

ISSUE ONE

THE

2009

# 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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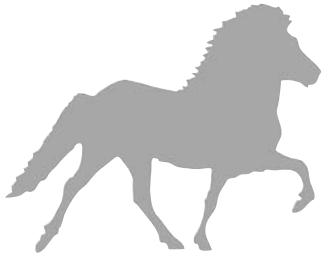
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THE  
ICELANDIC  
HORSE  
QUARTERLY  
Issue One 2009

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

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

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**On the cover:** Anne Elwell, one of the founders of the USIHC, riding Kjarnar vom Wiesenhof (US1994102323) at the Tunbridge Open in Vermont, 2007. See the Spotlight on page 33. Photo by Thorunn Kristjansdottir.



## FEIF AND THE USIHC

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

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

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## REGISTRY

The Congress maintains the Registry of Icelandic Horses in the United States in accordance with FEIF rules. The Registry Rules and all forms needed to register an Icelandic Horse in the United States are available on the Congress website at [www.icelandics.org](http://www.icelandics.org). Contact Asta Covert P.O. Box 1724, Santa Ynez, CA 93460; 805-688-1393; [registry@icelandics.org](mailto:registry@icelandics.org)

## WEBSITE

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

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## FROM THE PRESIDENT

Bernie Willis writes: What's in a name? When you hear the word "organic," what comes to mind? Several years ago the Rodale family began developing a system of growing food that avoided the use of petroleum based fertilizers. The idea was to follow the cycles of nature. The recycling of plant waste would fertilize the growth of the next generation. It is a self-sustaining system of agriculture similar to that done generations ago, but with a refined scientific basis. The method replaced the use of potentially poisonous chemicals with physical techniques to regulate the growth of the desired plants. The products became a popular niche market because they were believed to be better for you.

Then economic factors began to take notice and want part of the pie. American agribusiness saw "organic" as competition and wanted in on the market. The government stepped in and developed a definition of organic and an inspection process. Many of the original "organic" folk were not large enough to support the inspection costs, nor of the mind to agree with the watered-down official definition of "organic." Today the name has lost its original meaning. A large number of those developing the concept have gone on to use new descriptions such as natural, sustainable, and home grown. It can be confusing.

We have the same issues with horse training. Many popular websites, books, and magazines promote "natural horsemanship." You can rattle off the names of well-known trainers who use "natural" methods. But what is a natural method? One common answer is that a natural training method uses the horse's instincts to encourage it to do what man wants. In this way the horse responds positively making the choice



to do what a person wants instead of being forced to do something it doesn't understand. The horse is encouraged to partner with man instead of being psychologically broken down to do what man wants. A round pen is often used as a training device because it allows the horse freedom to move without it being able to run away from the influence of the trainer.

So far this sounds fair enough. The horse is worked by the trainer like another horse would work it. Body language is used to move the horse around, and after awhile the trainee is convinced that it is worthwhile to partner up with the trainer, follow him around, stand still, be touched all over, and even be sat on. Pretty soon the horse is ridden and mentally transfers the directions from the ground to aids from the saddle for going, stopping, and turning.

What could be better than this? I'd like to suggest that "natural" may be just as meaningless as "organic." First we need to define what we want the end product to be. If it's a horse to be ridden it must include a horse that has the ability to carry a person. Horses are not built to carry such a burden on their backs. The

horizontal position is strained significantly at the shoulders, the lumbar sacral joint and in each of the disks. It is further exasperated by weak abdominal muscles and poor riding techniques. I can't argue against using natural methods of horse training when compared with the hurried-up breaking methods of the American West, but there is still another aspect to consider.

"Classical" refers to something that has stood the test of time and been proven to be successful. When applied to horse training, it includes preparing the horse to be ridden by exercises that develop the top line and the bottom line to carry the weight of a rider. It aims at collection that demonstrates a high level of physical fitness. The process involves distinct steps that not only prepare a horse psychologically but physically for being a saddle horse. These steps are: rhythm, looseness, contact and acceptance of the bit, impulsion, straightness, and finally collection. Success can be measured as the horse progresses toward the ultimate goal.

Like "organic" has lost much of its ideal with commercialization, so has "natural" lost its role as the ideal of horsemanship, I would argue: Its focus has been limited to technique instead of purpose. Let me encourage you to look far ahead to your ultimate goal for your horse. Plan a long range process that includes helping your horse reach its potential. Only then are you allowing each horse to develop its natural ability to do the incredible and unnatural thing, to carry a person. It's this partnership that allows your horse to live longer, healthier, and happier than it would in the wild. It puts the welfare of the horse first. It is classical.

I hope you will think about what you are doing with your horses—just like more and more folk are starting



to think about what they eat—and not just look at the name. A recent comment on an Internet list got my attention when it said that the only worthwhile horse training was natural horsemanship. Natural horsemanship wasn't defined, but the writer implied that all else was damaging. I take issue with such general, yet decisive, statements. What's in a name? Answer that question for yourself. Be aware of alternatives, both time-tested methods and new ones, and see if they fit your situation.

### MORE ON "NATURAL"

Bernie's letter inspired a great discussion among the members of the Quarterly committee. Here are some excerpts.

*Anne Elwell writes:* Lynn Borden, my very sage stable help of many years, watching some early Pat Parelli advocates work with a young baffled Icelandic, commented, "That's what people do with regular horses to get them to be like Icelandics. Do that with an Icelandic and you are going to bore it to death." And Bob Jeffreys, a very good John Lyons trainer who has worked with a number of Icelandic owners, has repeatedly said, "You have to really modify this training

for Icelandics. What takes weeks with other breeds takes a couple of days with Icelandics."

Traditional Icelandic training has been grounded in natural horsemanship for centuries. Herd-raised horses, clarity of hierarchy, etc., are all natural horsemanship notions. Wiesenhof (Germany) has been using natural horsemanship techniques for at least the 20-some years that I have been going there, and Icelandic character and temperament are certainly alive and well at Wiesenhof.

To me, natural horsemanship is just using the language of the horse to teach the horse what you want it to learn. Unfortunately, there is a strong human desire to latch onto labels, formulas, methods, and dogma, which is so much easier than observing and thinking. As a result people fall prey to all of the hype and marketing which promise results through application of methods and produces horses with all of the personality of a turnip. And then, of course, there are quite a few people who actually want a horse with the personality of a turnip, because they are too fearful of anything else. Unfortunately, there is nothing you can do about that.

*Penny Miller writes:* I don't disagree with what Bernie says, but I don't agree either. He, too, makes a great many generalizations. I have studied "traditions" of the Old West, and I can tell you that real cowboys did not abuse horses or "break" them. The real "natural horsemanship" trainers didn't even use those words, there was nothing natural about it. They believed in maintaining the spirit and mind of the horse, and wanted all of the things that go along with "classical" training. They had to depend on that horse, day after day. They had much the same relationship with their equine partners as the Icelandic farmers did, or

that classical dressage riders do. Take the time to watch old clips of the really great minds, and you will see a proud regal horse, calm yet spirited, no different than a proud Icelandic stallion. They use their body with power and grace and have a liveliness in their eye. They are glorious.

If you really want to get to the roots of good training, whether "classical dressage" or "natural" or the Vacqueros or the Icelandic farmers, it came down to having a horse that could get a job done day after day in adverse conditions and get both of them home safely. For the dressage rider, the task was war. For the Icelandic rider it was a harsh environment, and for the Vacqueros it was harsh too.

Ground work is great horsemen trying to make good things happen for less-accomplished handlers. It has morphed into a commercial enterprise. If you watch the greats, the "groundwork" involves the time from the pasture to the barn to saddle up, and maybe a few more minutes with the saddle on. The working ranches have a motto: The first day you take a horse in training, you're losing money; the second day you break even; and third day the horse is on the payroll. The really great, like Mr.



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Tom Dorrance, had the rankest horse on the payroll the first day.

Anyone who has taken the time to really read what Mr. Tom had to say or, even better, was graced with the man's words in person, would know he is anything but cook-book. He believed in the physical, mental, and spiritual well-being of each and every living creature, and had such a regard for life he would look for the smallest characteristic to identify that creature as unique. I don't even consider people like Mr. Tom and Ray Hunt to be in the league of the average natural horseman. Ray Hunt has more than once put his life on the line to save his horse. There is so much more here than a training method. There is true heart.

The Parellis and Clinton Andersons and all the other "names" are commercial. They are not really well-respected in the real working ranch tradition. Names are names and tools are tools. The saddle you ride, the bridle you use, the tools you like, do not define you as any type of trainer. Horsemanship is not a discipline, or a saddle, or shoes vs. no shoes. It is an essence. It is your ability to communicate with a horse and come out the other side with both of you safe and better than where you started.

Yes, Icelandics are unique in many ways, but they still are a horse! Each is unique and individual. Some bloodlines have certain characteristics, abilities, predispositions to certain qualities, diseases, etc. So do people. I am not better or worse than another person because of my race, gender, height, or weight. It is my character and soul that make me unique: good, bad, or otherwise. I will continue my journey of horsemanship on my own path, and the more and more I think that path, the more it diverges away from any organiza-

tion. I love these horses and I love each and every one for its unique ability. I hope to never be without an Icelandic in my life.

*Judy Strehler writes:* I, for one, appreciate Bernie's column. Starting out with "organic" and how it has changed is true, and "natural" horsemanship seems to be the way to go right now. Many people are doing it here in Minnesota. While I am not saying it is good or bad, I am saying it is hard to see a once proud Icelandic stallion reduced to a piggy-pacing, shoeless, fat, misbehaved horse. Reading Bernie's article makes me wonder just what direction this breed is going to go in once we lose the strong advocates of Icelandic tradition. Look at the discussion we are getting about this letter now. People are referencing their sources! Isn't that what we are all about? Not following fashion, but taking a different path. Isn't that what makes this breed special? It is for me. I still prefer taking lessons from breed-specific trainers and learning their techniques to keep my horses the beautiful, proud animals that I purchased.

## ANNUAL MEETING

The 2009 USIHC Annual Meeting was held January 17-18 in Santa Clara, California. On the agenda were a review of Congress business and committee efforts for 2008; consideration of two amendments to the constitution; a preview of the FEIF Youth Camp, to be held July 17-24 at Winterhorse Park in Eagle, Wisconsin; and a group dinner and awards ceremony.

John Parke delivered the keynote address, "Journey to the Center of the Earth on Your Icelandic Horse." Parke, 55, resides in the Santa Ynez Valley near Santa Barbara, California. He is a lawyer by profession, with an emphasis on civil litigation. His

family has ridden Icelandic horses since 1994 and currently owns four of them. Although he enjoys learning about every activity with Icelandic horses, his chief form of organized equestrian sport is endurance riding. Probably his most notable endurance ride was the 2,000-mile long XP 2001 ride on the Pony Express Trail from Missouri to California. Three of his horses have competed in endurance rides. Two of them, Remington and the late Skjoldur, are well known for



their accomplishments.

The Quarterly will have a report on the Annual Meeting in our next issue.

## SPORT JUDGE INCENTIVE

One of the cleverest things coming out of Iceland for preserving the Icelandic horse is its judging system. To have an internationally accepted system that defines the quality of a horse and its riding provides for each of us a standard and a goal to aspire to. It is the basis for some of our most enjoyable events. Sanctioned shows have enjoyed a huge increase in participation this past year. One show alone had more than 70 Icelandic horses. None of this would happen if it were not for the judges working the system.



The USIHC promotes a high standard for Sports Judges. Sanctioned shows require at least one FEIF certified International Sport Judge. To achieve this certification a person first becomes an intern judge and then, after experience and practice, goes on to the FEIF seminar and test. Up to now that has all been done at a personal expense.

Today there is a special incentive to become a FEIF Judge. Thanks to a highly competitive anonymous donor, a new incentive is available through the USIHC to encourage the development of sport judges. This is how the program works:

1. A fund has been established that will pay \$1000 to a person upon passing the FEIF national or international test.
2. Another \$1000 will be paid to a person upon the completion of judging three sanctioned shows in the U.S.
3. Another \$1000 will be paid upon the first renewal of their FEIF judge license.

Check the FEIF calendar at [www.feif.org](http://www.feif.org) for the next opportunity to attend the FEIF seminar and take the judging test.

## WEBSITE PHOTOS

The USIHC web committee is looking for new photos to update the look of the Congress website at [www.icelandics.org](http://www.icelandics.org). Says committee chair Doug Smith, "Our overall goal is to convey the spirit of the Icelandic horse and the USIHC to website visitors who have little or no knowledge of either."

Here is the committee's basic list of criteria for what would make a good photo submission (the committee will not change any photo except to resize it):

- Photos must feature the Icelandic horse or the USIHC.
- The image must be well lit—not over- or under-exposed—and the subject must be in focus.
- Horses in the image must appear lively, bright, and happy.
- Try to avoid posed compositions. Action or candid shots are much better.
- Almost any resolution is acceptable. We can always make them smaller for the web site.
- You must own the rights to the image and must grant the USIHC unconditional permission to use the image on the website.

Says Doug, "The top five image contributors (based on number of images selected for use) will be featured

on a Photo Contributors web page on the site. Each contributor will be free to submit a short biography, including links to personal websites or photo galleries. This is not a requirement, but our way of thanking the top contributors."

Send your photos to [web\\_photos@icelandics.org](mailto:web_photos@icelandics.org).

## FEIF AND THE USIHC

Bernie Willis writes: As USIHC president, I was recently asked how FEIF rules are made and why it takes so long to make a change. FEIF is the parent organization of almost 20 country organizations that promote and protect the Icelandic horse. FEIF has an annual conference in February where issues are brought up by committee. Then, after a year's discussion, the committee recommendations are considered by the delegates assembly that meets just before the annual conference. At the delegates assembly, each country gets to vote based upon their membership. For instance, at the 2008 assembly, the USIHC got two votes where Norway got 5 and Germany 10, the point being that the larger the country club, the greater your influence at the FEIF delegates assembly.

It is at the FEIF delegates assembly that the decisions are made that become new FEIF rules for the following year, usually going into effect in April. So it takes well over a year to see changes. If you want something to change, you need to submit a proposal to the appropriate USIHC committee. These can be contacted through the USIHC website, [www.icelandics.org](http://www.icelandics.org), by following the proposal process outlined there. If, after discussion and revision, the USIHC committee decides to accept your proposal, the committee will get it onto the agenda for the next FEIF conference committee meeting. After your proposal has







had a year to be discussed by all the country committees, it may be presented to the FEIF delegates assembly for approval.

You may wonder why FEIF wants it to take so long for anything to happen. I did too until I realized that we Americans are usually in a hurry and don't think things through well enough. In the view of many Europeans, we have addressed problems by making them worse. As an American, I'm not sure I agree with this sentiment, but there is some evidence supporting it.

There is abundant material on the FEIF website, [www.feif.org](http://www.feif.org), that every USIHC member should be familiar with, especially the important information concerning FEIF's continued support for the welfare of the horse. It's always a good idea to check out the current rules before going to all the work to make new ones. It may be that a rule one thinks is needed is already in place, but that enforcement is lacking. If this is the case, then we make fools of ourselves by demanding change, when in reality we need to be more aware of our duty to enforce what is already in the rules.

Then of course there is the mat-

ter of authority. The web is full of opinions that come across as authority. But real authority comes from a national or international consensus of thought. That is what FEIF provides.

I hope these thoughts will direct our concerned members to a better understanding of our relationship to FEIF, its heritage of concern for the Icelandic horse, and how we can enjoy our horses better by learning from the information already available. I realize that much of what is out there is not in our language, but be assured that the USIHC is working diligently on getting more and more information translated into English. It's been an uphill trip, but at least now we have the attention of the leaders of FEIF and anticipate new developments in the coming year.

## BOARD MEETINGS

USIHC Board members attending the October, November, and December meetings were Laura Benson, Ásta Colvert, Anne Elwell, Katherine Love, Karen Olson-Fields, Kari Pietsch-Wangard, Doug Smith, and Bernie Willis. Regional Club members were Dawn Shaw (Cascade), Kathy Lock-erbie (Can/Am), Annette Coulon (Kraftur), and Alys Culhane (Alaska Icelandic Horse Association).

As of November 30, 2008, the checking account balance was \$15,873.69, the Money Market account balance (includes the Youth fund) was \$74,219.52, and the Registry checking account was \$2,081.41. The combined cash balances was \$92,174.62. Kari has restructured some of the Income/Expense (profit/loss) statements away from the "membership" or "registry" sub-headings. Most now reflect their relation to a committee. For example, any income or expense related to a seminar can be found under the "Ed-

ucation Seminar" heading. The main exception is the Icelandic Horse Quarterly income and expenses. These remain under "membership" since the Quarterly is a direct benefit to the membership via dues, same as the WorldFengur subscription. Kari will continue to work to refine the presentation of the income and expenses to make the profit/loss for each aspect of the United States Icelandic Horse Congress more clear. In particular, she will refine the handing of Quarterly and website advertising versus the associated expense.

Several venues are being considered for the U.S. World Championship Tryouts. They include Mill Farm in New York, Creekside Farm in Georgia, and Flying C Ranch in California. The judge will be FEIF International Sport Judge Einar Ragnarsson, who was also the judge in 2007, as well as head judge in the World Championships for 2007 and 2009. Mid-May dates have been set, but they need to be finalized with host locations and the judge. The judge's fee is \$350 per day. Travel expenses have yet to be determined. Dan Slott has suggested that each tryout location provide financial support for the process to reduce or eliminate the risk of loss associated with the tryout process to the Congress. Discussion is ongoing within the Sport Committee. Susan and Karen report they've heard rumors of the tryout process changing and suggestions for changes to the tryout process. Suggestions should be made formally through the online Proposal Tracking pages. Informal suggestions or questions should be addressed to the Sport Leader (Will Covert) via email to [sport@icelandics.org](mailto:sport@icelandics.org).

Doug moved that current policies be amended to allow non-USIHC members to participate in sanctioned seminars in exchange for a \$40 fee to



be paid per event. Ásta seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously. Doug also moved that the USIHC not refund any incidental profit of seminar fees for events where the Board has agreed to protect the organizer from loss. Profits shall be retained in the Treasury to support future seminars. This motion was seconded by Kari and carried unanimously.

Bernie summarized the current state of Canadian judge reciprocity for the Board. The IHF will accept U.S. National Judges with the full privileges granted to Canadian National Judges. This currently does not apply as we do not have any such judges. IHF will accept intern judges to judge as a team with Canadian National Judges at CIHF-sanctioned shows. The general question of granting intern judge standing to foreign trained individuals was also raised. In lieu of creating a general policy it was suggested that each case be considered on an individual basis. Doug moved that any foreign-trained individual seeking recognition as a U.S. intern judge seek the endorsement of the Sport Leader and subsequent approval of the Board. The motion was seconded by Susan and carried unanimously.

Annette and Doug presented a

preview of changes to the Regional Club renewal process for 2010. The proposed process will eliminate much of the paperwork involved in confirming the requisite number of club members are also Congress members. A prototype for the new process will be ready for review in 2009.

Concern has been raised regarding the conduct of committee members on the email lists and chat rooms used to support the work of the various Congress committees. Review of current policy regarding committee membership shows no provision for removal of a committee member for misconduct. As such, Doug moved that the committee chairs be given the right to dismiss a committee member for misconduct with a 30-day notice and provision to appeal. The motion was seconded by Karen and carried unanimously.

Doug reported that the second round of web ads was released on December 1, 2008. Three advertisers were each paying \$60 for three placements (bottom of home page, right side of bulletin board, and right side of calendar) to run from December through February. Three other advertisers have an expressed interest. Doug plans on following up with the current advertisers to see if any accommodation for new advertisers can be reached.

Doug said that the pilot web advertising program appears to be very successful. The website now pays for itself and will start to chip away at the PayPal fees, thanks to advertisers! The Pleasure Rider Membership email list is up and running. The PRP chair can now email all current/future members with a single email. The list is regenerated from the membership database nightly so all new PRP members are automatically added.

Submissions of new photos for the web site have been trickling in.

Many of the images are more “snapshots” than the caliber we needed to enhance the appearance of the web site. It appears an error was made when the criteria were announced, and they did not include the fact that images should feature the horse, be in focus, and show the horse in action. The vast majority of the images submitted show the horse standing still. Action shots are needed to reach the portion of the web audience that doesn’t know the Icelandic horse; otherwise, we risk leaving the wrong impression. Several semi-professional photographers have offered to allow us to use their work in exchange for some form of compensation. Generally, the sought compensation is free advertising in both the Quarterly and on the website. This is likely to become a very touchy point for the web committee. If we agree to offer free advertising, we need to have very clear standards for the number and quality of images we receive in exchange. We risk having everyone who has submitted images ask for free advertising. Clearly, that is inappropriate.

The web committee has discussed the idea of a “contributors” page where we would list all the photographers who have contributed to the site. This page would list photographers in a specific, stated order (alphabetical or based on contributed volume) and include one link per photographer to a website or gallery.

The USIHC Election Committee (which consists of Debbie Cook, Kristin Sjolrie, and Kevin Draeger) reported results as follows: 210 ballots were returned. There were 2 spoiled ballots and 1 unmarked ballot. Two envelopes were returned with no forwarding address. Three ballot envelopes were returned with postage due. The results are as follows:

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Asta Covert: 176 votes

Kari Pietsch-Wangard: 159 votes

Susan Peters: 148 votes

Kathryn Lockerbie: 81 votes

The Officer and Committee Liaison election results have been posted and are as follows:

President: Bernie Willis. (Nominated by Doug, seconded by Kari, unanimous vote.)

Vice President: Susan Peters. (Nominated by Doug, seconded by Bernie, unanimous vote.)

Treasurer: Kari Pietsch-Wangard. (Nominated by Doug, seconded by Ásta, unanimous vote.)

Secretary: Doug Smith. (Nominated by Bernie, seconded by Kari, unanimous vote.)

Quarterly Committee Liaison: Bernie Willis

Regional Club Committee Liaison: Doug Smith

Breeding Committee Liaison: TBD (awaiting suggestion from committee chair)

Annette Coulon has been named chair of the Regional Clubs Committee. All other committee liaisons and chairs to remain the same. The board is seeking volunteers to fill the vacant seat for a one-year term. The ideal candidate should have a professional background in marketing.

Will Covert presented a summary of the applicable rules and explained the course of events leading to the submission of show results judged by two International FEIF judges and one Icelandic National judge. After a brief discussion, Doug moved that the marks recorded by the National judge be removed from IceTest and the adjusted results of the show be

recorded. Ásta seconded the motion, and it carried unanimously.

During the discussion the Board identified two areas of the Sanctioned Show Rules which need adjustment:

The current rules do not make adequate provision for the case of more than one judge at a sanctioned show. Further, while the majority of the references to judges in the current rules specify International Judges, there is one paragraph (on page 2) that is unclear with regard to the International Judge requirement. The Board directs the Sport Committee to propose revisions to the USIHC Sanctioned Show Rules to allow for a combination of National and International judges. The Board expects these rule changes to be presented for approval before the start of the 2009 competition season. The original application for sanction may have been a contributing factor to the issues with the Kentucky Show. On the application the judge was listed as "Pétur Jökull Hákonarson and two others." Doug moved that all judges for sanctioned shows be named on the sanction application. Karen seconded the motion, and it carried unanimously. Bernie will draft a letter to be sent to the participants

of the Kentucky Show explaining the Board's decision, and will forward the text to the Board for approval before it is mailed.

Karen moved that USIHC Board accept the *Tölt News* offer of a 2,500-hour prize in exchange for a sponsor image and link on the PRP page. Doug seconded the motion, and it carried unanimously. Karen reported on the integration of the PRP enrollment process with the online membership renewal process and the future plans to allow PRP participants to report their hours via the website. Karen reports that efforts are continuing in the committee to establish a new prize level for high-time participants. Efforts also continue to include community service as an aspect of the Pleasure Rider Program.

Can two individuals who share a USIHC family membership both sign the Regional Club renewal form? The current and previous chairs of the committee disagree. Annette requested Board clarification. Quoting page two of the Regional Clubs Renewal Form with added emphasis: In order to renew as a Regional Club of the USIHC, you must have at least five (5) people with separate and current USIHC memberships and who are full, voting members of the club (remember individuals can only be full voting members of one club). Kari moved that the language in question be clarified to require five individuals with any type of current USIHC membership for Regional Club application or renewal. (For clarity, a Regional Club would be allowed with a minimum of three Congress households.) The motion was seconded by Bernie and failed a roll-call vote (For: Kari, Bernie, Susan. Against: Doug, Karen, Laura, Ásta). After further discussion regarding the wording and intent of the language on the Regional Club application and renewal forms, the



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Board concluded that there should be five households in each Regional Club that are current USIHC members. As there is no formal definition of a household, Doug moved the language “five people with separate and current USIHC memberships” be replaced with “five people with separate and current individual or family USIHC memberships.” Laura seconded the motion, and it carried unanimously.

The Board discussed a proposal put forth by 14-year-old Kevin Draeger to waive the age requirement for young riders in open classes. The Board members all agree that the current rules were created with safety in mind. However, the current rules strand talented young riders who receive 3 scores of 6.0 or better at the intermediate level. Under the current rules, a young rider would be forced back to the youth classes after reaching those marks. By the time a rider reaches the point of three 6.0 or better scores in the intermediate division he or she should clearly have enough understanding of competition and control of the horse to advance to the open classes. Doug moved that the current Sanctioned Show Rules be amended to include an exception to the age requirement for young riders in open classes if a rider receives overall marks of 6.0 or better in the corresponding intermediate division class at three sanctioned shows. Kari seconded the motion, and it was passed unanimously. The Board directed the Sport Committee to prepare revisions to the sanctioned show rules to include this exception.

The 2009 Trainer Level I course is again scheduled to take place at Creekside Farm in March. Katrin Sheehan, in letter form, informed the board that the planned instructor, Walter Feldmann, had to cancel for personal reasons, and she suggested

that the other IPZV “Ausbilder,” Nicole Kempf, take his place. Kempf is able to come in March and give the same “trainer level 1.” Andrea-Katharina Rostock would still be the tester. Kempf, who has the same qualifications as Feldmann, has been a serious competitor in Germany in the last 10 years. She has participated in the last five World Championships and has been involved in most international FEIF events of the last few years. The Trainer Level I seminar was approved using the revised instructor/examiner team.

Doug moved that the committee membership policy be amended to require all committee members to be current USIHC members. Kari seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

The Board directed Doug to investigate hosting the email discussion groups used by the committees on the Congress web server and to implement the discussion lists in such a way as to enforce the USIHC membership requirement for discussion group membership.

There will be a breeding judge seminar and test for international breeding judges organized by FEIF in April 2009. Katrin spoke to Bernie, who indicated that he would like to participate. He is the only person in the U.S. who has taken multiple seminars on this topic, has achieved a national breeding judge certificate in Canada, and has scribed at all the breeding events in the U.S. in the past ten years. The Breeding Committee sought approval for this; Bernie abstained from voting. The Board voted unanimously to send Bernie to Hólar, the clinic and test site.

Karen noted that the Trail Expo went as planned, despite the fires near Santa Barbara. There were two booths, running all three days of the festival, thanks to a couple of dedi-

cated volunteers. The Icelandic team tied for third; their competition were some well trained reining/cutting horses. Karen reported that there was a lot of favorable feedback from the public and from the clinician/celebrity judges.

Doug was named the USIHC's Delegate to the FEIF Conference by a unanimous vote with Doug's abstention from voting.

Kari has received the funds from an anonymous donor for the Sport Judge Incentive Scholarship and created three Certificates of Deposit: \$1,000 in a one-year CD (at 2.05% APY), \$2,000 in a two-year CD (at 2.2% APY), and the balance (\$7,000) in a four-year CD (at 2.7% APY). Bernie has agreed to write a piece for the Quarterly outlining the scholarship program and encouraging participation. Doug will make the same information available on the web site and in the Yahoo Group Forum.

Bernie reported that the Canadian requirements for intern judges (they call them National Judges) are more stringent than the U.S. requirements, in that Canada requires the test be passed every two years instead of just once. The Board unanimously agreed to allow Canadian National Judges with current licenses to enjoy full privileges as USIHC Intern Judges, as long as the Canadian Icelandic Horse Federation (CIHF) agrees to extend the same courtesy to USIHC Intern Judges. The Board decided reciprocity agreements would be considered on a country-by-country basis.

The 2009 Youth Camp will run from July 17-24, 2009. The deadline to sign up for participation is April 15.

The complete minutes can be found on the USIHC website: [www.icelandics.org/bulletin.php](http://www.icelandics.org/bulletin.php).

## Breeding Seminar

FEIF, in cooperation with the Agricultural University of Hvanneyri, Iceland, is offering an interesting and extensive seminar about the breeding of Icelandic horses on March 13-15, 2009. The seminar is open to breeding leaders, persons being active in breeding shows, and breeders. Say the organizers, "We hope to have an inspiring as well as instructive seminar, with expert lectures and informal meetings with time and space for discussions and exchange of experiences. We hope to meet as many engaged breeding people as possible at the seminar. This will help to build up a strong community of international breeders and improve the work within FEIF on breeding matters."

## Seminars for Sport Judges

Every year FEIF organizes a seminar for Sport Judges. In 2009, the seminar will be split between a seminar for FEIF Licensed International Sport Judges and a separate seminar for national judges, in combination with the test to become a Licensed Sport Judge. The test will be at two levels: to become a FEIF Licensed International Sport Judge or to become a National Sport Judge (the latter upon request of FEIF member associations only). This change follows the outcome of a survey of sport judges. In the past, seminars were open to a mixed group of judges, and this could lead to confusing situations for some participants, especially those coming to take the test. The seminar for FEIF Licensed International Sport Judges will be combined in 2009 with the European Championships on Ice in Haarlem (NL), March 20-22, 2009. The seminar for national judges (and the test) will take place in the third weekend of September 2009. A separate seminar for World Championship Judges will be organised April

18-19, 2009. FEIF Licensed International Sport Judges have to attend at least one seminar in the three-year period of their license.

## International Education Seminar

On January 9-11, the FEIF Education Committee, in cooperation with the Dutch Icelandic Horse Association (NSIJP) and the Dutch Equestrian Vocational Education Centre at Deurne, held its Sixth FEIF International Education Seminar. The theme was "All-Around Good Riding." Horse trainers and riding instructors registered in the FEIF Education Matrix and all FEIF-International Sport and Breeding Judges were invited. Said the organizers, "NHB Deurne and NSIJP have a magnificent cooperation in education, and the seminar introduced the very best of trainers, instructors, coaches, veterinarians, dentists, and farriers. We aimed to challenge people's thinking, provide interesting and informative lectures and workshops, and continue the discussions from last year's FEIF Education Seminar held at Kalo, Denmark."

## Free WorldFengur?

FEIF president Jens Iversen and WorldFengur project manager Jón Baldur Lorange recently discussed new goals for WorldFengur and came

to an additional agreement between FEIF and BÍ, which, among other things, aims to provide free access to WorldFengur for all FEIF members as of March of next year. This agreement was made at the request of FEIF, in order to show its faith in the WorldFengur project, to promote equality between its 19 member societies, and to give all 60,000 members of these societies free access to WorldFengur.

## No Free Style Ranks

The FEIF Sport Committee decided to stop the World Ranking for Free Style Performance FS1 as of January 1, 2009. The reason is the lack of marks and riders participating. The last ranking contained less than 10 riders worldwide. Of course organizers of sport events are still encouraged to organise Free Style (and similar tests) during their events as they contribute to proper riding and training of horses. This means that Josefín Birkebro, Mariella Salloker, Linnea Adler, Evi Ortler, and Maximilian Öhner are the last five riders to be ranked in Free Style Performance.

## Awards to Founders

Marit and Gunnar Jonsson were presented with a FEIF Award at the 40th anniversary celebration of the Danish Icelandic Horse Association. The president of FEIF, Jens Iversen, made the award on behalf of the board of FEIF. Jens especially emphasized Marit and Gunnar's love of the Icelandic horse and the Icelandic horse community. He recognized their great contributions to FEIF and to the vision of FEIF: bringing people together in their passion for the Icelandic horse. Gunnar and Marit are two of the founders of FEIF, and Jens acknowledged their unique effort for the Icelandic horse over nearly 50 years.



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# REGIONAL UPDATES

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To contact a USIHC Regional Club, see the complete listing on the website at: [www.icelandics.org/regionalclubs.php](http://www.icelandics.org/regionalclubs.php)

## Alaska Icelandic Horse Association

*Alys Culhane writes:* Winter in Alaska is both a time for reflecting on the past year and preparing for the upcoming one. Even more so this year, because it's been unusually cold. A low of -45F was recorded in Fairbanks, where the majority of our club members live. Before the cold set in, there were trail rides, clinics, and lessons. There was considerable travel involved; the Kenai, Southcentral, and Interior club members often got together. We had two clinics this year, both were at Bernie Willis's place in Wasilla. The first was Bernie's three-day gaited horse clinic. The second was Mandy Pretty's four-day TTeam clinic.

On December 21, the Willis's had their second annual Solstice Party/Ice Tolt. The Willis's live on a lake, so the two dozen or so who attended partook in sleigh rides, dog mushing, and cross-country skiing. Those who were feeling a bit more sedentary either hug out by the bonfire or went inside and ate.

Once the cold set in, those in Fairbanks hunkered down by the woodstove, going outside every so often to monitor hay and water intake. Farrier plans were cancelled; they can't shoe or trim when it's really cold, say below -40, because the horses' hooves are more likely to crack. Tack cleaning and checking out WorldFenger became the order of the day.

Those who live in the Kenai Peninsula also opted to give their horses a break. There are two types of people in this world, those who own Icelandic horses, and those who wish they do. Those down in the Kenai who wish they do have been

spending time horse shopping. At last count, there were two new Icelandic horse owners; both were considering joining the USIHC and the Alaska Regional Horse Club.

And those who live in southcentral Alaska spent their obligatory indoor time designing a club website ([www.alaskaicelandics.org](http://www.alaskaicelandics.org)). Pete Praetorius is the webmaster and Alys Culhane is the site editor. (Check out the frosted ice horses!) The site contains member profiles, blogs, essays, photos, and links to upcoming events. Those in other regional clubs are invited to contribute to our club's latest work-in-progress. The club is going to continue to produce and disseminate a bi-annual newsletter; this was deemed to be quite important since our members include some in the bush community who don't have Internet access.

## Cascade Icelandic Horse Club

*Lisa MMcKeen writes:* Summer and fall have been chocked full again this year in all the areas of the huge region our members inhabit!

Many members have attended clinics and events with Robyn Hood,

Phil Pretty, Christine Swartz, and Mandy Pretty at the Icelandic Horse Farm in Vernon, BC. Svanny Stefansdottir gave a clinic in Ridgefield, WA and one at the new Icelandic Horse Center in Troutlake, WA. Vice President Linda Eddy hosted a T-Touch practice event in October for members. Many of us have gathered for parades, horse shows and trail rides in our areas.

We have youth member Sasha Roland participating in 4-H events in The Dalles, Oregon area. She is doing a great job introducing Icelandics to the area youth.

Cascade Icelandic's online store opened at CafePress.com. You can now buy t-shirts, sweatshirts, jackets, even mugs with our club logo. This is an online store, so you can buy just one item or several. There is no "markup," so the club does not profit from sales, but it is great to show off our club logo at horse events. The store is at: [www.cafepress.com/cascadicelandic](http://www.cafepress.com/cascadicelandic) (don't try to spell "cascade" with the "e"—it won't work). There is a link to the new store in the Links section of the group's Yahoo site. Jean Waller, our new secretary,



The Cascade Club's annual winery ride.



Scene from the Cascade Club's October beach ride.

created the store and has invited any suggestions. Happy shopping!

Newly elected vice-president and former membership chair, Sandy Solberg reported on and headed up the effort for club members to participate in the Celebrate the Horse event, July 5 and 6, in Puyallup, WA. From the website, [www.celebratethehorse.com](http://www.celebratethehorse.com): "Celebrate the Horse is the Pacific Northwest's only horse festival to focus on entertaining and educating the general public. It's the mission of Celebrate the Horse to help people learn about the wonderful world of horses—its breeds, its disciplines, and its sports—in an atmosphere of celebration and education. All net proceeds benefit People Helping Horses, a nonprofit focused on rescue, rehabilitation, and public education. Celebrate the Horse is not an industry trade show, it's better yet. You'll find the best in the horse business ready and available to help you learn, and answer your questions." Club members Svanny Steffansdottir with Blessi, Linda Eddy with Liperta, and Lotta Jensen with Sorli all rode. Jean Waller with Stella offered support and a stall buddy for Liperta. This was a fun, friendly, and laid-back expo with tons of great clinicians, good shopping, and great breed demos. The talented

trio performed two demos, one each day, and they both went very well. Sandy would like to encourage more folks to participate with their horses next year!

Member Lori Birge participated in both the Can-Am show and the Evergreen Gaited Classic. The Westcoast Can-Am Icelandic Horse Club hosted the Tolt-ally Icelandic Horse Show on July 11-13 in Chilliwack, B.C. Nathaly, Christopher, and Chanel Jones organized the event. The judges were Bernie Willis, president of USIHC, and Kordula Reinhartz, Nationals Sport Judge for CIHF. There were 35 horses present, with three from Washington and the rest from Canada. Lori reports: "The weather couldn't have been better for all three days of the show, and Heritage Park was a wonderful facility with indoor stalls, covered stands for the spectators, and a regulation-size oval track that worked out well for our Icelandic horses. There were three types of classes. Sport classes had each gait shown individually and rated on a scale of 0-10, with 0 meaning the gait was not present and 10 being perfect. The finals had all of the horses on the track at the same time, but each horse was rated individually for each gait. The highest overall score was

the champion. I learned that a score of 4 or 5 was pretty good, with few scores much above 5 and lots below 3. Pleasure classes for both juniors and adults had all of the horses on the track at the same time, with the judges asking for the gaits. There were also fun classes: the beer tolt, Australian pursuit, ride-a-buck (10 bucks actually), barrel race in tolt, and an all out race at your horse's fastest gait. One of the fun aspects of this show was that the judges were willing to discuss your horse's performance so that your ride was also a learning experience. The other fun part of the weekend was that most of the people camped right at the show grounds, so we sat around, grazed horses on the grass, and talked about Icelandic horses the entire weekend. If they do the show again, they hope to have pleasure classes for beginning, intermediate, and advanced riders. If you get a chance to go in the future, don't hesitate. It was a fun event and crossing the border with a horse was very easy."

The Evergreen Gaited Horse Show was held July 19-20 in Puyallup. Lori reports: "There were six Icelandic-only classes, two of which were schooling classes. The Cascade Club had six horses competing, and one horse present for the experience. There were also a number of members who came in support but did not ride. The riders were surprised in the tolt class when the judge asked for first a trot and then a canter. Luckily, all of the riders were also signed up for the four-gait class, so Dawn Shaw spoke to the judge about changing the four-gait to the original tolt class. Four different riders placed first, so it was a good mix of competition and fun for all involved. Two of the horses also competed in open classes with all of the different gaited horses, but the judge obviously

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was crazy because she didn't place either of the Icelandic horses. We all know that Icelandics are cuter and better than the other gaited breeds. We'll just have to expose more judges to our favorite breed so that they become better informed. All of the Icelandic people did have a chance to hang out and talk about horses, so it was a fun weekend."

Gwen Feero, former board member-at-large, hosted and reported on a beach ride at Cape Blanco, Oregon, in August. A friend with a Fjord went with them. Staci, another youth in the club and Gwen's daughter, brought her new horse, Buck, and Gwen had both of her Icelandics. Kim had not only her Fjord, but also her daughter Megan and Megan's POA. All had a blast. It was the first trip to the ocean for most of the horses except Hilmir and Meyla, and the group was trying out a new camping site. Cape Blanco is a great site: it has a huge circle with a center common area, large stalls or corrals, both pull-through and back-in sites, and there is only a short walk to the main camp for showers. The trail to the beach is very steep with switchbacks that campers chose not to negotiate. The group even grabbed one of the off-duty park rangers and put him on one of Gwen's Icelandics. There is beautiful scenery, and plenty of trails going inland, or down to the estuary and the lighthouse keeper's house. There is a 150-acre area set aside just for horseback riding. Next year the group will head to a different state park, Bullards, and we will get you another report!

We just wrapped up our fourth annual winery ride in Zillah, WA. It was our biggest ever with 17 riders and six support staff. The support staff (Van Herndon, Carol Burckhart, Ken Crandall, Ian Shaw, and Rachel Knowlton's mom, Marga) really made the event fun by meeting us at each

winery and providing tie up spots, water, and food. In addition, they kept all the wine sorted out and labeled. This year three members were able to purchase wine barrels as we had two pickups and trailers at each winery. Let us know if you need help figuring out how to coordinate an event in your area.

Our club had another beach ride the weekend of October 17-19. The event is held at a rental home with a barn and paddocks for the horses. We had great food and great fun riding our horses straight out from the house along a sandy trail to get to the miles of open beach. Another plus was the spectacular October weather and waves. The ride is always full, rain or shine, and we were able to sit out on the deck in the warm afternoon sun on Saturday after a great ride.

It was decided at our summer meeting that we will be hosting an official evaluation in the year 2010. That gives us lots of time to plan and coordinate with the Can-Am club. We are working on planning through the winter for our tenth-anniversary demos at the Northwest Equine Expo and a schooling show next spring.

Please contact us with any questions or comments, we would love to have people join us for an event; organized or impromptu! Members have lots of events to choose from and we are excited about the rising number of events in the Pacific Northwest that include participation by Icelandics.

Our 2009 CIHC Annual Meeting was held Feb. 8, 2009, in Vancouver, WA at the Clark Public Utilities Community Room. We have held elections and have a new board to keep things hopping out here: Rachel Knowlton (president), Sandy Solberg (vice president), Jean Waller (secretary), Claudia Rancore (treasurer), Lisa Roland (membership chair), Lori Birge and

Cindy Seibert (members-at-large). I have enjoyed my time as president but am really looking forward to the future with new leadership and more events!

## **Flugnir**

*Kristin Sjolie writes:* We are in the throes of winter here in Flugnir country (the Midwest). This winter has been especially challenging due to the prevalence of ice, and unusually cold temperatures and wind chills. We are looking forward to several events this spring and summer. Some club members will be participating in the Midwest Horse Expo in Madison,

WI, April 17-19. Flugnir youth will be performing the demo at this expo. The Minnesota Horse Expo will be held April 24-26 in St. Paul, MN. Participants will ride in the parade of breeds daily, as well as performing a daily demo.

The FEIF International Youth Camp will be held this summer from July 17-24 at Winterhorse Farm in Eagle, WI. Some Flugnir Youth will participate, and several adult members will help out with camp.

Gabriel, an Icelandic gelding formerly owned by Flugnir member Debbie Cook, is featured in a heartwarming YouTube video with his new owner Cathy Cascade, helping rehabilitate Alf, a dog rescued from Michael Vick's infamous Pit Bull Kennel using T-Touch.

We look forward to warmer weather, wearing less layers of clothing, and riding our horses.

## **Frida (FIRC)**

*Rich Moore writes:* FIRC members got together on October 18 for a trail ride at Dave and Lisa Goodman's new farm in Warrenton, VA. Everyone had a good time. The club held a schooling show on November 8 in





Irene Owsley Photography

On December 14, 24 club members rode Icelandic horses in a holiday equestrian parade in Charles Town, WV. Another 15 members walked in the parade.

Thurmont, MD, at Sam Castleman and Sally Thorpe's farm. Club members Sandy Newkirk and Curt Pierce judged the show

On December 14, 24 club members rode Icelandic horses in a holiday equestrian parade in Charles Town, WV. It was the largest turnout of riders and horses in the seven years of the club's existence. Another 15 members walked in the parade or were observers. Afterward, everyone went to Suzi McGraw and Sandy Newkirk's nearby farm for a party and a short club annual meeting. Megan Milloy received a prize as the club champion from the results of its schooling shows.

Planning for 2009 includes three clinics, two schooling shows, several trail rides, and a parade. For additional information on club events, please see the FIRC events calendar at [www.firc.us](http://www.firc.us).

### **Kraftur Club**

*Doug Smith writes:* 2008 marked a record year for Kraftur. The most exciting record broken was the number of active youth members. Beyond

the young riders, the club had more members than ever, and was very active in competition, education, and trail riding.

Kraftur sponsored two sanctioned shows at Mountain Icelandic Farm in Watsonville. Local area participants were joined by our friends in the CIA (Santa Ynez) and LAIHC (Los Angeles). While Kraftur's weren't the largest shows in the U.S. in 2008, both shows were well received by participants and judges alike. Kraftur pulled

together one more time for a one-day Kid's Fun Show at the end of November. The riders were all our youth members, with the adults on hand to cheer and help.

Farm owners and founding club members Annette Coulon and Bruce Edwards very generously opened up their facility for a number of clinics as well. Visiting trainers included Gudmar Pétursson in January, Mette Manseth in August, and Master Trainer Eyjólfur (Jolli) Ísólfsson in October. These great education opportunities were completely sold out and had respectably sized waiting lists.

In the past, Kraftur has flown Gunnar Gudmundsson from Iceland to shoe for the club. With the changes in the world economy, Gunnar has proven to be too difficult and costly to schedule on a regular basis. However, Kraftur's horses continue to benefit from Icelandic farriers thanks to our ability to make it cost effective to import specialists: Gudmar Pétursson (Kentucky) and Steindor Thórisson (Southern California).

Between the competitions and clinics, Kraftur members regularly rode together in small and large groups on the wide variety of trails on



Twenty-five Kraftur members were on hand for the Los Gatos Children's Christmas Parade, with 17 of them riding.



Another fun and well-attended club event was a ride along Point Reyes National Seashore.

the Central California coast. The best club turnouts were for a weekend of riding at the Point Reyes National Seashore and the annual club meeting and picnic at Henry Cowell State Park. The final club event of the year was the Los Gatos Children's Christmas Parade. Twenty-five Kraftur members were on hand for the parade, with 17 of them riding. Kraftur was the largest mounted entry in the parade for the third year in a row. The annual Christmas party was held afterwards, hosted by the Prestine family in Monte Sereno. Awards were given to Annette Coulon and Lucy Nold for the most hours riding with other club members. Kraftur has its own version of the Pleasure Rider Program. Members accumulate points by riding together. A point is given to each rider for each club member attending the event. For example, if three members go on a trail ride each get three points. There is also a bonus earned by members who travel more than 50 miles one-way to reach an event. At the end of the year, the high scoring adult and youth member win a prize.

On a final, more serious note, Kraftur pulled together brilliantly to evacuate horses in the path of two of the state's wildland fires this summer.

No Kraftur life or property was lost, but there were some very stressful moments.

Looking back on 2008, Kraftur had a really good year enjoying each other's company in a variety of settings centered on our common interest, the Icelandic horse. Much of what we were able to accomplish in 2008 was made possible through the collective bargaining advantage of the club.

### **Los Angeles (LAIHA)**

Kristin Forbregd Houser writes: The LAIHA is very excited about construction underway at Hansen Dam Equestrian Center in Lake View Terrace, home of Valhalla Icelandics. Tons of dirt are getting moved about and organized, in preparation for a beautiful new big oval track. It's on the outside, and very public edge, of the equestrian center, by a public park and horse arena, so our horses in action in all their glory will be very public now! Arena inside the track, eco-friendly bamboo fencing ... very cool! Stay tuned for the schedule of schooling shows and officially sanctioned shows! And LAIHA is greeting 2009 with a calendar of seven club events for the year, including trail rides, educational activities, lots of

eating and socializing, and arena instructional and game days. So many ways to enjoy our horse pals!

### **Maine Icelandic Horse Assoc.**

Nancy Wines-DeWan writes: The Maine Icelandic Horse Association was formed five years ago, but this is our first year as a USIHC Regional Club. Although our members are mostly Maine residents, we do have a few riders from neighboring states. Even our in-state members can be several hours apart. Those in the northern part of the state are much closer to Canada than to their counterparts in southern Maine, and our southern members could drive to New York in as much time as it would take to meet those in the north. For this reason (coupled with the price of gas this past year), most of the events in which our members participated were local and regional in nature, organized by individuals or other organizations.

This year, MIHA sponsored two events: a beach ride at Popham State Park (an annual event for the last four years) and our first-ever schooling show, held in Hollis, Maine. The judge was Alex Pregitzer, who conducted a clinic the day before at Boulder Ridge Icelandics (owned by Cindy and Brian Wescott). Some riders have been competing in shows for years, but others (of all ages) were experiencing their first horse show. All agreed that it was a fun and rewarding event and felt that they had learned a great deal from the feedback of the judge and other riders. A second show is already being planned for the fall of 2009.

A number of members went camping with their horses in two organized trips: one in the hills of New Hampshire, and the second along the coast (which was also quite hilly!) at

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Acadia National Park. Three members hosted clinics at their farms, with two different clinicians. Others rode in benefit and endurance rides, riding and driving demos, pleasure drives, and Maine Carriage Days (an annual event which has been held for over 30 years). Often, in non-breed-specific events, the presence of an Icelandic horse is a novelty and always draws admiring looks and comments. In a state in which Morgans, Quarterhorses, and Standardbreds are the dominant breeds, our small, furry Icelandics certainly stand out!

## NEIHC

Brian Puntin writes: The Northeast Icelandic Horse Club has been busy as usual. Our fourth breeding assessment was held last September, with a great turnout. Plans for the next breed evaluation are underway for the third week in September 2009.

Members participated in three breed demos during the Equine Affair in W. Springfield, MA, last November.

Twenty-three riders attended the annual Turkey Tolt group ride on the Saturday after Thanksgiving at Rockefeller State Park Preserve. The preserve provides a spectacular setting, with miles and miles of wide smooth trails perfect for toltng, a river, meadows and lovely views.

Several new Icelandic horse training facilities were opened this past fall. Thor Icelandics in Claverack, NY: [www.thoricelandics.com](http://www.thoricelandics.com); Berkshire Icelandics in Lenox, MA: [www.berkshireicelandics.com](http://www.berkshireicelandics.com); and Pangaea Equestrian in Stanfordville, NY: [www.pangaeaequestrian.com](http://www.pangaeaequestrian.com) were all recently started or moved to new facilities. All are owned and operated by NEIHC members.

Thirteen members gathered to participate in a drill team rehearsal in

January. The event was organized by Martina Gates and hosted by Nicki Esdorn. We hope to have more identical drill team rehearsals throughout New England and New York in the coming months, with the goal of having well-rehearsed, choreographed teams ready to show off their Icelandics with style and class at various venues.

The annual club meeting and Thorrablot celebration was held at president Brian Puntin's new farm in Lenox, MA, on February 28.

## St Skutla Club

Andrea Barber writes: By the time you are reading this, spring has probably already sprung. But as I am writing in early January, Central and Western New York are blanketed in snow and we are bracing ourselves for the coldest temperatures this area has experienced in the last five years. Overall it has already been quite a winter in Central and Western New York. Here in the Rochester, New York area, we are just coming off of the snowiest December on record—and that is saying something as we always get a lot of snow! So far this season we have had 69" of snow. The normal average

for this time of year is 38" and normal for the entire season is around 100". So much for global warming! Of course our snowfall here in the Rochester area pales in comparison to that of some of our other club members. To the North, Jodi Towne lives on the snow belt that is the Tug Hill Plateau in Mannsville, New York, with her Icelandic Rodi from Rhythm Hill (US2000101712), where snowfall is often measured in feet not inches!

Prior to Jack Frost making his appearance we had a wonderful Fall season. The riding could not have been better, and I think there are few places more beautiful than the Finger Lakes Region of New York in fall. The hillsides explode with all the different colors of the season and are in contrast to the deep blue of the lakes. The temperatures are cool and comfortable, and the horses love it. Our group had several great rides on the Outlet Trail that runs between the lakes of Seneca and Keuka, as well as our old standby Mendon Ponds Park.

Fall is also the ideal time for taking those last travels to attend events before winter sets in. Back in September Steve and I brought one of our



Kalman frá Lækjamóti (IS1995155106), and Víkingur frá Götu (IS1989184930) enjoy the snow at Sand Meadow Farm in January.

Andrea Barber



Andrea Barber

Sula from Pheasant Field Farm (US2003203458) owned by Cordy Sullivan at the 2008 NEIHC Breeding Evaluations.

mares from our own breeding, Sola from Sand Meadow (US2003202396), to the NEIHC Breeding Evaluations in Ancramdale, New York, for a conformation evaluation. We were very pleased with the results, as Sola scored 8.5 for Back/Hindquarters, and 8.0 for Head, Neck/Withers/Shoulders, Quality of Legs, Leg Structure, Hooves, and Mane/Tail for a total of 7.94. Cordy Sullivan also made the trip with her young mare Sula from Pheasant Field Farm (US2003203458) to have her evaluated for conformation as well. Sula was another good representative of our club (she was bred and born in Central New York) and scored 7.78 overall with 8.5 for Back/Hindquarters and Leg Structure, and 8.0 for Head, Quality of Legs, and Mane/Tail.

However harsh it may seem, winter does have its advantages. For one, it is incredibly beautiful. Everything is dusted in white and the snow covers

up all those unsightly manure piles. The horses also love it. Although they don't seem particularly fond of trudging around in deep snow, they do love to roll in it and they enjoy the soft, comfy bed that it naturally makes for them. Living in the snow keeps them incredibly clean—no mud! As for the temperatures, my horses always seem happiest when the temperatures are around the 20 degree F mark. They would rather that than the hot days of summer any day. Many of our club members, including Steve and I, take a couple months off from riding in the winter. The way we look at it, most horses in Iceland get an annual vacation in the fall, and ours just get theirs in winter when it makes more sense for us. However some of our members, like Stephanie Sher, are lucky enough to enjoy the use of an indoor arena. Stephanie goes a couple times a week to take lessons, and this winter is focusing on training one of her youngsters, Greni

from Blasted Rock (US2004102801), who was just started under saddle last year. Stephanie has been very happy with his progress. He has that wonderful Icelandic mind that is such a pleasure to work with. We all look forward to seeing him out on the trails this spring.

Winter also has its advantages for people. All that tack so well used during the other seasons gets cleaned, taxes and other paperwork get done, there is time to actually see non-horsy friends and relatives, and houses that were neglected over the riding season get a good cleaning as well. It is a chance to catch up on indoor activities that are often so hard to focus on when the weather outside is warm and inviting. For others winter also brings time for other fun winter sports like skiing (downhill and cross country), snowshoeing, snowmobiling, etc. One of our members, Marilyn Buckham, owns a B&B (Sugar Pine Lodge) in the winter holiday Mecca of Ellicottville, New York, which is best known for being home to the Holiday Valley ski area. So winter is a very busy time for her.

During the winter our group does not get together much. Although we did have a nice holiday party back in December at the beautiful Honeoye lakeside home of member Harriett Rubins, before her departure for her winter home in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Planning rides and other events would be difficult in winter because often it is hard to know what the driving conditions will be. So we keep in touch via our email group and plan for spring. We are looking forward to next year's foals, and already we have a clinic with Gudmar Petursson planned for July 4-5. Maybe we'll see you then when the sun is shining and the weather is warm!

# AROUND THE OVAL TRACK

T H E F U N O F S H O W I N G



Alex Pregitzer showing Kraftur fra Grafarkoti (US91101523) at the 2005 Summermot at Winterhorse Park in Wisconsin.

**N**ine USIHC-sanctioned horse shows were held in 2008 in various parts of the country: The Mason-Dixon May Day Show (Pennsylvania), two CIA Opens (California), two shows at Mountain Icelandic Farm (California), the Solheimar Open (Vermont), the Flugnirkeppni (Wisconsin), the Eastern Seaboard Show (Virginia), and the Kentucky Show. Show scores are posted on the USIHC website, [www.icelandics.org](http://www.icelandics.org) under “Shows and Competition.” In addition, scores are available from six schooling shows: four held by the FIRC Regional Club (Virginia), one at Winterhorse Park (Wisconsin), and one at the Tunbridge Fair (Vermont). The following stories explore the reasons USIHC members like to attend shows, and why everyone should give showing a try.

# ICELANDIC HORSE SHOWS 101

by Maïke Liekweg

“Showing.” “Competition.” These words bring out many different reactions in riders. Some start glowing with excitement, others get nervous. In some, their competitive and ambitious side is brought out, for others it’s just a great weekend with friends and horses. Yet others get too overwhelmed to even try. I guess I have all of these feelings every time show season comes around.

The Icelandic show circuit has been slowly growing over the years. New competition venues have been added, more riders are now participating, and more shows now have not only one international judge, but two or three, along with our own intern judges. However, I still think too many riders are shying away from participating, based on a lack of information or certain misconceptions, and I really want to encourage every one of you to come, see, and try. I think you’d enjoy it.

## “But there are too many rules!”

It’s true, an Icelandic horse show is governed by lots and lots of rules—rules about everything from shoes, tack, classes, and judging, to conflict resolution. You can find these rules at the USIHC website ([www.icelandics.org](http://www.icelandics.org)) or the FEIF website ([www.feif.org](http://www.feif.org)), but with this article I’ll try to give an overview of the major categories and to answer some of the more common questions. (I still encourage you to look up the details yourself or to ask questions before the event.)

## “I don’t have a show horse.”

You don’t need a show horse to participate. The different classes are based on the natural abilities of our breed. The Gait Classes focus on their natural ability to show four or five gaits, the Tölt Classes showcase their



Debby Cook

Kathy Love riding Mani fra Eskiholti (US1997103756) races Carrie Brandt on Throstur fra Innri-Skeljabrekku (US91101511) in the Pace Races at the 2008 Flugnirkeppni at Winterhorse Park, Eagle, WI.

signature gait in different speeds and/or on a loose rein, the Pleasure Tölt and the Beer Tölt Classes show off the smoothness of the tölt. In classes like the Trail Class, their work ethic, smarts, and level-headedness come into play, and yet other classes like the Flag Race show their speed and power. I’m sure you’ll find classes where your particular horse will excel and have fun.

## “I don’t know much about the bits that should be used”

The rules for bits and bridles are that they need to fit, be intended for riding Icelandic horses, and not be on the list of prohibited equipment. The *Quarterly* printed the list of prohibited bits in the last issue; you’ll also find it on the FEIF website. Most riders will show in single or double broken snaffle bits, Icelandic bits, or other similar bits.

## “Does my horse have to be shod?”

You can show barefoot, or with a full set of shoes. There are some strict rules about shoeing to protect the welfare of the horse, but if your farrier does a regular trim with regular shoes, you’ll be fine.

## “I see many horses with fancy white boots on. Do I need them?”

What you see most often are called quarterboots. They are used to some degree to accentuate the gaits, but mainly to protect the horse from over-reaching and injuring himself. You don’t need to use boots at all, or you can choose any other type of boot to protect your horse from over-reaching, such as scalpers, bell boots, or over-reach boots. Just make sure that the weight is well below 230 grams (8.11 ounces). Just as a guide-

line, scalpers run around 80 gr (2.8 oz), over-reach boots are around 115 gr (4 oz), and bell boots can have a wide range of weights. If you are not sure, you can weigh your boots before the competition.

### **“How does the scoring work?”**

The complete definitions of the gaits, classes, and scores can be found on the FEIF website under Sports. Look for Sports Judge Guidelines. Here is a brief summary to get you started:

Each class has a number of elements; each one of these is scored individually on a scale from 10 (best) to 0, in 0.5 increments. If there is more than one judge, the scores are added together and divided by the number of judges. Let's take the V3 Four-Gaited Class as an example:

This class has five sections, which are:

1. slow to medium speed tölt
2. slow to medium speed trot
3. medium walk
4. slow to medium speed canter
5. fast trot or fast tölt

Your score sheet will show five individual scores, one score per section. If there is more than one judge, you

will get one score sheet per judge. Each of the judges is encouraged to add comments to the score sheet, so you can get a rather accurate view of your ride.

Say you got a 4 or 4.5 for your slow tölt section with the comment “poor shape” on your score sheet. According to the Judges Guidelines, your horse was judged as: “clear beat, average action and length of stride, but poor outline.” That will give you quite a bit of information on what you can work on with your horse in the future.

All the judges at our events are very helpful, kind, and will offer to sit down with you to discuss your scores. They will answer your questions on why they judged your ride that way, and can also offer training suggestions or exercises to improve some of your weaker areas. I keep all of my score sheets and discuss them with my trainer here and we work on a plan together.

It's really not about placement or ribbons at these events. It's about individual scores and comments that gives each rider a detailed “re-cap” of their ride.

### **“I'm not a competitive person, so why could I compete?”**

Icelandic shows are not about beating Susie Q., or getting yet another blue ribbon. It's only between you and your horse and the last ride you had: the partnership you have with your horse and the challenges the two of you face together. It's about horsemanship, trust, and your relationship with your equine partner.

You can look at it as a learning opportunity. Ride, look at your score sheets, ask questions, work on some of the problem areas at home, and come back a few months later and see where you are at. Remember that rocky transition from trot to canter you had last time? Well, you worked on it, and it was much better this time. Besides the fact that you'll have a big smile on your face, lots of other riders will compliment you on your achievement.

The score sheets and the judges' comments can help you to get a lot of insight into your ride, but everybody else at the event will also be supportive and encouraging.

Besides riding, the events are a great networking opportunity, a way



Sigrún Brynjarsdóttir riding Parker frá Solheimum (US1998103222) at a schooling show in Tunbridge, VT, in June 2008.

Nancy Marie Brown



Becky Herrin

Judges with their scribes observing the Trail Class at the Kentucky show in 2008.

to meet new Icelandic horse friends or reconnect with old ones, and a great place for endless discussions about your horse, feeding, fence building, trail rides, and yes, there have been some great parties at shows, too!

**“But I’m not that good a rider. I’m not ready to compete.”**

Showing is not about perfection. It’s about showing up! It’s about riding, learning, listening, and trying—and yes, it’s also about making mistakes. Don’t ever be afraid of making mistakes in the show ring. Everybody who rides has been there, and every single rider has made their fair share of mistakes or misjudgments. Nobody cares about mistakes, only about how you handle them and how you treat your horse if one happens. For all of us, the horse comes first. Can’t get a gait where you need it? That has happened to all of us. Keep your cool, go back to walk, ask again. Be kind and respectful to your horse. You’ll get everybody’s applause once you hit the gait—and even if it’s just for half the round. If you don’t ever get it, so what. I didn’t get trot on my mare for two years and happily posted the trot with a big smile on my face.

**“What kind of classes are there?”**

Each show venue offers a great variety of classes, offering something for everyone, for the professional riders, intermediate and novice riders, young and youth riders. You can choose from classes ridden individually or classes ridden in groups. Depending on the location, the novice



Nancy Marie Brown

Sverrir Bjartmarz has proved to be the “Beer Tolt Champion,” winning several blue ribbons at different shows. Here he rides Hágangur frá Sveinatungu (US1993102212) in a show at Tunbridge, VT, in June 2008.

or kids classes might be held in an indoor facility to make riders feel more secure.

The complete list of all classes can be found on the USIHC web site under Sport: Show Rules ([www.icelandics.org/download/competition\\_rules\\_2008.pdf](http://www.icelandics.org/download/competition_rules_2008.pdf)).

Most shows also include a number of fun classes like Ride-A-Buck, where each participant gets a dollar bill placed under one leg and then follows the announcer’s requests for different gaits, speed, and movements. Whoever can keep their bill the longest wins the pot.

In the Ribbon Class, two riders hold onto a short piece of ribbon, and each pair follows the announcer’s calls. The pair who still is holding on at the end, wins.

In the Trail Classes, everyday trail challenges must be navigated. Opening gates, putting on a rain coat, mounting and dismounting, and navigating a maze might be some of the elements.

In the Pleasure Tölt, riders are judged on the harmony between horse and rider, and the gait as being a comfortable travel or trail gait.

The Lead Line Class offers the little ones an opportunity to be part of the event. Young children are led by an adult and “judged”—with every kid winning a Blue Ribbon.

In the Flag Race, the rider must pick up a flag at one barrel and stick it into the next one. Most races have six barrels and the fastest rider with the fewest mistakes wins.

One of the most crowd-pleasing fun classes is always the Beverage Tölt (it’s the Beer Tölt for the adults, the Root Beer Tölt for the teenagers, and the O.J. Tölt for the kids). Regardless of the choice of beverage, each rider carries a full glass in one hand and follows the announcer’s requests for gait, direction, speed, or movement. Whoever has the most of his or her beverage left in the end, wins. Just don’t be wearing your nicest riding pants for this one. You will spill!





USIHC President Bernie Willis explains the rules of the Ribbon Class to riders at the 2008 Flugnrkeppni at Winterhorse Park, Eagle, WI.

**“What are the stories you take home?”**

Yes, we talk about the awe-inspiring performance of the first-prize stallion or the fantastic ride this trainer had on her new first-prize mare. But the true heart-warming stories that pass the test of time are of the teenager who showed incredible horsemanship, the self-proclaimed pacing grandmom on her pinto stallion, the beginner rider who braved the teeter-totter, or the man who never got canter before this show, the woman who vowed to never show again but still saddled up her horse and went out there.

We talk about the evening a trainer’s truck broke down and everybody dropped what they were doing to go out to help him, or the day we outfitted a visiting friend with jods, boots, helmet, gloves, and a horse so she could ride the Beer Tölt with us ... and she won.

Showing is about the important things like friendship, horses, trust, experience, fun, learning, trying new things, relationships ... and if you ever show at Winterhorse Park, it’s about Dan’s Chicken.



Jen Stevenson rides Ari fra Nordurstjarna (US2002102033)

# THE KENTUCKY ICELANDIC HORSE SHOW *by Kathy Love*

This year's Kentucky Icelandic Horse Show was held October 24-26 at Lakeside Arena in Frankfort, KY. The change in date and venue seemed to be popular with the many supporters of the show. We kicked things off with Horse Health and Saddle-Fitting clinics (*see the Education column in this issue*) which were very well attended and worthwhile. The show that followed was also a success. With 79 horse-rider combinations, there was great participation in all classes, even T2. The individual four-gait preliminary had 19 entrants and took all Saturday morning to judge. Individual programs teach the rider so much, and it was

great to see so many riders willing to try T1, T2, V1, and F1. The trail class was well designed and the many participants enjoyed the tough course.

"Fun" classes included Ribbon Class, Ride-a-Buck, Lead Rope Class for the little kids, and of course, Beer Tolt. After the Saturday classes, adults challenged juniors in a drill, with American Idol-type judging giving the prize again this year to the old folks. The youths are getting a lot better though, so watch out for next year, oldies. The kids had so much fun and rode so well that the adults donated their cash prize to the youths, who, in turn donated it to a Youth Fund which

was subsequently established with additional capitalization from two Congress members inspired by the talent, ebullience, and camaraderie displayed by said youths.

Barb Riva was the recipient of the first annual "Best Paperwork" Prize.

We were again privileged to have three judges, Petur Jokull Hakonarson, Isolfur Lindal, and Gylfi Geirsson, providing competitors with the best judging experience available in the U.S., thanks to Gudmar Petursson.

As show organizer, I would like to express my deepest appreciation for the help of a magnificent team: Maggie Brandt, Lily Lyons, Sharon Johnson, Maike Liekweg, Bernie Willis, Amber and Jim Parry, Barb Riva, and all of the scribes, and huge apologies to anyone whom I forgot to mention.

Next year's show will be at Lakeside Arena in Frankfort, KY, on Halloween weekend, Oct. 30-Nov. 1, 2009, and, yes, there will be a costume class!



Some tricky obstacles from the Trail Class at the October 2008 Kentucky show: In one, the rider must unhook a rope, go through the stanchions and reattach the rope. In another, the horse must cross a wooden platform then tolt around a series of barrels and continue the tolt right up to the cone. Then, the horse had to back up through the poles set at an acute angle. The rider is Alex Pregitzer; the horse is Brá from Curtis, owned by Lynn Wiese. Brá (pronounced "Brow") had only been under saddle since June.



Lynn Wiese

# THREE VERMONT SHOWS

by Nancy Marie Brown

Sigrun Brynjarsdottir and Jason Brickner of Solheimar Farm in Tunbridge, Vermont, organized three summer shows in 2008: the Solheimar Open (a USIHC-sanctioned show) and two schooling shows. All were held at the Tunbridge Fairgrounds.

The judges were Alex Pregitzer, Susan Peters, and Knutur Berndsen (June schooling show); Einar Orn Grant (July schooling show); and Marlise Grimm (Solheimar Open, August 29-31). Grant and Grimm were assisted by judging intern Alex Pregitzer.

The June and July schooling shows each had over 35 entries (horse-rider combinations), with 42 at the Solheimar Open. A judging

seminar, organized by the USIHC Education committee, was held in conjunction with the August show. Nine people participated, and Jason Brickner took and passed the test to become an intern judge.

Fun highlights of the summer were the July Beer Tolt and the August Trail Class. In the Beer Tolt, the “ringer” from the Frida Icelandic Riding Club in Virginia, Sverrir Bjartmarz, proved once again that he is the U.S. champion beer-tolter by not spilling a drop on his palomino stallion, Hagangur fra Sveinatungu. At the Solheimar Open, Caeli Cavanaugh wowed the crowd by winning the trail class with a score of 7.60 on her stallion, Sorvi fra Ingolfshvoli—

and then rode a victory lap in tolt while sitting backwards on the saddle.

High scorers at the Solheimar Open were Sigrun Brynjarsdottir on her stallion, Parker fra Solheimum, who received 8.0 for trot in the Four Gait A-Final (6.90 overall); and Caeli Cavanaugh, who scored 7.30 in the “Mix in a Bag” on Sorvi fra Ingolfshvoli. Other high scores were achieved by Martina Gates, riding Stigandi fra Leysingjastodum II in T1-Tolt (6.10); Caeli Cavanaugh on Hjortur fra Holtsmula I in T8-Tolt (6.50) and Sorvi fra Ingolfshvoli in V6-Four Gait (6.00); and Gillian Gates, riding Stigandi fra Leysingjastodum II (6.00).



Jessica Haynsworth competes on Thor frá Skorrastad (IS1999176379) at the June 2008 Schooling Show held in Tunbridge, Vermont.

Nancy Marie Brown

# WHY WE SHOW *by Kathy Sierra*

People have commented about my interest in having a horse that I can ride in novice competitions, so here's a little explanation of why both my husband and I—four years into Icelandic horses—are participating in shows:

We were visiting Arnold Faber's farm, Fitjamyri, while searching for a horse, and somehow were talked into

participating in a schooling show. It had never *ever* occurred to us that we might like to do competitions, but when people from British Columbia started driving in, and we saw how helpful and supportive and fun that community was, we decided to do it. That fun schooling show was a turning point: the announcements from Bernie, the discussions after-

ward with Lisi, Erhard, and Bernie, all was incredibly helpful. We suddenly saw shows as a learning/growing opportunity rather than as the kind of intense competitive events I'd seen in other domains. Granted, it was a schooling show, but that was the foundation for a new way of looking at competition-as-learning. We could not care less about ribbons or medals.

And that's what's so special about Icelandic competitions: You get the chance to learn and improve your scores, both between shows and, especially, between the preliminary and final events. Can you take the judge's feedback from the preliminary day and incorporate it into what you do the next day? Or even between two classes on the same day? Can you see what the judge is looking for in the other classes you don't participate in, and learn from that? Can you choose something to analyze, and see if the judge's scores and your own views match? Can you find someone more experienced to help explain what the judge is looking for as you watch?

If the first show my husband and I participated in had been one of the shows we later did, we probably would never have done it again, so we were fortunate for having such a friendly, supportive start. But we have had two other tremendously helpful shows—one at Mountain Icelandic and one at Flying C Ranch, both in California.

The Mountain Icelandic show had Johannes Hoyos as a judge, and by the second day he was treating it, if not like a schooling show, then certainly as an educational event for *everyone*. While not everyone was happy about that, I can tell you the beginners—and spectators—were *thrilled* with what Johannes chose to do. He began announcing to all of us in real time what he was seeing, what he was looking for, and even reveal-



Heather Skopik

Dominic Ng and Byr frá Enni (US1996103162) showing at Flying C Ranch in Santa Ynez, CA, last spring.

Draumur from Destiny Farms (US2002103450) and Bert Bates at Flying C Ranch in Santa Ynez, CA, last spring.



Heather Skopik

ing the scores we would have gotten had we maintained “that part of your canter right *there*.” He would say, “There! That’s a 6.5! But you couldn’t keep it, so your score is ...”

He announced to the group that he was giving me a half-point increase in my canter score because of the transition into it (seat/aids)—something we’d really worked on—then he told me, while I was cantering, how I could have made it better (including put the whip in my other hand).

Johannes would compare two riders side by side and discuss what he was seeing and what we should be looking for. Again, this might have been completely inappropriate for him to do, but from the novice and spectator perspective, it was fantastic. Suddenly the world of Icelandic competition did not appear as some arbitrary judge’s whim, but based on something specific we could actually work toward.

The other really helpful show was the recent fall show at Flying C. The judge was extremely helpful and, while there was no announcement/education during the event itself, the feedback was often very useful and the judge was very approachable throughout the event. Several of us took lessons the day before the show, and the judge would tell us what a particular section of gait might have scored.

Some of the most useful input

from judges is when they help you decide how to choose what kind of “risk” to take, although here we have seen the most difference between different judges. For example, the judge at Flying C was very specific about what he wanted our priorities to be: “clear beat.” He helped us understand that, from his perspective, if we pushed to get a faster or more animated gait, we would be penalized heavily if we broke gait by doing so. People who accidentally broke from tolt or trot into canter saw the result of that. It helped to know that we should/could focus on beat.

Most importantly, showing is about trying to take feedback and produce change. There is no point to riding in competitions if you simply do the same thing and do not try to make improvements. And there is

no point (as a novice) in trying to win ribbons or medals. The point is to improve your own scores based on what you’ve learned, including—most importantly—figuring out what you need to learn in order to do that.

There are downsides, of course. The Icelandic emphasis on speed is a problem, given that “speed” is at the very top of the training pyramid for Icelandic horses, yet it’s emphasized even in the novice classes at times. And some judges seem to care more about the seat/leg aids in novice classes than in others, and some judges seem to care more about the “harmony between horse and rider,” as Johannes put it, than others. But a big part of this is probably that my husband and I simply do not yet have the knowledge and resolution to even recognize what we’re seeing.

I’m grateful to the people who have encouraged even the novice adults to participate in shows—Will and Asta Covert (Flying C Ranch), Annette Coulon (Mountain Icelandic), and most especially the group from Arnold Faber’s that included Bernie, Erhard, and Lisi. That experience set us on a learning path that was greatly accelerated by participating in these events. We have no desire to ever go beyond intermediate, and even if we never make it out of novice we’ll be happy as long as we are still learning to develop a better relationship with our horses.



Kani frá Feti (US2001103574) and Asta Covert showing at Flying C Ranch in Santa Ynez, CA, last spring.

Heather Skopik

# KIDS FUN SHOW *by Annette Coulon with photos by Heidi Benson*

It was a beautiful sunny day with clear skies in Santa Cruz, California, perfect for hosting a “Kids Only” Fun Show at Mountain Icelandic Farm. Our judges were Doug Smith and Laura Benson, with Morgan Venable as the scribe. We had 12 kids riding in 13 classes starting in the morning and lasting until dark. All of our parents and most of our Kraftur Members came out in support of our kids.

We hosted a mixed bag of classes ranging from the usual gaited classes to an obstacle course. It was truly “fun” seeing all the kids running around with smiles on their faces playing with Icelandic horses. We started our day with a judges meeting, then moved right on to the first class of the day, T1, where Lucy Nold and Alexandra Venable showed us how it is done. Our second class of the day was the Obstacle Course where Chelsea Jamison, Ayla Green, Alexis Williams, Madison Prestine, Cait Nold, Alexandra Venable, Juliet Evlensen-Wallace, and Lucy Nold all competed on the eleven obstacles, doing a



Zane Yett and Trissa competing in the Barrel Race.

wonderful job. We then moved back onto the track to watch T2 where Cait Nold and Alexandra Venable rode

their horses with loose rein contact and made it look so easy. The next class was the Flag Race where Chelsea Jamison, Juliet Evlensen-Wallace, Lucy Nold, and Alexandra Fischer raced around the track removing flags from the first and third barrels and placing them in the second and fourth barrels, very hard to do on the fly! The Four-Gait class got a little



Lucy Nold canters Andi across the ring.



Ran in tolt with rider Madison Prestine.

more serious, with Madison Prestine, Ayla Green, Cait Nold, Lucy Nold, and Alexandra Venable moving to the track and showing us their best. At this point we broke for lunch, where a couple of the parents chipped in and supplied all the participants with some great food. We had a birthday song prepared for Riley Nagel, who did not ride in the classes but came to see what these horses are all about and we hope she enjoyed her birthday wish and comes to play with us again in the future.

After lunch we resumed our classes with the Slalom class, where Ayla Green, Alexis Williams, Gabby Walton, Lucy Nold, Alexandra Venable, and Zane Yett rode through the cones, zigging and zagging as best they could. We then proceeded to the Barrel Race, where Chelsea Jamison, Alexis Williams, Gabby Walton, Lucy Nold, and Zane Yett went as fast as they could around the barrels without running off course—very hard to do with the speed that some of the kids



Ayla Green and Leiri negotiate a ramp in the Obstacle class.

had! The next class was the Egg 'n' Spoon race where Juliet Evlensen-Wallace and Madison Prestine tried the hardest to keep the poor raw egg in the spoon, a very difficult task to

master while riding. The Ride-a-Buck class was the real money maker. Alexis Williams, Madison Prestine, Gabby Walton, Juliet Evlensen-Wallace, Lucy Nold, Alexandra Venable, Chelsea Jamison, and Alexandra Fischer participated in this class, where the goal is to keep the dollar bill between you and your horse. Our next class was Three-Gait and was designed for the kids who did not want to perform canter; Allison Moerer, Madison Prestine, Juliet Evlensen-Wallace, and Alexandra Fischer showed us what they could do. The next class was the Tolt

Show organizer, Annette Coulon with Chelsea Jamison riding Holmsteinn.



Juliet Evlensen-Wallace trots Elskan around the track.





All photos by Heidi Benson

(any tempo both directions) class where Allison Moerer, Madison Prestine, Ayla Green, Gabby Walton, and Alexandra Fischer performed beautifully. The second to the last class of the day was the Jumping class where Madison Prestine, Cait Nold, and Zane Yett did their best to jump some very tired horses, by this time, over some jumps up to 16 inches. The last class of the day was the “Best 3 out of 4 Gaits” class. This was a class suggested by Doug Smith, who says this is one of Iceland’s favorite classes early



(Above left to right ) Allison Moerer aboard Katla in the 3-Gait class. Alexandra Fischer and Eyraros on the track. Alexis Williams aboard Punktur in the Obstacle class.

(Left) Elskan and Gabby Walton make their way around a barrel.

in the year to get your horse ready for the season. You get judged on all four gaits that you show but you only keep the three best scores. Allison Moerer, Ayla Green, Lucy Nold, Alexandra Venable, and Madison Prestine rode in this class.

All in all it was a very enjoyable event and the Kraftur Club and Mountain Icelandic Farm look forward to 2009: “The Year of the Youth.” We encourage all the regional clubs to make this year a very special year for all our youth riders.

Judge Laura Benson observes Cait Nold riding Sara in the Obstacle class.



Alexandra Venable and Fjalar showing loose-rein tolt in T2.





## A MILESTONE IN USIHC HISTORY

by Eileen Gunipero

The United States Icelandic Horse Congress held its 2009 Annual Meeting this January. Elections were held and, for the first time since the inception of the organization, a name was missing from the nominee list. Anne W. Elwell has resigned from the Board.

As distinct as the Icelandic horse is as a breed, it seems to attract people of equal distinction. There is quite a cast of characters surrounding the Icelandic horse in the United States. Anne Elwell has a leading role.

Anne Werneke Elwell decided in adulthood that she no longer needed her parents' permission in order to own a horse. Her first foray into equine ownership was with Arabian horses. Life was good. It would have been even better if her friend, Sophie Katakozinos, shared the same passion and wasn't afraid to ride. In 1983, when Sophie saw an article in *Equus* magazine on the Icelandic horse, she assured Anne that this would probably be a horse breed that she could muster up the courage to mount. The article featured Laurie Veness in Wisconsin. After a telephone conversation with Laurie, more research and a rather circuitous route, Anne found a man in Walden, New York, and purchased a gelding, Logi.

Like all of us reading this piece, Anne got pulled further and further into the Icelandic horse world. While Sophie never did get the "riding bug" she became an ardent and hard-working advocate of the breed for years and years.

As Anne rode more, read more about, and did more with her Icelandic horses, a dressage teacher commented to her that the breed would never be embraced in the U.S.

without a proper breed organization. This innocent comment resonated deep in Elwell's soul and the crusade was launched. It began the volunteer work she's been doing for more than 22 years.

The fledgling Icelandic Horse Federation was incubated in the autumn of 1985 on the east coast. The International Icelandic Horse Association took on life on the west coast. Admission to FEIF was open to only one group from the country—a united breed organization had to be formed. With a subtext of its own and drama befitting our organization, The United States Icelandic Horse Congress came to be in 1987. That same year, the U.S. had its first "official" presence at the World Championships in Austria when a U.S. Exhibition team choreographed by Dani Gehmacher bravely performed.

When Anne met and worked with Dani, she instantly realized that this woman had the talent and knowledge

the Icelandic horse community in the U.S. so desperately needed. Dani was already making trips to the west coast, and Anne invited her to stop on the east coast on her way back to Wiesenhof in Germany. There were many more "long weekend" trips after that. The contributions and influences from Wiesenhof are far-reaching and deserve an article of their own. In 1989 the first U.S. Team went to the World Championships under the tutelage of Bruno Podlech of Wiesenhof. The USIHC has sent a team to the World's every year since, with the exception of 2000.

### Off to Iceland

In 1986, while Anne was immersed in the excitement of discovering the horse breed that would literally shape her life, she felt it was imperative to go to Iceland to see the horse in its native habitat. Anne was, and still is, a strong advocate for understanding the nature of the horse by investigat-



Anne Elwell riding Kjarnar vom Wiesenhof (US1994102323) at the 2007 Tunbridge Open in Vermont.

Thorunn Kristjansdottir

ing and understanding the land, people, and climate that shaped it. She has a fierce protectiveness of the horses' innate characteristics most evident in their natural surroundings.

Stefan Sigurdsson came to the United States when Peter Strong imported a herd into Connecticut in 1970. When Anne contacted him and explained her desire to go to the "mother country" and learn, Stefan directed Anne and her group of trekkers to Reynir Hjartasson. A young trainer, Baldvin Ari Gudlaugsson, was working for Reynir at that time. Two of the young people in the group with Anne, Reynir's daughter and Bald-



Anne and Kjarnar after a great ride.

Thorunn Krisjansdottir

vin Ari, bonded on this trip. It was agreed that Ann Passannante would have Reynir's daughter visit her, and "Baddi" would come to Anne Elwell's farm. Lots more history after that!

Along with a friendship with a young trainer, Anne brought home three excellent mares—one being Elding fra Refsstad, the first First Prize mare to leave Iceland for the United States. It was a fitting start to Helms Hill Farm's outstanding herd of riding and breeding horses.

Perhaps Anne's greatest contribution to the Icelandic horse in the United States are the results of her breeding program. Helms Hill Farm is an impressive name to have on the registration paper. Many "firsts" and "bests" came into and out of the Washingtonville, NY farm. Through Anne's strong desire to produce only the best, her ability to learn and match breeding lines, and her strong personal relationships with other knowledgeable breeders throughout the world, she has left a legacy recognized here and abroad.

### **The USIHC Board**

As can be understood from reading so far, it is impossible to separate the history of the USIHC and the growth of the Icelandic horse in the United States from the personal history of Anne Elwell. From the first meeting around a kitchen table on January 19, 1986, through this election cycle in 2009, Anne has given an astounding amount of time, effort, money, energy, insight, guidance, and sanity. She has caused her share of insanity. She does not shy from controversy or confrontation, nor does she lose sight of the big picture and the welfare of this breed. She can be a fierce opponent and a magnificent proponent.

Anne served most of her years in the USIHC as Secretary. She was the founding editor (and for many years

the financial reservoir) of the *Quarterly*. She supported and participated in demos at Devon, the Mid-America Horse Fair, and countless others in an effort to showcase and promote the Icelandic horse. She has served on innumerable committees, organized clinics, and served as a rep at various FEIF meetings. Anne began the North East Gaited Horse Show that quickly outgrew its start in Fonda, NY and filled the much larger facility in Dillsburg, PA. With her move to North Carolina in 2008 a new venue has begun with a breed-specific Icelandic show at the Virginia Horse Park.

The United States Icelandic Horse Congress has grown immensely since 1986. Change is inevitable, but growth is not. Many more unsung contributors have brought the USIHC and the breed to the place it is in today. This is not meant to minimize any other's hard work, dedication or thankless (and I do mean thankless) hours of hard work, but rather, by highlighting one founding member's years of service, it is meant to give the membership today a perspective of how much has been accomplished. This is meant to thank Anne for her years of service and possibly to whet the appetite of the reader for more history and insight.

While Anne is leaving the Congress as a board member, she is not leaving the horses, organization, or community that she loves. She can be reached at pruthur@aol.com. Don't let her resignation keep her from contributing. I can't imagine the trouble she will get into if not kept busy.

## LEARNING ABOUT...

by Alex Pregitzer

Horse History, *Streptococcus equi*, tooth eruption, gullets & spine clearance... This year the annual Kentucky Icelandic Horse show changed its date and location to be held at Lakeside Arena in Frankfort, Kentucky, October 25-26, 2008. Show organizers Gudmar Petursson and Gigja Einarsdottir invited competitors to come and enjoy a large variety of different FEIF and fun classes at their new location. At the same time, the USIHC education committee, together with Kathy Love and Gudmar Petursson, offered USIHC members two different seminars before the show emphasizing the topics of horse health and well-being.

The timing for organizing, advertising, and marketing the seminars ended up being a little shorter than we hoped for, but everybody involved was very helpful, all the clinicians were extremely accommodating and flexible, and with interested, eager-to-learn participants the results exceeded our expectations.



The ins-and-outs of evaluating a saddle was the subject of one seminar.



Scenes from the 2008 Education seminars at the Kentucky show. Here, Dr. Jack Easley teaches a session on equine dental care.

### History and Health

Thursday afternoon started with three hours of lectures on horse health in the Best Western Hotel, Frankfort. Dr. John F. Timoney is an expert on equine bacterial diseases at the University of Kentucky's Gluck Research Center. He gave a presentation on the history of the horse in Northern America and shared his knowledge about the development of diseases that came with the horses. A big part of Dr. Timoney's presentation covered the topic of Strangles, caused by *Streptococcus equi*, including detailed explanations of the disease, the different symptoms, treatment, etc.

Dr. Jack Easley, also of the University of Kentucky's Gluck Research Center, is an expert on equine dental health. He gave a presentation about equine dental care, educating us about the eruption of horse teeth and the development of the teeth over the horse's life time, the importance of horse food with regard to oral health, teeth issues and potential problems, as well as preventative care such as

floating. Dr. Easley is an excellent speaker who knows how to get the participants' interest and attention and understands how to entertain a crowd. Time flew by way too quickly.

In between the two lectures, Kathy Love had organized a discussion panel featuring two certified Icelandic horse trainers, Gudmar Petursson and Laura Benson, as well as the two professors from the University of Kentucky. This was an opportunity to ask all those questions about horse training, horse health, diseases, dental care, general equine care, riding lessons, and farrier questions we had always wanted to ask. The opportunity was well received and the answers given very helpful.

### Saddle Fitting

Friday morning started with another seminar. To educate participants about the horse's health and well being, we were taught about correct saddle fitting and its importance for the horse's overall condition. The clinician, USIHC member Eileen Gunipero, has attended numerous



The hands-on demonstration during the saddle-fitting clinic tried the patience of at least one volunteer, Lynn Wiese's young horse Brá from Curtis (seen also in the Trail Class photos, page 26).

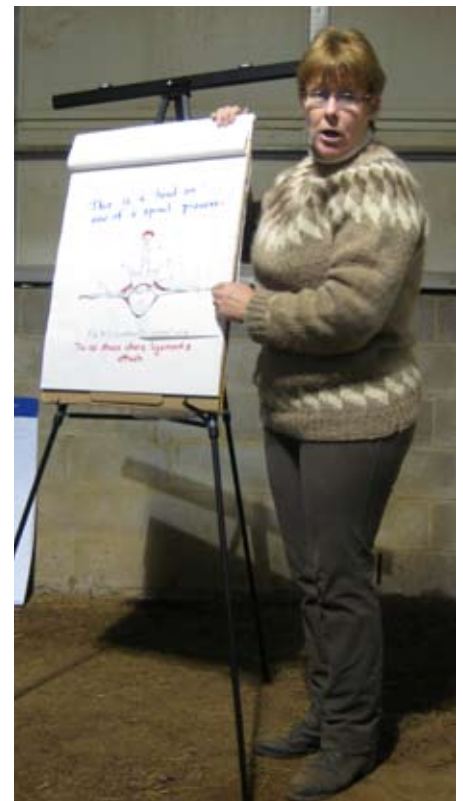
seminars on saddle fitting with well-known clinicians over the past years and has specialized in saddle fitting for Icelandic horses.

Eileen greeted us with a much appreciated early morning coffee, cookies, and snacks, and with a very well-prepared easel paper full of drawings and scientific explanations about the horse's spine as well as the different parts of a saddle. The seminar started with a classroom style theory session, giving much-needed general knowledge, before Eileen went on to some hands-on demonstrations on the saddles she had brought. Information included the parts of the saddle, important things to consider when looking at a saddle, how to evaluate a saddle and its condition when buying one, and many answers to questions

that were brought up.

My favorite part of the seminar was our hands-on saddle fitting on Lynn Wiese's horse Brá. Brá came to Kentucky, not to compete, but looking for a saddle, and now stood patiently in the same spot *forever*, not even moving, but possibly wondering why all of a sudden 20 arms and hands were all over her body—standing in front, on both of her sides, behind her, looking at her anatomy, feeling for bridging, checking out saddle fits, and sliding numerous saddles up and down her back. We could not have asked for a better horse for the demonstrations—especially considering that she had been untrained only a few months ago and volunteered her time for a very small tip of two apples.

Thanks to everybody involved in supporting the USIHC education seminars in 2008! Eileen Gunipero, Dr. Jack Easley, and Dr. John Timoney supported the USIHC with special discounted rates, and Gudmar and Laura generously volunteered their time for the discussion panel, as did Kathy Love for all the work she did. Kari Pietsch-Wangard helped us save money by providing technical equipment, Lynn Wiese brought along her horse just for demo purposes, Bruce of Lakeside Arenas helped out with the saddle-fitting seminar set-up, some participants paid for others who could not pay—we're grateful for everyone's generosity and support.



Eileen Gunipero included a theory class as part of her saddle-fitting clinic.

## WHO IS ALISA BREEDLOVE?

by Alex Pregitzer

*What is your background?*

I was born in Minnesota and raised in Wisconsin. I have always had horses in my life. My father raised and trained our own and he also trained all the local farmer's horses. I started riding when I was old enough to walk and started training with my Dad when I was only eight. I got my first personal training horse when I was 13. My first legitimate job was when I was 16 and went to work for an Arabian horse farm. I trained and showed A circuit for 10 years, before I ended up in Georgia.

*Why and when did you end up in Georgia?*

In 1997 I was given an opportunity to move to Georgia and run a large Arabian show barn making better money. That fell through, and I moved on to Paint and Quarter horses. Big change, but I adjusted and in 2000 was fourth in the world in "hunter under saddle." After five



Alisa working a horse in the round pen.

years I moved on to having two children and took a little break. When I came out of hibernating another five years later, I met Katrin Sheehan and was introduced to the Icelandic horse world and fell in love.

*How long have you been riding?*  
My whole life.

*What is your horse experience?*

Being a farmer's kid and a nosy little girl, I was given a lot of opportunities with all my neighbors within a 10-mile radius. I would ride my Dad's old horse Smokey to all the local farms and nose around till they let me join in on whatever they had going on. I rode Saddlebreds, Quarterhorse race horses, Swedish warmbloods, Tennessee walkers, Thoroughbreds, Arabians, Percherons (riding and driving), Andalusian, Lipizan, and even sat behind a Standardbred! What didn't kill me only made me stronger! I was introduced to the show ring by my girlfriend's mom, who talked my Mom into putting me in 4-H and starting the horse program when I was nine.



Martina Gates

Alisa toltng Erpur at Creekside Farm, Georgia.

*What is your training philosophy and do you follow a particular way of teaching?*

Listen to your horse! I have had very few lessons in my life. I was determined that what I read about and what I saw going on in the ring and on videos I could do. But I also discovered I could only do this if my horse understood what I was asking for, and what you see on videos is usually the end product and doesn't show how to get there from the beginning. So it starts with a lot of communication with your horse, and letting your horse tell you when he is ready to take that next step. I can honestly say that I have learned most of my training from the horses themselves. Don't put a deadline on your training, and don't forget that the horses need a play day too, just like you. Have a fun day on the trail!

*What is your teaching philosophy, do you follow a particular way of teaching?*

I haven't given but a few lessons with Icelandics because I am still learning myself. But with my past lessons I focused on rhythm and balance.



Alisa and Walter having fun with ground work at the FEIF trainer seminar.

Ride *with* your horse. Feel the movement underneath you and relax and move with it. If you're uncomfortable faster, go back to slower. Confidence! Without it you can't ride it! And don't forget to have fun. With children it

is very important to build self-confidence. This will help them in the future with anything they choose to do. With adults it can be like therapy and help with confidence in a whole other matter. So you must be a people-person as well as a horse-person and to know when to push and when to back off and take a break.

*What are your hopes for Icelandic horses in the U.S.?*

People need to learn that this is not just a family horse but a family horse with the people involved as well. I hope for this breed to become as widespread as the Quarterhorse without the inbreeding and cross-breeding involved. Let's keep it as pure and true as when they step off the plane from Iceland!

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Trot training.

### THE NORTHSTAR CHALLENGE

by Carol Andrews

The story started with my first Icelandic mare, Perla from Bluegrass Icelandics (US99201565). I have had horses of various breeds since I was a young adult, but had heard from my various exchange students from Germany about the Icelandic horse. My first personal experience with this breed was at the Vermont Icelandic

Horse Farm in Waitsfield, owned by Karen Winhold. They warned me that, "Once you have ridden an Icelandic, you will never want to ride another horse!" and they were so right. So began my hunt for my first Icelandic.

I found Perla in Indiana on a farm in West Lafayette called Indian River Icelandics, owned by Loretta and Will Lewallen. Perla had been sold to Indian River by Ohio's Northstar Farm. Lanny Carroll owned Per-

la's first-prize stallion sire, Kolskeggur fra Staerri-Bae (US89100794). He had boarded her dam, Ljósbrá fra Árbakka (US91200779), owned by Greg and Mary Lunn of Bluegrass Icelandics in Kentucky, and so she was named Perla from Bluegrass.

I was new to the Icelandic world, but made a connection with Perla right away, or better stated she made a connection with me. I took her information back to the Vermont Icelandic Horse Farm. The folks there



Carol Andrews and first-prize mare Perla from Bluegrass Icelandics (US99201565) won the Northstar Challenge, sponsored by Lanny Carroll of Northstar Farm.

said that, based on her breeding and a picture of her conformation at the age of two, she looked like a good buy. I had never raised a two-year-old horse before and had never had an Icelandic. I had no guidance and made my mistakes. I fed her treats to reward her learning and let her be on pasture all the time. By the time I took her to the first breed evaluation in Northampton, Massachusetts, she was way too heavy!

### **A Good Representative**

Why did I go to a breeding evaluation at all? I had thought about breeding, but did not want to breed a horse who was not a good representative of the breed. By this time I was very aware of what I did not know! I was the only owner there who showed my own horse! Fortunately, an Icelandic trainer (Sverrir Bjartmarz) noticed that I was alone. He kindly offered to help me in the ring, letting me do the showing, and giving me pointers as we went along. Perla did well, and I went home confident that breeding could be in Perla's future but aware of my need for much further information and training for both Perla and me.

Time went by and Perla was trained briefly and then bred to the first-prize stallion Adam fra Kviarhóli (US1998102701), resulting in a lovely foal named Elding from Pinnacle Brook Farm (US2006203542) in 2006, who looks and moves exactly like Perla. Sigrun Brynjarsdottir from Solheimar Icelandics took over the training and convinced me that Perla was a good quality mare who should be evaluated fully. This was a big step for me to take, given my finances were not great after putting four children through college. However, I felt very strongly that we need to maintain breed standards and breed horses that should be bred. Perla has

a great disposition, wonderful natural movements and is a large horse for the breed. So I committed to training and Sigrun taught Perla everything required for showing at a fully sanctioned breed evaluation. She educated me as well about Icelandic horses.

### **The Big Adventure**

Perla's accomplishments and those of all the horses who participated in the Georgia breed evaluations at Creekside Farm, hosted by Katrin and Joe Sheehan were chronicled in Tolt News, along with pictures and scores. A friend of Lanny's, Martha Boyd, whose family also has Northstar and Bluegrass horses, noticed that Perla from Bluegrass was one of the horses achieving prize status. She passed this information on to Lanny, who called Katrin, and then Sigrun to find out how to reach me. Within a few days, I was talking with Lanny, who indicated that he owed me a free horse. I was of course quite shocked at this and at first thought it was some kind of a strange joke, but he was entirely serious.

Lanny told me about the Northstar Challenge, which he had instituted years ago to try to get owners to have Northstar-sired offspring evaluated properly. He had indicated that, if any of the horses bred by his sires made it to prize status in an official breed evaluation, he would give the owner their choice of a yearling gelding from the Northstar herd. All I would need to do was truck out to Ohio and select one of the seven geldings that were available. Lanny sent me the names of sires and dams for each one. I would choose the name, DNA the gelding, and register him myself. He encouraged me to talk with Sigrun and others about the breeding to help make an educated selection. I agreed and set the date as the weekend after Thanksgiving

because I had several days free at that time and my daughter would be able to accompany me.

The farthest I have ever trucked a horse was to Massachusetts, Maine, or Vermont from New Hampshire for clinics. This was a big step and we made a lot of preparations, thinking and rethinking about any contingencies that might occur. It turned out that Sigrun was buying Perla's dam Ljósbrá, and I would truck her back to New Hampshire as well. Now my young gelding would have a companion on the ride, which was good for him but more responsibility for me.

Finally the big day arrived. We had driven 12 hours the first day and stayed overnight. Only four hours more to drive. I dropped my daughter off at the bus station to go to Pittsburgh for a visit with a friend while I went on to Brookville, Ohio, to Northstar Farm, home of Perla's sire and dam. I was looking forward to meeting Ljósbrá and Kolskeggur and was anxious to see which yearling would respond to me the best.

### **Northstar Farm**

I arrived at Northstar Farm at the time I had estimated, and Lanny was out front, waiting for me, putting up Christmas lights. He greeted me and together we walked the adjoining bike trail as he pointed out the farm layout and recent destruction from drought, flooding and, most recently, wind storm damage from hurricane Ike in 2008. Our discussions included breeding, training, producing and storing hay, with Lanny giving me several ideas on how to farm/manage my own property. Lanny has faced a lot of challenges over the years, but still has a nicely laid out 40 acres with fencing to allow for ease of herding and a beautiful hay field (three cuttings this year!). That hay field is where I first met Kolskeggur, who was



out grazing. He is getting older and had his blanket on, but was delighting in the green grass available to him. He acknowledged us, but made it clear that he was not yet finished with either his grass or the warmth from the sun, so Lanny let him stay. It was very special to be able to meet Perla's sire and dam, not an experience I have had before.

The yearlings plus Ljósbrá were already stabled for me for my perusal. They were all adorable, healthy, and friendly. I went from stall to stall looking at each one. One of them in particular, a bay gelding, seemed particularly interested in me and willing for me to handle him. Although he was not halter-trained, I haltered him easily. Lanny had arranged for his veterinarian, Dr. Mark Ulrich, to be there to do a health check and to answer any questions I might have. I was pleasantly surprised by the fact that, although the gelding did not yet lead, he was able to stand nicely while Dr. Ulrich looked him over. He was calm and confident in his attitude. Afterwards we put him out in the barnyard with the other yearlings and chased him around a bit. He moved nicely and had some tolt even in the somewhat restricted space and he seemed to fit in well with the herd. I had found my yearling!

As all this was going on, horse owners from a variety of different breeds from the Ohio Horsemen's Council, in addition to Icelandic horse owners, started arriving at the farm to meet with me, help in my selection, and partake of the refreshments provided. In particular I had the opportunity to meet the Boyd family, Martha, Todd, and their QH champion daughter, Jackie. Jackie had placed very high in the QH Congress a while back. Also in attendance was Bonnie Borgerson, who was featured among others in this year's

*Icelandic Horse Quarterly* (Issue Three, 2008). Former USA Icelandic Team rider April Arseneau, now stationed at Wright Patterson AFB, was there as well. It was great to have this equine comradeship and welcome. We spent a very nice afternoon watching the horses, talking about our own horses, experiences, and people we knew in the Icelandic horse world.

### **Thanksgiving**

The next morning at 5:30 a.m., Lanny was already waiting for me. The weather was scheduled to be terrible, but we were able to load Ljósbrá and my new baby without much difficulty. After a big thank you and farewell, I drove off to spend the next 20 hours driving. Being Thanksgiving weekend, the roads were quite crowded, and the weather was not at all cooperative. We had to stay overnight in Connecticut because of snow and ice in Vermont and New Hampshire. Although I worried about the extra time in the trailer, my new yearling bonded with Ljósbrá and snuggled up to her, thus remaining very calm and content. Luckily, my contingency plans included bringing extra hay and grain, so all went smoothly.

When we got home, we unloaded Ljósbrá without difficulty. My

husband, Wally, the non-horseman, led Ljósbrá to the pasture while I "skijored" behind Odinn (the name occurred to me on the way home) down the hill covered with snow and ice! He just stayed with Ljósbrá and soon they were safely in the paddock together.

Many thanks go to Lanny Carroll for my new young gelding, "Odinn fra Northstar." Lanny tells me that I have it backwards. He feels he should thank me for spending the time, money, faith, and effort needed to get Perla to where she is today, a prize mare. Lanny sees good breeding as a "win-win" for everyone, especially the domestic Icelandic horse. I encourage other Icelandic horse owners to breed properly and thoughtfully, with appropriate evaluations from experts.

This experience has certainly broadened my contacts within the Icelandic horse community and educated me more than I would ever have anticipated. Thanks to my family and the many new friends I have made along the journey, which started with a trail ride, a two-year-old named Perla from Bluegrass, and continues with yet another young horse, Odinn fra Northstar—a real Thanksgiving blessing.



Lanny Carroll's first-prize stallion, Kolskeggur fra Staerri-Bae (US89100794), at Northstar Farm in Ohio.

*Editors' note: In keeping with FEIF's focus on the Welfare of the Horse, we are inviting USIHC members to tell us how they try to improve their horses' welfare. These opinions may not reflect the "official" position of the USIHC or FEIF and are intended to be thought-provoking. If you would like to submit an article for this series, write to [quarterly@icelandics.org](mailto:quarterly@icelandics.org).*

## ABOUT HORSE FEET

by Ed Hilgaertner

A newborn foal is born with what looks like feathers on the bottom of its feet. They very quickly wear away and the frog and sole begin to grow. The hoof wall begins to open up and harden as the foal gets his "land legs." The foal is ready to hit the trail with his mom within an hour of birth and can travel many miles when necessary, right from birth.

Nature has provided him with feet specifically designed to adapt to his changing needs and weight increases. He has no trouble achieving a heel first landing with every step at any speed, just as nature provided, first absorbing the shock of the impact through the frog, then the sole, then the supporting structures within the foot, namely the digital cushion and the lateral cartilages, then on up the leg bones themselves.

As the foal grows, the digital cushion, which starts out as a glob of fat, gradually grows (assuming sufficient freedom to move about) into a network of sensory nerves that provide just the right amount of sensitivity to the foot to prevent injury from missteps and also the right amount of insensitivity to allow movement over varied terrain without pain. The frog and sole develop into a "landing pad" with a healthy sole about a half-inch thick. The lateral cartilages, providing side to side and front to back



Charles Fergus

Are you doing the best thing for your horse when you shoe him? Do you know enough about horses' feet to be sure?

stability, grow to about three-quarters of an inch thick each.

When the foot lands flat following the heel impact, the entire hoof expands downward and outward, compressing the internal organs, shutting off the blood flow for an instant, and relaxing the flexor tendon in preparation for the pickup of the heel for the next step. As lift occurs, the hoof wall contracts, the flexor tendon contracts and slides back over the navicular bone, internal pressure is relieved and blood flows back through the organs and back to the heart. The whole process acts like a blood pump, just as nature evolved it over millions of years.

The introduction of anything that interferes with this developing process—injury, stress associated with training or starting work too soon, or shoeing before the hoof reaches maturity—can arrest the development of the organs involved, causing an untold number of locomotion problems later on.

## The Hoof Wall

The hoof wall forms the outer protective covering to the foot. While it appears quite hard, it is actually fluid. It moves under pressure. Human finger and toe nails function similarly in this regard. It has long been thought that the connecting tissue between the hoof wall and the internal structure, made up of interlocking laminae, is supporting the hoof structure. Actually, the function of the laminae is to provide tubules of keratin-producing cells that provide growth and replacement material to both the hoof and the sole. According to Dr. Robert Bowker, VMD PhD, Professor of Anatomy and Director of the Equine Foot Laboratory at Michigan State University College of Veterinary Medicine, "There is no direct connection that can be shown between the laminae and the coffin bone to indicate support." He compares it to saying that your hand is attached to your shoulder: True, but there is a lot of tissue in between.

Dr. Bowker uses the term "peripheral loading" to indicate when the hoof wall bears most of the weight load. He believes this to be a negative situation for the hoof, because it severely interferes with the blood flow inside the foot. Shoes are peripheral loading devices, bypassing nature's design for shock absorption and in fact only supporting the hoof edges that would otherwise naturally wear away as required by nature's design for proper foot health.

## Where to From Here?

Seems we ought to figure out when a horse reaches maturity before we do much with his feet. We also want to find a way to provide sufficient movement during his growth years. I have known folks who routinely turned out their young stock with a few adults in



Andrea Barber

Six-month old Blær from Sand Meadow (US2008103875). Young horses should not be shod until their feet and legs are fully developed.

the herd, perhaps on leased land for a couple of years, sharing the expense with like-minded friends.

There seems to be a consensus that about five years is needed for a horse to achieve maturity, i.e., final joint closure in his legs and full adult weight. Some folks in segments of the horse industry pay dearly for not waiting. Many horses of course, pay with their lives.

So if we have been diligent and listened to the science behind raising our horses, we now have a mature horse, hopefully well mannered and cooperative with his human caretakers. Traditionally, when we start training, the practice is to install shoes to help the horse cope with the added stress of training. But, having studied diligently how the horse's feet grow and develop, there was no mention of any design deficiency that would require the addition of shoes to his feet to finish or perfect what nature's design "left out or forgot."

So we start asking around, surfing the web, reading the literature, searching for why horses need shoes.

The difficult part is to find the facts. My research brought me to this story, which has plausibility, but no exact connection to factual data. It goes like this:

Back in the Middle Ages, the wealthy folks kept horses. For their convenience, they were kept in pens and stalls making them easy to catch for their riding pleasure. Before long, this confinement, standing around in their own urine and excrement, caused the horse's feet to deteriorate. The wealthy decided to install iron shoes on the horse's feet to prevent this decay. The peasants followed suit because it worked. It saved their feet from rot. It also satisfied the natural human desire to "show off" to the neighbors that they were affluent enough to keep their horses shod. Nobody noticed what effect this process had on the horses, and shoeing became "normal horse care" for the last few hundred years.

Modern day farriers are taught that it is not good to keep horses shod all year round. They almost without exception recommend a

"few months off" each year to let the horses' feet "get back to normal."

By normal, I take it to mean as nature designed them: fully flexible and functional, adapting to the surfaces it encounters, growing more sole, forming more callous, or not, as required by its design and living conditions.

I am still searching for the "benefits" provided by shoeing my horses. I have found a few so-called benefits for the humans (higher marks in the show ring, near full employment for farriers, for example) but none so far for my horses.

### Time for More Research

Good hoof form is a ground-parallel coffin bone suspended in the hoof capsule, with a tight laminar connection which facilitates concavity; low, wide, open heels; a solid but flexible frog; and a round shape to the front feet and a spade shape to the hind feet.

This good form produces an even growth pattern. Growth lines on the wall are tight and evenly spaced from toe to heel. Proper form establishes proper balance, which stimulates proper growth, which generates stronger tissue, which allows the horse to move correctly, which promotes proper form. A positive cycle.

This bare foot is critical to the healthy horse's circulation in his entire system, the corium in each foot acting as an auxiliary pump with every step, in effect assisting the heart in its work. Blood flow is the medium by which nutrients are delivered to the cells: A healthy circulatory system delivers nutrients evenly throughout the tissues. Anywhere the system is restricted, then on a cellular level, nutrients are either not distributed or distributed in an irregular manner, causing uneven or unbalanced growth.

A healthy bare foot is equipped with several interacting traction mechanisms. It is a three-dimensional structure specifically designed to absorb shock and dissipate energy. Dr. Jeff Thomasson, at Ontario Veterinary College, Guelph, Ontario, Canada, suggests that the horse's foot upon impact needs a little bit of "slide" in order to withstand impact and dissipate shock. A little too much and you can strain the muscles higher up the leg, too little and you jam the foot into the ground and you start getting bone and joint problems.

Barefoot horses have quite a bit of control because they can feel what is happening: A bare foot slips only until it comes under the horse's center of balance, so that the horse maintains control of the slip, whereas a smooth shoe, once it slips, continues to slide beyond the natural grab a bare foot would exert from suction and skid brake effects (frog and heel expansion under impact). Caulks or studs can certainly stop a slide, but the stress is transferred to the bone structure, by-passing nature's built-in mechanism, namely the frog, sole, digital cushion, and lateral cartilages.

Healthy bare feet adapt to the surfaces upon which they live. They grow more sole and frog callous as necessary to protect their feet. The material that causes our human hands to harden and callous when exposed to hard work is called keratin. This is the same material that provides sole and frog growth when needed. Dr. Bowker from MSU believes that the bars of the hoof provide the actual keratin delivery system to the sole when needed and as much as is needed to maintain proper foot protection and balance during periods of extreme wear.

A thoughtful horse caregiver ought to provide a living surface for his horse that promotes healthy

hooves and also resembles the surfaces upon which his horse is ridden. Firmer surfaces stimulate healthy hoof growth (and therefore a healthier horse), more so than soft materials such as sand or shavings. Hard surfaces, such as concrete are not recommended due to the lack of "give" the hoof needs for stimulation. Pea gravel has been shown to be an optimum material surface for paddocks to stimulate healthy feet. Turn-outs as large as possible are also necessary to a horse's health and well-being. Nature designed the horse's feet to be constantly moving, not standing in stalls.

### **Paddock Paradise**

The term "Paddock Paradise" has been used recently to describe turn-outs that have been optimized for enticing your horse or (preferably) horses to move about more and thereby improve his foot health. Essentially, you must be creative

enough to divide up a small pasture, no matter what shape, by creating a pathway around the outside of it, large enough for several horses to walk side by side. The middle can be fenced with an electric wire strung onto relatively small plastic or wood posts. The idea is to provide hay in small amounts at different points around the "track" you have created. It would also be desirable to provide different types of footing, for example; pea gravel or a mud puddle here and there around the paddock track. The length can be several miles or a few hundred feet depending upon your personal circumstances. (For more detailed information, along with illustrations, go to <http://paddockparadise.wetpaint.com>.) It is just as true of horses as it is with people, the grass seems always greener on the "other side," so providing feed at different points along the "track" keeps them moving. And movement is the key to foot health.



Andrea Barber

High action is in the genes, not in the shoes. Here first-prize breeding stallion Kalman frá Lækjamóti (IS1995155106) does a barefoot dance in the snow. Says owner Andrea Barber, "We ride most of our horses without shoes—they just don't need them. I haven't put shoes on Kalman in the last 5+ years. He moves exactly the same with shoes or without. In fact if his gaits changed without shoes, I would question whether or not he really should be used for breeding."

## SAFETY VESTS

by Shari Nees

To be honest, I never thought about riding with a body protection vest. I rode for a large number of years (30+) without needing one. I figured only the people that rode in high risk equestrian sports needed to wear one. But I was oh so wrong about that. I found out the hard way. Things changed for me in December 2006. I had my first major accident coming off a horse. The helmet, padded jacket, gloves, and boots did not prevent the rib, elbow, and lower back injuries that resulted. The helmet prevented a concussion, I am sure.

Time in the hospital and then a nursing home was not much fun. Lying in the bed at the nursing home, wondering whether I would ride again and, if I did, what could I do or wear that would help keep me from getting so many broken bones and other damage, if the unthinkable happened again, I had lots of time to think about safety vests. One of my friends' daughters always wore a body protection vest when she rode. I figured it wouldn't hurt for me to wear one too.

### Who Needs a Safety Vest?

Now I would say *everyone*, but I know people will look at this and say, *that won't happen to me, or I don't like how bulky they feel*. For me it is simple. I would rather wear a vest than end up in the hospital with that kind of damage again. If you are middle-aged or older, I would recommend a safety vest. Most of us do not bounce back like we used to. It will take you a little time to get used to it, but it will mold to your body shape and become more comfortable. After a number of months, you will notice it little or not at all. I now feel naked without mine on. The vest is comfortable, warm, al-

lows normal range of motion, and offers me much greater confidence that I will return from my ride unharmed. Every ride I go on involves me wearing my vest.

### Which Brand, What Model?

I was told to stay away from Tipperarys by a number of horsemen and women, as only one was rated at the old Beta 7, which is now down-graded to a Beta 1 (rated for lightweight professional racing jockeys). This means it doesn't offer much in the way of protection for your ribs and spine. Tipperary did have the 2005 Esprit model, rated Beta 3 under the new classification, but it is no longer sold.

So I started asking people who I knew wore body armor. I talked, listened, did research, and read everything I could on the subject. There was very little information out there on the rating systems. There is a European Standard (Beta 2000) and a U.S. standard (listed within ASTM; the current version is ASTM F-1937-04). These are the bases for rating vests, much like the standards for motorcycle helmets or almost any other type of safety gear. The bottom line for me was, which vest would offer *me* the most protection?

As the equestrian body armor industry has developed, the types of injuries you can prevent with the armor have changed. The newer vests (covered by the newer standards) offer substantially more protection compared to the older vests. The 1995 BETA standard essentially used a scale of 1 to 10 to describe the amount of energy a vest could absorb; a bigger number was better. The BETA 2000 standard changes the classification scheme, to Level 1, Level 2, and Level 3. The higher the level number, the better the protection. Level 3 is the only one recommended for use in jumping, riding on road-

ways, working with excitable horses, or inexperienced riders.

I got an explanation of the ASTM Body Protectors from the University of Tennessee. The ASTM technical contact there is Cherie Alexander of the Sports Biomechanics Impact Research Laboratory (423-974-2016). Her response will give you some idea of the ASTM testing standards, and why it is so important to purchase a Beta 3 and ASTM rated Body Protection Vest.

The laboratory had been asked by the U.S. Pony Club, the American Medical Equestrian Association, and other riding groups to develop a U.S. standard for body protectors. They did research to determine the types of injuries which occur, and the products currently on the market. They researched the existing body protector standards (BETA and SATRA, both from the UK). "Different aspects from each of these standards were utilized as part of a first draft of an ASTM standard," the researchers wrote. After some revisions, the final draft was approved by ASTM members and became a standard in November 1998.

### ASTM Requirements

For those of you who like the technical details, here is their description of the impact requirements they came up with:

"The impact velocity for this standard is 3.15 m/s which results in an impact energy of 25 J. This is the mid-value of the impact energies required for the SATRA standard and is very similar to the requirements of the BETA standard. However, the shape of the impactor and the elimination of a 'ring' over which the test specimen is supported, results in the ASTM standard being somewhat more demanding of the protective capabilities of the protector." The im-

portant part to remember here is that the ASTM standard is *more demanding* than the BETA standard.

The University of Tennessee report continues: "In addition, the ASTM standard utilizes a deformation test which is similar to one used in the National Institute of Justice standard entitled 'Ballistic Resistance of Police Body Armor.' It was felt that the amount of deformation which results from a 25 J impact energy is critical to preventing or reducing the severity of some of the more traumatic injuries in the sport. Therefore the circumference of the impacting object and the impact velocity of the ASTM standard versus the NIJ standard was analyzed to determine a maximum deformation limit of 1 inch."

The University of Tennessee team made several body "test body protectors" out of a variety of materials while developing the ASTM standard. "Many variations are able to comply, and test riders report that products which meet this standard are as 'wearable' as those protectors they are currently using."

### **What Vests Are Recommended?**

The list of approved ASTM SEI body protectors is online at: [www.seinet.org/CPL/astm1937\\_04.htm](http://www.seinet.org/CPL/astm1937_04.htm). There are only a few: Charles Owen & Company Ltd. Ultralite Body Protector; Eastwest International Lamicell 4604AT (adult sizes) or 4604CT (child sizes); Intec Corporation Flex Rider C1011, C1012, and C1013; Intec Corporation Flex-Rider 1011-, 1012-01 (-02, -03), 1013-01 (-02, -03); Polybid Ltd. Safe Rider 102.

The Beta 3 website ([www.beta-uk.org/](http://www.beta-uk.org/)) was being updated as I wrote this article, so vests may have been added since I last looked. Some vests are both Beta 3 and ASTM-rated;



Shari's well-used Charles Owen Beta 3/ASTM rated Safety Vest. "If you are middle-aged or older, I would recommend a safety vest. Most of us do not bounce back like we used to."

those I would recommend. Here are some that are only rated Beta 3 (no ASTM testing done): Air O Wear Reiver Elite, Mars, Zippa, and Zippa Plus; Charles Owen Gel Ultralite Body Protector; KC sports Rodney Powell Body Armour; Proline Supports Champion Cobra.

### **Size, Fit, and Storage**

Another important thing to remember with a body protection vest is that it really needs to fit properly. Just like buying a saddle for your horse, the fit of your body protection vest will make all the difference in the world. It needs to be comfortable *when you are in the saddle*, or it will hang in the closet and provide no protection at all. Take the time to get this right.

Each maker seems to have something a little different to measure for, so if you can, it is best to try the vests on in person. Next best is to find a mail-order shop that will work with you, letting you try a vest out and send it back if it doesn't fit well. Have a friend or family member measure you before you order. Don't be afraid to contact the dealer/distributor in your country. Many times they can give you the best help and advice

on who to talk to, to get the help you need. One of the best places I have found online for measuring for many of the safety vests is the Air O Wears site ([www.airowear.co.uk/fitting\\_guide.php](http://www.airowear.co.uk/fitting_guide.php)). It is clear and easy to understand.

I ended up with a Charles Owen Safety Vest because it was rated both Beta 3 and ASTM, as those ratings are very important to me. (The picture you see in this article is of my well-used Charles Owen Beta 3/ASTM rated Safety Vest.) I am an odd-sized person, so I ended up with a medium-sized front and a small back, which fits me well. But that was after a week of trying on all their sizes! When you try your vest on, I learned, it should be over a light shirt. (I have to admit I sometimes wear my vest over a sweatshirt, but this was after I had bought it and knew how it fit.)

When you finally purchase the safety vest that fits you best, you will need to keep it some place safe. You don't want to just chuck your vest in the corner or lay it flat. To help keep the shape of your body, the best way to store these vests is on a hanger and adjusted just like you would have it when worn.

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Sverrir Bjartmarz, USIHC National Ranking Champion T6 - Intermediate Loose Rein Tölt. First Place 2008, 2007, riding Hágangur frá Sveinatungu.

# Throstur frá Innri Skeljabrekka

US91101511 / IS91135551 Father: Kveikur frá Miðsitju Mother: Glóa frá Innri Skeljabrekka

## *Choose a stallion with proven results*

All of Throstur's offspring have:

- Great temperament
- Lots of easy tolt
- Long legs and light build
- A pleasure to work with



### **Conformation:**

Head:	7.0
Neck, withers and shoulders:	8.5
Back and croup:	8.0
Proportions:	8.5
Leg Quality	8.0
Leg Joints:	8.0
Hooves:	8.5

Total 8.22

**Overall Score: 8.43**

### **Riding Abilities:**

Tolt:	8.5
Trot:	8.0
Pace:	9.0
Gallop:	8.0
Spirit:	9.0
General Impression:	8.5
Walk:	8.0
Slow Tolt:	8.0
Canter:	8.0
Total:	8.57

**Throstur is 14.2 hands tall and at the age of 17 he has never been or looked better!**

We are happy to announce Throstur's new co-owner, Maggie Brandt. Maggie is the mother of 14 year old Carrie Lyons Brandt. Carrie has been very successful in competitions under Gudmar's instruction these last few years. It will be exciting to watch Throstur and Carrie together as a new pair. **Go to [www.gudmar.com](http://www.gudmar.com) for more info on Throstur.**



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