horse to be forward and focused and to have a good work ethic.

He should not be rushing, though. He should not be trying to go faster all the time. A good test for this is, Can I release the reins? If I can release the reins and he doesn’t try to take off, that tells me he’s not in any kind of a flight mode. He’s relaxed and feeling good, but he’s keeping that forward, energetic walk.

If you don’t have a forward walk, you have to squeeze every step out of your horse. He’s hesitant, and it feels like you’re walking upstream or you’ve left the emergency brake on in your car. We don’t want that. We want the horse forward and focused and happy to walk on.

This is about setting expectations. I think that stumbling starts when we have a sleepwalking horse and the rider is okay with it. The horse puts no effort into his steps and he gets lazier and lazier, and sooner or later he doesn’t pick his feet up at all and he can’t get over a little stone. He trips.

Maybe he’s tired, you think.

If you really think your horse is tired, then stop. Just get off. Give him a break.

Don’t let him be lazy. If he is too tired to walk with purpose and focus, you shouldn’t be riding the horse.

But I doubt he actually is tired. I think he’s bored.

RESPECT AND CLARITY

This is especially true for a horse that’s forward on the trail, but in the arena he goes to sleep. It’s quite normal too. Arena work can easily feel like going around and around and never getting anywhere. It can be harder to make it fun.

When we go into the arena, we generally start thinking immediately about exercises, and what most of these exercises have in common is that they are forward-restricting. When we go outside on the trail, we do much less of that. So the horse connects the arena with being restricted, and the trail with having less restrictions.

So stop restricting him so much in the arena. Go in for a short time, and make it simple and fun. Once he is listening again to your forward cues, and you don’t have to be begging and pushing and squeezing for each step, then you can start working on exercises again.

It’s good, too, to mix things up. Don’t always start your ride with arena work. Go for a trail ride first, then go into the arena.

If you use the arena like a circular

trail, that’s bound to be boring. Break it up and keep the work interesting to the horse. Do something new. Turn around, do a circle, go down the centerline, stop, back up, do something else. Keep it short—just a few minutes, so he connects the arena with short, energetic, fun work. Don’t repeat things too many times.

Maybe over time he has gotten away with being lazy in the arena. To turn this around you need to be firm. There’s no other way around it. You need to get respect for your forward aids, and you need to follow through. When you say go, he needs to go. He needs to respond clearly, push off his hind end, and turn his motor on. As soon as he responds, you ease up. You reward him.

When you ask him to go, and he doesn’t go, it means your communication system is out of order. Get your mind out of the exercise you want to practice, and start thinking about your basic communication system with your horse. Is the gas pedal working? When you ask him to go with your leg, or stick, or voice, do you get a response that is good enough? Or is he challenging you? Is he going and stopping and turning when you ask? Once you regain his respect and there is clarity in the communication system, then you can work on exercises.

But even then, and probably for a long time, you’ll need to start each arena session by reminding him of basic, separated cues: leg means forward, reins mean stop, one rein means turn. This is the most basic system to control a horse’s speed and direction. If that basic communication system is questioned, if it’s not working, then you have to strengthen it. Take all the gray areas out. Clear up that simple system for a few minutes every time you ride.

STIFFNESS

The second problem that leads to stumbling is stiffness, and stiffness is connected to forwardness. When you lose the focus, when the horse gets into the habit of not pushing off his hind end, of not following through, that creates stiffness. The horse doesn’t work through his body, and he becomes stiff and lazy.

And because he’s stiff, he becomes even less forward—and then he becomes more stiff, and this negative cycle plays into his balance problems as well. It can



"Ask me anything about Icelandic horses," Guðmar says. The questions are what keep online teaching interesting for him. "It's a challenge."

be tricky to turn around.

So while you're working on forwardness, you also want to work on suppleness. Make sure there are no issues with bending to either side. It's like stretching exercises for us. Make sure bending is easy and effortless, with no restrictions and no resistance. The horse has to be soft and flexible enough that he can cross his feet over without any problem.

And here is where we start to work on his balance. We don't want the horse to just cross over with his front legs and leave his hind legs behind. If you let him do that, you might be stretching his shoulders, but you're not helping him improve his balance.

BALANCE

Another thing I connect to stumbling is a horse leaning on the reins. If you're holding his head up, you're more likely to get a stumble.

Or, if a horse is ridden too heavy on the reins—if the rider is too much in his mouth—then he is more likely to stumble. This comes up a lot on the cross-country treks here in Iceland. Our first instinct when a horse stumbles and we get insecure is to help him, to hold up his head for him—but then he is way more likely to stumble again.

It's better to let go of the reins a little.

Give him his head, give him a little more space. Extending the neck is a balancing motion for the horse. If you're going over uneven ground, you're not going to keep the horse from stumbling by hanging onto his mouth.

All horses can stumble. It's normal. When it happens, give the reins quickly enough so that he can find his balance again. Maintain your own balance, release the reins, then take them up again and reconnect with the horse.

A horse that has a chronic stumbling problem is one that is not independent in his balance. If you've been holding his head up for him, some muscles over time have stopped doing the job they should be doing.

So from lateral work, bending work, you should move into collecting work: shoulder-in and other exercises that bring the horse's hind end underneath him. Here you are working on the horse's balance directly, teaching him to shift his weight toward his hind end. Backing up is also a good exercise. It may not be his favorite exercise—which is why he needs it.

While we're doing this collecting work, we're aiming for having the horse more self-carrying and lighter on the reins. You should feel in connection with the horse, but not as if he's leaning on your hands.

Finally, some people have the opinion that there is a connection between stumbling and where a horse is raised, and that kind of makes sense to me. This is one of the reasons that, here in Iceland, we choose to let horses be raised on big fields with areas of uneven ground, whether it's pastures that are uneven due to frost-heaves or mountainsides with lots of rocks.

In Iceland, the horse from a young age has to deal with uneven ground and learn to run sideways down a hill and things like that. You can imitate this environment a little bit by creating obstacles in your arena or on the trail. These obstacles can be trotting poles, uneven ground, logs and tree stumps, or anything you have available. Adding obstacles to your training routine will help him learn to pick up his feet and become more aware of where his feet are in space, and that—along with forwardness, suppleness, and good balance—will lead to less stumbling.

SOURCES

This article is based on the Ask Gudmar video from December 11, 2020: "How to work with a horse that stumbles" and the accompanying Facebook Live session on December 14. To join Ask Gudmar, go to <https://hestaland.net/new-ask-gudmar/>

HOSTING A CLINIC

by Andrea Barber

Now that things are starting to get back to “normal” after the Covid-19 pandemic, and we can begin to gather again, I’ve been thinking about clinics. Yes, online educational opportunities have been very helpful during these difficult times. But they are no substitute for in-person instruction.

I have been riding Icelandics for over 20 years now and have attended numerous clinics over the years. I still get as much out of each one that I attend as do the beginners who come for their very first time. No matter your or your horse’s level of ability or your riding interests (trail riding, showing, etc.), attending a clinic can help you and your horse improve and become a better team—and that equals more enjoyable rides for you both!

So how do I find a clinic to attend? I could wait until I see one advertised as being offered near me. But that might be a long wait. Better yet—how about organizing a clinic for my club, or for a group of friends, so I can help others enjoy this great experience as well?

I understand that for most people the thought of organizing a clinic is daunting. But it really need not be. Yes, it’s hard work, but the benefits are tremendous. After you do it the first time, it’s also easy to replicate. In this article, I’ll go over some of the key



There is really no substitute for expert in-person instruction. Here, Guðmar Pétursson coaches Kelly Clark and Löggi frá Laufhóli. Photo by Andrea Barber.



Having a PA system is important to save the clinician’s voice and ensure everyone can hear his instruction. Here, Terral Hill demonstrates with a youngster, Venus from Sand Meadow. Photo by Andrea Barber.

points to take into account, based on my own experience of hosting clinics at my Sand Meadow Farm in Honeoye Falls, NY.

WHO WILL ATTEND?

Who might attend your clinic and what are their interests? Do you have a regional Icelandic horse club? Maybe you have a group of friends in the area? If you don’t have enough interest locally, and it may be a far distance for people to travel to your farm, perhaps you could host the clinic in another more central location. Also, do you want to include people who ride other breeds than Icelandics? Some clinicians are happy to work with a variety of breeds, and these riders can help fill your clinic.

In general, a good number for a clinic is 8 to 12 riders. Less than that, and you may have trouble making it work financially. More than that, and people rarely get the attention they want and need. In addition, the particular clinician you choose may have a set amount he or she is willing to take on, so make sure to check that out in advance.

Also, don’t forget about auditors! Many people enjoy just observing a clinic, but not actually riding, and get a lot out of the experience. You can charge a small fee for auditing (something like \$25 to \$50 per day), which will help offset your overall expenses. Plus, having an audience somehow always makes the clinic atmosphere more lively and fun.

DATES

In your area, seasonal weather may be a factor when choosing a date. Ideally, you don’t want it to be too hot or too cold, and nobody likes to ride in the pouring rain or blazing hot sun. So if you don’t have a covered arena or indoor stabling for the horses, take potential weather conditions into consideration. You won’t be able to control Mother Nature completely, but at least you can pick a date that has the best chance of providing comfortable conditions.

With peoples’ work schedules, weekends are usually best. However, if your group can make it on weekdays that usually makes for much fewer scheduling conflicts for both the participants and the clinician. Holidays can be tricky. For some people, it means they won’t be able to attend due to family obligations. But for others, it means more flexibility with travel time to attend the clinic. Holidays can also mean more expensive travel and lodging costs, however. So use caution when planning your date around a holiday.

Check for conflicting dates with other Icelandic horse events: shows, clinics, etc. Consult the USIHC events calendar (<https://icelandics.org/events/>) and the calendars of any USIHC-affiliated clubs near you (find them here: <https://icelandics.org/affiliated-clubs>). Contact Icelandic horse trainers (certified ones are listed here: <https://icelandics.org/horse-trainers>) to



make sure you haven't missed anything. Since Icelandic events are still few and far between, you don't want to make people choose between two events—that just means fewer participants for both. But if there is a clinic or other event being planned in another area of the country around the dates you are thinking of, maybe you could piggyback off that event. Using the same clinician may save you some travel costs, especially if he or she is from Europe.

For most clinicians, spring and summer are their busiest months, with many clinics, shows, and other events. So if you are thinking of these dates you may have to book far in advance. In addition, airfares tend to be higher during these seasons. Fall and winter tend to be quieter for clinicians, with more reasonable travel costs.

CHOOSING A CLINICIAN

While there are many fine clinicians from other disciplines whose teaching is applicable to Icelandics, I tend to stick with clinicians who have significant experience riding and training Icelandic horses. I feel that if you want dressage instruction, you can probably find an instructor in your local area to take some lessons with. But the chance to learn from an instructor specifically experienced with Icelandic horses is really special.

Four clinicians that we've hosted and have had excellent experiences with are Guðmar Þór Pétursson, Barbara Frische, Terral Hill, and Carrie Lyons Brandt. But of course there are many others. Ask around for recommendations. The USIHC also

maintains a list of certified Icelandic trainers and that can be found on the USIHC website (<https://icelandics.org/horse-trainers>).

When you contact a clinician, ask what they charge—most charge a daily rate. Also, ask how many riders they will take and if they have any other requirements. Have some dates ready so they can check their schedule. You should also ask if they are willing to stay for additional time before or after the clinic to give private lessons. These private sessions are usually quite popular and a good way for the clinician to make a little extra money in addition to the main event.

In addition to the clinician's daily rate, you will usually also need to pay for your clinician's travel, lodging, and food. Ask if they would like to book the travel themselves or have you do it. Then check the rates so you'll have an idea how much to plug into your budget for travel. For lodging, if you or someone else nearby can host the clinician at home, that's best. You'll save a lot of money and it's usually nicer for the clinician than staying in an impersonal hotel. Food doesn't have to be fancy, but it should be plentiful. These individuals work very hard. So make sure when they are instructing that they have plenty of water, coffee, and other snacks. Of course, ask in advance if they have any preferences or dietary requirements.

THE FACILITY

Of course, it's ideal to have a large covered riding arena with a spectator area and inside stabling for all the horses. But for many

An indoor arena can provide comfort against the elements, but it isn't necessary for a good clinic. Photo by Andrea Barber.

people that just is not possible. The basic requirements for a clinic are: a riding area of adequate size for riding the faster gaits, and with safe footing and fencing; safe boarding facilities for the horses (even temporary paddocks); room for trailer parking; and restroom facilities for the humans (a least a porta-potty). Things that are nice to have include a covered gathering area for participants to rest in between sessions (a tent can work well), a wash area for the horses if the weather will be hot, washroom facilities for humans that include a shower, camping facilities, etc.

To make sure everyone gets the most out of the experience, and so that the clinician doesn't lose his or her voice, you'll also need some sort of PA system. Some clinicians have their own sets, which they may be willing to bring, so it's worth it to ask them. It is also possible that the facility you are using already has one. But if not, they are relatively inexpensive to purchase. It's a good investment, since it can be used over and over again. For private lessons, the wireless headsets that allow the instructor and student to hear and talk to each other are also very nice, but these are expensive.

INSURANCE & LEGAL CONCERNS

Depending on where you are holding the clinic, and if you are renting the facility, there may be legal (e.g., liability) concerns. You may need to have posted signs and to

have participants sign waivers, etc. Having insurance may also be a good idea—and may even be required, if you are renting a facility. So do your research beforehand and contact experts in your area (an attorney, insurance agent, etc.), as needed.

HORSE HEALTH

Talk to your veterinarian and make sure that you understand the health risks for horses in your area. Nobody wants to attend a clinic only to come home with a sick horse! So make sure that you are requiring the vaccinations and other paperwork (e.g., health certificates, coggins tests) that are appropriate for your area, to keep the horses that will be attending your clinic as safe as possible. It's also important not just to ask for the paperwork, but to check it before the horse arrives. You don't want to have to turn somebody away just because they forgot the horse's paperwork at home.

TRAVEL INFORMATION

It's a good idea to make sure all participants have clear directions to the clinic location. An address is a good start, but often people's GPS gets them close—but not exactly there. With a horse trailer it can be a real pain if you have to turn around! A sheet with directions (that include visual landmarks) that



Many clinicians are willing to do private lessons either before or after the clinic. Here, Guðmar Pétursson instructs Cordy Sullivan and Lýsingur frá Eyjófsstöðum. Photo by Andrea Barber.



Clinics provide rare opportunities to learn from experts. Here, Guðmar Pétursson demonstrates on Kalman frá Lækjamóti. Photo by Andrea Barber.

people can print out is usually very helpful. On the same sheet with the directions, I also like to give a list of some of the lodging, restaurant, and market options in the area (noting their distance from the clinic location) that I can recommend.

FOOD & BEVERAGES

Food for the participants isn't a necessity—but they sure will appreciate it! At a minimum, I would recommend providing morning coffee, tea, etc. The coffee table usually provides for a nice social gathering point in the morning and helps everybody get going. A box of doughnuts never hurts either.

For lunch, you can either provide it by making it yourself (lots of work!) or by ordering in. Or you can choose to have everybody on their own for lunch, if there are quick and casual restaurants close by that won't mind a mob of dirty equestrians. If you have the facilities, a refrigerator and microwave are appreciated for those who would like to bring and prepare their own food.

Afternoon snacks can be a nice pick-me-up to keep everyone going and can be quite inexpensive. Some ideas are ice pops in the summer, hot chocolate in the cooler months. Candy (especially Icelandic candy!) goes over well all year round.

NAME TAGS & INTRODUCTIONS

These are a must! I like to include on them

the name of the person and the name of the horse they are working with (if any—obviously auditors' name tags will just have the person's name). It's quite a challenge for the clinician to get up to speed on all the names in a short period of time, and the name tags really help make it easier. That way the focus can be on teaching—not on remembering names. It also helps the participants to get to know one another easily.

For similar reasons, I think it's important to start out the clinic with introductions. These can be just for the actual participants (it might take too long if you go through all the auditors). People can give their names, their horse's name, their background, goals, etc. This is very helpful to the clinician on understanding who is who and what level to teach to. Also during the introductions, I like to give general announcements about the clinic schedule, the restroom location, where to put horse poop, etc.

NOTHING IS EVER PERFECT

Lastly, just realize nothing is ever perfect. It's not if something will go wrong, it's when. But don't sweat it! Keep the emphasis on learning and having fun, and all the little snags will quickly be forgotten. Instead pat yourself on the back for taking the initiative and doing all the work to make the event happen. You deserve it—so remember to enjoy it!

HELP! NO BRAKES!

by Nicki Esdorn



Illustration by Margot Apple

figure-eights at the walk on a loose rein. I focused on a soft, steady connection with my seat and legs and on a calm breathing rhythm. He answered by lowering his head and giving some good blows. When I wanted to stop, I let all my energy flow out my legs, ceased following the movement with my hips, and did a big, audible exhale. He stood even before I had closed my hands on the reins! He got lots of praise.

We practiced that for a while, then I felt connected enough to try trot and tölt. He became more and more calm, and when he stopped easily from a little bit of canter I jumped off. “His brakes work fine,” I said to the surprised woman, “but not when you step on the gas at the same time.”

STOP OR GO?

Our unintentional and often conflicting aids get us into so much trouble! We, the riders, often blame the horse, because we are not even aware of what we are doing. The gelding’s rider had been sitting heavily, with her legs braced out in front of her. She held on tight with her calves for security. All this amounted to a strong forward driving aid for the horse. At the

Years ago I was asked to evaluate a supposedly nicely trained Icelandic horse that a friend of a friend had just bought. I packed my tack and drove a few hours. When I got out of my car I saw a chestnut Icelandic with a woman rider coming at me in fast tölt—actually more of a tölt verging on gallop. I stepped aside in order not to be bowled over. The rider eventually

managed to slow down, turned around, and said to me, “See? He has no brakes!”

“Uh-oh,” I thought. I looked at the sweaty gelding, tacked up in a large saddle and a shank bit. I said I would check him out—but in my own saddle and bridle, and definitely in the indoor ring.

The gelding was a bit tense when I mounted, so I started riding circles and



If Jenný would magically disappear beneath me I would land on my feet! I feel very stable and safe in both the balanced full seat on the left, and the balanced half-light seat on the right. Photo by Mae McLean.



If Jenný would disappear now, I would fall painfully on my butt! If Jenný would make a sudden movement, I would be jerked around or worse! Photo by Mae McLean.

same time, she had a tight grip on the reins, and those reins were attached to a quite severe bit, which was likely inflicting pain on the horse's mouth.

On top of that, you have the emotional energy component. The rider was nervous and afraid that she could not stop, so she was tense and not breathing well. The basic problem here was her seat. The poor woman was not at all aware that she was telling her horse "Go, go, go!" just by the way she was sitting on his back. Her saddle did not help her either; it placed her in a chair seat. Because of the conflicting signals, the pain, and the nervous rider, the horse became very tense himself—he lifted his head to evade the rein aid, tensed and hollowed his back because of the heavy seat, and his sympathetic nervous system kicked in. That is the system responsible for "flight or fight"—so he ran.

I attempted—successfully—to switch him back into the parasympathetic nervous system, responsible for being calm, and functions like eating and digesting. Taking away painful tack and lowering his head was the first thing to do, followed by riding in a light and balanced seat with very clear

signals from my whole body. Moving to a safe, enclosed space helped, too. He got lots of affirming praise for relaxing, keeping his head low, and stopping. I was able to stay calm and relaxed through the first hurried steps, guided him onto a large circle, and praised him when he slowed down.

GOOD BALANCE

The horse's physical and mental balance is a very important prerequisite for good brakes! Young or untrained horses carry most of their weight on the forehead. They have not developed carrying power in their hindquarters and a balanced way of moving under a rider. The faster they go, the easier it is to keep their balance, like a motorcycle. They first must be trained to develop the correct muscling for carrying their own weight in balance, and then also for carrying a rider's. If the horse is not in balance, our unintentional aids affect it even more.

Our own balance as riders is at least as important for clear aids and good brakes. If you sit on the horse in good balance, you are able to elastically follow every movement: Your legs are underneath you, and

you are securely "grounded."

Here is a good test: Can you move from a full seat in your saddle into a so-called half-light seat? That's when you put more weight onto your thighs and the balls of your feet. Picture kneeling rather than sitting. If your horse magically vanished, would you land on your feet in a stable position? Can you ride in that seat in all gaits?

And when you sit back down into a full seat, do your legs stay in the same position? Can you switch easily from a full, balanced seat to a light, balanced seat? We love to ride our small, strong horses, but the ratio of our weight and size to theirs is very different from that of a big warmblood or Quarter horse. We affect our horses much more if we have poor balance.

CALM AND POSITIVE

Even if the horse is trained and fit, our conflicting aids bring about insecurity and a loss of trust in the rider, and so affect the horse's mental balance. A conflicting aid could also be pulling on the right rein to make a right turn, and at the same time collapsing at the waist to the right and putting more weight onto the left seat bone. The horse will lose its sideways balance and make a very awkward turn, falling out over his left shoulder, trying to support the rider's weight on the left, but still somehow trying to move to the right following the pressure on the rein.

Likewise, pushing with your seat, falling forward, holding on tight with your calves, and pulling on the reins is a painful and frightening experience for a horse that may already be anxious. If this scenario never changes, and is often even associated with punishment, the sympathetic nervous system will no longer respond and will completely shut down, resulting in "learned helplessness." That's an awful result, where the animal loses all hope and can only function like a robot.

Our own mental state is more important than we are often aware of. Are you still mad at someone while you are grooming your horse? Are you anxious about the ride and holding your breath? Are you—unintentionally—tensing your shoulders, your jaw, or your hips? Clenching your toes? Our horses can tell our mood, our breathing, and our heart rate. If we are not mentally calm and positive, and if we don't have clear intentions, they will take over and save themselves in whatever way they can.



RUN AND PLAY

A balanced, well-trained, and confident horse will always have good brakes. It is up to us to make sure we are also balanced, fit, and cheerful! I highly recommend following the Centered Riding method by Sally Swift, or, even better, taking lessons in person or virtually. It often takes another experienced pair of eyes to see what we are not even aware of.

Another tip is to teach your horse several different signals for slowing down and stopping. FT trainer Laura Benson suggested I teach my horses the whistle stop. I did so from the ground at first, stopping them from a gentle signal on the lead rope and doing a specific soft whistle. Big praise and a treat! The whistle stop works well now even when we ride in a group, and the horses want to go along with their friends. It came in really handy once when my mare got loose. She stopped instantly on my whistle, and I could catch up with her.

Then, of course, there are those cool and windy days, or when spring is coming, or it's the first group trail ride in a long time. Spirits run high—and all our happy horses want to do is run and play. On such days, it's great if you can let them have a bit of play time at liberty in a safe, enclosed space to take the edge off. Even better if your horse can live in a group and has access to a large space to let off some steam. You will have a much more mentally balanced partner who is ready to listen to you.

And if you have practiced your balanced seat and can ride a fast tölt or gallop—ride like the wind and enjoy it!

Here is a balanced seat in action. When I ride trot in a half-light seat, I can easily pick up a soft posting trot, swinging with the movement. I can also move between a balanced sitting trot and a posting trot if my balance is securely grounded. Cantering in a half-light seat is a lot of fun for both horse and rider. Jenný is calm and balanced here and able to stop instantly at my request. Photo by Mae McLean.



After a good workout Jenný loves to stretch the muscles in her topline. She is physically and mentally relaxed. I use a full balanced seat, my weight is evenly distributed and I feel grounded and safe. Photo by Mae McLean.



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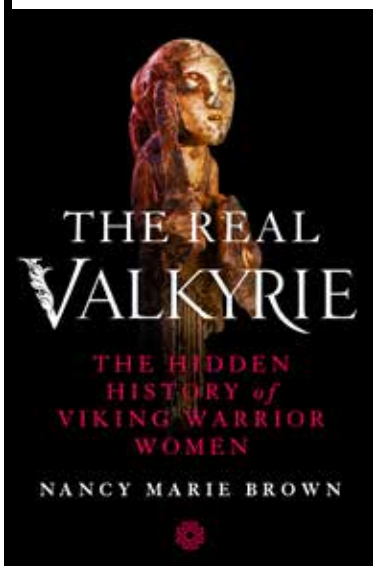
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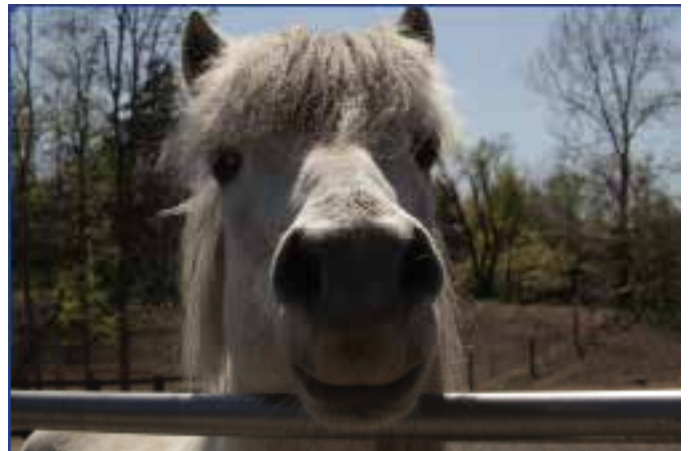


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