

ISSUE THREE

THE

2010

# ICELANDIC HORSE

Q U A R T E R L Y



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

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THE ICELANDIC

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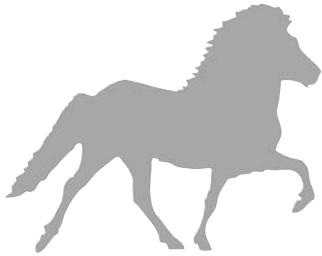
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THE  
ICELANDIC  
HORSE  
QUARTERLY  
Issue Three 2010

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

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*The Icelandic Horse Quarterly* is published in March, June, September, and December by the USIHC as a benefit of membership. Membership fees of \$45 per individual (\$35 for youth members) or \$65 per family (2 adults and children) are due on January 1 each year. Renew online at [www.icelandics.org](http://www.icelandics.org).

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

Advertising rates and instructions are also online at [www.icelandics.org](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:** Laura Benson and Langfeti frá Hofsstöðum. Laura is the first American to complete the three-year horsemanship program at Holar University College, Iceland. Here she practices bending exercises in Holar's "front yard." Photo by Carrie Lyons Brandt.



## 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/join](http://www.icelandics.org/join).

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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)

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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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The horse flu in Iceland kept Laura Benson from completing her three years of study at Holar University College on time. But a month later, her five-gaited mare Rimma frá Saurbae was healthy again and Laura took and passed her final exam. She is the first American to receive a degree in horsemanship from Holar. Photo by Gígja Einarsdóttir.

## LANDSMÓT CANCELED

The majority of the horses in Iceland suffered from an infectious upper respiratory disease from February through May 2010. Horsemanship throughout Iceland was paralyzed. People could not sell horses, and training centers closed. An investigation at Keldur, the Institute for Experimental Pathology in Iceland, found that an initial viral infection (possibly a herpes infection) followed by a streptococcal infection, which worsens the animals' condition, may be to blame for the outbreak in Iceland, according to chief veterinarian Halldór Runólfsson.

On May 31, the Icelanders decided to cancel their biannual national horshow, Landsmót 2010, which was to be held in Skagafjörður in late June-early July. The canceling of Landsmót severely impacted the tourist industry, because many foreign tourists had planned to attend the show and participate in horse trips related to it.

What can USIHC members do to help? When traveling to Iceland, please be sure to sterilize all riding boots and clothing; used riding tack is not permitted in the country. Check with MAST, the

Icelandic Food and Veterinary Authority for more information at [www.mast.is](http://www.mast.is).

## USIHC ELECTIONS

The 2010 Election Committee is preparing for this year's Board of Directors elections. Pat Moore is the chairwoman; Suzi McGraw, Sandy Newkirk, Rich Moore, Maureen Henry, and Jim Henry complete the committee. Members who have asked to receive official notices via email will receive the Notice of Election on September 1. Those who prefer the U.S. Mail will receive the Notice in the first week of September.

Candidate nomination and voting are open to all adult Congress members of record as of August 15, 2010. The Election Committee will accept nominations until October 1. Nominations must be accompanied by the candidate's written acceptance and the names and signatures of two Congress members who nominate and second the candidate for election. The committee will prepare and mail ballots by October 15. Voted ballots must be received by the Election Committee no later than December 1. The results will be made public no later than December 15.

Questions should be directed to the

committee chair at either [election@icelandics.org](mailto:election@icelandics.org) or USIHC 2010 Election Committee, c/o Pat Moore, 3481 Sanders Lane, Catharpin, VA, 20143.

## FOREIGN FRIENDS

The Board is pleased to announce the long-awaited "Foreign Friends of the Congress" program, which extends benefits previously available only to U.S. citizens and residents to anyone in the world.

The USIHC's constitution and FEIF regulations prohibit anyone who is neither a U.S. citizen nor resident from becoming a full member of the Congress. The Foreign Friends program offers a way for anyone to enjoy the variety of educational, competition, and breeding programs offered by the Congress.

Foreign Friends will receive copies of the *Quarterly* and may participate in any Congress-sanctioned event without paying non-member fees. This includes but is not limited to the Pleasure Rider Program, sanctioned competitions, clinics and seminars, breeding evaluations, and stallion listings. Foreign Friends can also list events and advertise on the website and have written information on their farm or events on display at Congress booth locations.

In short, a Foreign Friend has all the benefits of membership except the ability to hold office, vote, nominate Board candidates, or represent the Congress internationally.

The cost for the program is \$70 per year and follows the same renewal schedule as the various other classes of membership. This cost is the basic cost of being an individual member of the Congress with an additional fee to pay for the increased postage necessary to mail the *Quarterly* internationally.

Joining the Foreign Friends program is as easy as joining as a full member. Simply complete the application included in this issue and mail it with payment for the annual fee. If you'd prefer to sign-up online, visit our website at [www.icelandics.com/join](http://www.icelandics.com/join). With a PayPal account, you can join instantly.

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## EDUCATION SEMINAR

Barbara Frische approached the USIHC education committee with a concept for a conformation+training seminar which has been extremely popular in Germany, but is new to the U.S. On July 31-Aug. 1, the committee offered this two-day seminar for the first time. The location was Marianne and Jim Welch's farm near Louisville, KY. Clinicians were Gudmar Petursson (FT Trainer) and Frische, who is an International FEIF Breeding Judge. Barbara Frische will be repeating the seminar October 2-3, 2010, at Sara Lyter's farm in Columbus, North Carolina, with Birga Wild, an internationally known trainer and rider.

Says committee chair Alex Pregitzer, "The seminar emphasizes the horse's conformation in correlation with its training, riding, and performance. Two extremely knowledgeable experts are with the participants all day, helping horses and riders to gain a better understanding of one another.

"The goal is to learn about strength and weaknesses in your horse's conformation, and to link those to your experiences in riding the horse. Why is it that your horse cannot tolt as fast as your husband's horse? Why is it that your mare prefers trot, while your gelding has a hard time trotting at all? Why is your two-year-old already showing a great head set, when you have been working so hard with your six-year-old to get break at the poll? Why is your horse always on the forehand, stumbling? All of us wonder about certain things that our horses do or don't do. More often than not, the answer lies at least partially in the way the horses are built and the ways they can find balance with their rider.

"The clinic includes theoretical information about how each horse is likely to use its body when ridden, followed by the opportunity to see the horse actually demonstrating this, followed by suggestions on how the rider can help the horse move more comfortably and improve the ride for both of them." Says Alex, "I would strongly encourage anybody to consider taking this clinic. The information is immediately useful, and what is so wonderful about it is, that it is really suited for any rider and any horse, no matter what their knowledge or



A scene from one of Centaur City's Summer Riding Camps—week-long day camps taught by Heidi Benson in Santa Cruz, CA. Classes range from beginner to advanced, with USIHC Riding Badges levels 1 through 7 taught. Says Heidi, "I just finished the first of four riding camps this summer, two of which are badge program camps. So far I will have five girls testing for the Badge Level 1 in August." Here, Sarah McWaid practices jumping Draupnir. Photo by Heidi Benson.

training is. It is a huge learning opportunity for pleasure riders, competitors, breeders, and professionals alike."

Adds Anne Elwell, "There are a number of excellent clinics offered in this country, focusing on various aspects of riding and care of Icelandic horses, and the Congress certainly recommends that people take advantage of as many of these as possible. In the case of this clinic, however, it seems to many of us, particularly members of the Education Committee and the Board, that it offers so much to all riders and, moreover, to the welfare of the horse, that we want to promote and support it in several parts of the country. Barbara Frische has offered to teach it in conjunction with various experienced trainers. The Congress will be aiding in the funding of the clinic in certain locations to lower its cost during this year and we hope that many riders and horses will be able to reap the rewards."

To sign up for the October clinic, or learn about future ones, contact the committee at [education@icelandics.org](mailto:education@icelandics.org).

## WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS 2011 IN AUSTRIA

Preparation for the next Icelandic Horse World Championships, to take place in St. Radegund, Austria the first week of August

2011, are underway. The organizing committee in Austria has been working since the summer of 2009 to design and build the tracks, tribunes, and pavilions. Here in the U.S., Sport Leader Will Covert has asked Doug Smith to be the Team Leader again in 2011. The team hotel has been arranged in a German resort town just across the border from the showgrounds in Austria. Meanwhile, riders and trainers are already working to prepare for the team tryouts to take place next spring.

Doug and members of the 2009 World Championship team formed a working group to update the procedures for riders to follow if they are interested in trying out for the WC 2011 team. All of the details are available on the USIHC website ([www.icelandics.org/wc\\_tryouts.php](http://www.icelandics.org/wc_tryouts.php)).

There are several important changes; some of which require more planning on the part of the riders and trainers. The key changes include:

- Riders must now use the horse they plan to ride at the Championships to qualify for the team. European horses may still be used by U.S. riders at the Championships. In order to do so, the rider must travel to Europe to complete the tryout riding requirements.

- All riders must appear in the U.S.

National Ranking or the World Ranking for their tests of choice at the Championships.

- Riders must now reach the scores used to qualify for “master” competition in Iceland in order to qualify for the WC team.

In addition to preparing their horses and understanding the new tryout procedures, riders also need to begin to prepare to face the financial burden of the Championships. The riders are responsible for their own travel expenses. The only expense traditionally paid by the Congress is the stabling fee at the Championships. In addition to the travel expenses (for horse and rider) and the stabling fee, there are “team” expenses which are born by the riders with the help of private sponsors. These include the off-track team uniform worn by the riders any time a team member is competing and the “National Night” event before the start of the first preliminaries.

Cindy Wescott, chair of the Promotion Committee, and Doug have formed a working group to help raise funds to support the U.S. team. Their goal is to identify corporate and individual sponsors willing to help offset the “team” expenses. If they are wildly successful, any funds raised beyond the needs of the uniform and National Night will be shared equally with all the riders on the team.

The group is working to construct levels of recognition for our sponsors. All



sponsors will be recognized on the website and in the Quarterly. The top-level sponsors will have an unprecedented opportunity for a behind-the-scenes experience at the Championships, including access to the practice track and the team campground areas as well as preferred parking at the event. For corporate sponsors, there are opportunities to advertise their brands on the team uniform. The fundraising group will have the complete program designed by December.

Contact Doug Smith (secretary@icelandics.org) or Cindy Wescott (promotion@icelandics.org) to join the fundraising working group. Cindy and Doug are also available to discuss donations of cash, goods, or services. Please consider supporting our riders in Austria in 2011!



Doug Smith is organizing a sponsorship program to support the U.S. at the 2011 Icelandic Horse World Championships in Austria. Here, 2009 medalist Ásta Covert and Dynjandi frá Dalvík practice for the next tryouts.

## BOARD MEETINGS

Highlights of the May, June, and July 2010 meetings of the USIHC Board of Directors are summarized below. Full minutes of the Board meetings can be found at [www.icelandics.org/bod/minutes.php](http://www.icelandics.org/bod/minutes.php).

In May, the Pleasure Riding Chair called for volunteers to join the committee to help with transferring PRP record-keeping to all-paperless; with keeping the web page up-to-date by providing the webmaster with new pictures and captions; and with creating a newsletter for PRP members and writing PRP-focused articles for the *Quarterly*. Karen Olson-Fields will be resigning as chair at the end of the year; anyone interested in chairing the committee should email her ([pleasure\\_riding@icelandics.org](mailto:pleasure_riding@icelandics.org)).

Cindy Wescott of the Promotion Committee reported that the Ohio Equine Affaire in April was a great event and that the “Knights of Iceland” performance wowed the crowd in the Fantasia. The Knights will also perform at the fall event in Springfield, MA; see [www.equineaffaire.com](http://www.equineaffaire.com). The committee is currently working on a new display booth; any ideas or photos are welcome.

Webmaster Doug Smith reported that a few small changes were made to streamline the processing of sanctioned show results into the automated National Ranking. The first live update was made using the CIA Spring Open results.

Doug also noted that updates on the USIHC Bulletin Board page are now automatically sent to the USIHC Facebook page to keep members better informed of Congress news.

The Board amended the policy to reimburse Regional Clubs for some costs of advertising and breed demos. For every dollar spent from a Regional Club, the USIHC will match it up to a total of \$200 per calendar year.

According to the new rules, ads must be submitted to the Regional Club Chair ([regional\\_clubs@icelandics.org](mailto:regional_clubs@icelandics.org)) for approval before being run. Ads may be placed for any Icelandic horse event or for promotion of the Regional Club, the USIHC, and/or the Icelandic breed, but must be placed in media that are not specific to the Icelandic horse breed to receive the match-

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ing funds. The purpose of this limitation is to ensure the promotion of the breed to those who do not already own or have an interest in Icelandic horses. (*Please note that Regional Clubs can already receive free ads in the Quarterly; contact the Quarterly committee at quarterly@icelandics.org*). The USIHC and the website address ([www.icelandics.org](http://www.icelandics.org)) must be mentioned in the ad and the USIHC logo is strongly recommended when possible.

If a Regional Club incurs fees (such as stall fees or admission fees) for a breed demo, the appropriate receipt can be submitted to the USIHC treasurer for a 50% reimbursement.

In the June Board Meeting, the concerns of Youth Riders were foremost. Ásta Covert, interim chair of the Youth Committee, announced that the USIHC was sending four young riders to the FEIF Youth Cup, July 10-18 in Denmark. Team members are Rachel Ng, Madison Prestine, Kevin Draeger, and Caitlin Nold. Country leader is Jasmine Ho, and Team Leader is Perry Rothman-Ostrow.

The Youth committee has also been working on organizing a Youth Clinic at Wiesenhof, Germany this summer. Committee member Amelie Brewster has been in touch with Birga Wild of Wiesenhof and a clinic date of August 2-13, 2010, was chosen. However, only two young riders expressed interest in the program. It appears that the timing was too late for it to succeed this year. The Youth Committee will carry this program forward to 2011, with more notice to the membership.

The FEIF Youth Exchange program was discussed; the committee is waiting to confirm who the five interested farms in the U.S. are. We already have one German girl interested in coming to the U.S. this summer.

Sam Castleman has agreed to take over from Ásta as the Youth Committee Chair / Youth Leader effective August 1, after the Youth Cup to maintain consistency through that key event.

In other business in June, the Board voted to adopt the Foreign Friends program as described earlier in this issue of the *Quarterly*.

Doug Smith was given suggestions for

raising funds to support the U.S. team for the 2011 World Championships in Austria. Doug will work with a small group to identify sponsorship levels; see the announcement in this *Quarterly*.

Cerice Berndsen and Doug have been working on preliminary logistics to hold the USIHC annual meeting in New Orleans next year. The Board gave approval for the venue and instructed Doug and Cerice to continue with booking a hotel/conference facility with a budget the same as for this year's meeting.

The Board received an email message from Nicki Branch of FalconRidge Equine Rescue, Inc. concerning an Icelandic Horse Sanctuary. Branch is currently managing the Icelandic Horse Rehoming Project, a joint project in Solvang, California, to help assist a breeder with placing 50 Icelandic horses into loving homes as they can no longer take care of them. (See <http://icelandicrehomingproject.blogspot.com>)

Branch asked if the USIHC knew of "any sanctuaries for them where they can live out their retirement years in pasture? If there are no Icelandic horse sanctuaries here, would you be interested in helping create one? While working on this project there are a few horses that are either older or have a lameness issue and therefore hard to place in adoptable homes. A U.S. Icelandic Horse Sanctuary would be a wonderful idea to be able to place these horses in a natural pasture environment while at the same time being able to bring in the public to educate and promote the breed. We have sanctuaries for mustangs and for domesticated horses here in the United States. I think an Icelandic Horse Sanctuary, publicly funded and supported as a non-profit organization for the retirement of Icelandic horses and the education of the public would be a great asset to Icelandic horse breeders across the country and for the organizations that promote Icelandic horses such as yours. A nonprofit sanctuary would not be difficult to run, and I am sure you would have support from the wonderful Icelandic community in the U.S. Please let me know your thoughts and opinions on this issue and feel free to share it with other Icelandic organizations or clubs that would be interested in discussion of creating an

Icelandic Horse Sanctuary."

The Board discussed the underlying situation at some length. Katrin Sheehan will investigate further to determine the extent of the task to get as many of the rescued horses registered and will report back.

In continuing discussion on this topic at the July Board Meeting, Katrin Sheehan volunteered to travel to California at her own expense to assist in the work required to determine which of the rescued horses are able to be registered. Katrin plans to submit an article to the *Quarterly* to explain the situation with the rescue and the effort to register as many horses as possible. Members will be given an opportunity to donate to the effort through the article. The Board asks the Breeding Committee to consider the possibility of waiving some or all of the registry fees for rescue organizations. If the committee sees a need, the Board asks for recommended guidelines to establish an appropriate policy.

Also at the July Board Meeting, treasurer Kari Pietsch-Wangard noted that she had received a number of nice notes from the US FEIF Youth Cup team members thanking the USIHC for helping them with their travel expenses. The 2010 Youth Cup Fund now has a \$0 balance and the general Youth Fund has been reduced, as both were used to offset the charges for the Youth Cup riders' fees.

The Board also discussed two issues related to links on the USIHC website. The Board instructed webmaster Doug Smith to contact any listed trainers who are not members of the USIHC to suggest that they renew or join. Any non-member trainers will be removed from the website.

The Promotion Committee suggested linking the USIHC web page with ACTHA (the American Competitive Trail Horse Association) and vice versa, at no charge to either organization. The Board asked the Web Committee to consider whether it is possible to have shared (free) links on the website in addition to the paid Farm Listings and sponsor ads. Until the Web Committee is able to find an alternative, the current policy stands: only paid third-party links will appear on the website.



## YOUTH CUP

The FEIF Youth Cup was held July 9-18 at the agricultural college Kalø Økologiske Landbrugsskole, Denmark, as this issue of the *Quarterly* was going to press. The Youth Cup is held every other year in a different country. Participants, ages 14 to 17, are coached by experienced instructors, participate in various activities, and go on excursions. The week ends with a competition. For more information, see [www.feifyouthcup2010.dk](http://www.feifyouthcup2010.dk)

This year five USIHC Youth Members qualified for the team: Kevin Draeger (MN), Rachel Ng (CA), Cait Nold (CA), Meagan Milloy (VA), and Madison Prestine (CA). Four were able to attend. Look for their report in the December issue of the *Quarterly*.

The focus of the Youth Cup this year was on the theoretical side of horsemanship. As the young riders' general level of riding increases all the time, the youth leaders felt it was time to address the theoretical side a bit more. Apart from traditional riding theory, taught by Lisa Grau, the welfare of the horse was a major topic. Machteld van Dierendonck, who taught those sections, has worked in the welfare committee of FEIF from its start and started teaching about the welfare of



Rachel Ng and Kaliber frá Laekjarbotnum.  
Photo by Will Covert.

the horse at the last FEIF Youth Cup.

Altogether, six trainers and seven judges were present to train and judge the participants at the FEIF Youth Cup 2010: Anette Lohrke (TI2), Johannes Hoyos (TI3), Lisa Grau (TI2), Rikke Nielsen (TI2), Thórdís Anna Gylfadóttir (TI3), and Yoni Blom (TI1) were available as trainers; Birgit Quasnitschka, Fi Pugh, Johannes Hoyos, Mark Tillmann, Martin Heller, Sandra Pohl (all FEIF International Sport Judges), and Machteld van Dierendonck were available to judge.

Although the World Championships 2011 in St Radegund, Austria, will take

place more than a year from now, the organising committee is supporting the Youth Cup. The five most versatile riders (to be announced July 17) will win a free entrance ticket for the full week of the championships, August 1-7, 2011.

## LANDSMÓT 2011?

After the decision of our Icelandic member associations LH and BÍ to cancel Landsmót 2010 due to an infectious horse disease, FEIF has been involved in the discussion about an extra Landsmót in 2011. Landsmót and World Championships are the two biggest events in the Icelandic horse world. They are organized every two years, the first in the even years, the other in the uneven years. They are both part of the yearly rhythm and holiday plans of many Icelandic horse friends. The decision in Iceland to organize an extra Landsmót in 2011 doesn't fit into this schedule.

Of course FEIF understands that there is—in the current situation—a need for breeders and riders in Iceland to organize major events in 2011. However, it is the opinion of the board of FEIF, that the Icelandic horse world isn't big enough to advertise and carry the two biggest events in the same year, especially as they are organized in a period of only five weeks after each other. Choices have to be made. FEIF carries—together with all member associations in 19 countries—a direct responsibility for the World Championships.

This means that the current focus of FEIF will be on our World Championships, in St. Radegund, Austria 2011. The preparations are on schedule and excellent tracks are waiting for the participants, in beautiful surroundings. After the World Championships our focus will switch to Landsmót 2012 in Reykjavík. The major breeding show, in the capital of Iceland, will attract not only the regular visitors, but also gives us a chance to explore a new approach for this type of events, as Berlin would do for the World Championships 2013.



Madison Prestine riding Rán frá Hofi in the CIA Spring Open show in Santa Ynez, CA in April 2009. This is the horse that she qualified for the FEIF Youth Cup on. Photo by Heidi Benson.



## LENGTH OF A HOOF

The new rule in FIPO about the length of a hoof has caused some questions about the way to measure the length. A document has been published to explain the procedure: the length is determined by measuring the front of the hoof, in the center, from the skin line on the lower side of the coronary band to the ground (shoe). Unfortunately a part of article 2.3.1 about the length of a hoof was left out when the new edition of FIPO was first published. The correct text is: *The angle of the hoof must be in line with the pastern. The hoof length must be natural and not exceed 9.5 cm. Exceptions to the 9.5 cm rule can be made when a written proof (e.g. from a breeding show or a veterinarian) is shown that the horse has a stick measurement of 145.0 cm or more, in which case a length up to 10.0 cm is allowed. Any artificial lengthening is forbidden.* A revised version of FIPO 2010 and the page in question are available for download from the FEIF website.

## BREEDING SHOW BOOKLET

FEIF has created a brochure, "Approved Information about Breeding Shows 2010," for organizers of breeding shows, as well as judges. The booklet serves as a quick guide on how a breeding show works, what the main rules are, the criteria for the various marks, and a few common

working rules for judging and other procedures. Look under "documents" on the Breeding page of the FEIF website. Or go directly to [http://www.feiffengur.com/documents/FiZObooklet8c\\_2010.pdf](http://www.feiffengur.com/documents/FiZObooklet8c_2010.pdf)

## VACCINATION RULES

FEIF has received some questions about the rules about equine influenza vaccinations and the document describing the demands has been updated. For horses competing all year around (or taking part in breeding shows and other events), two vaccinations per year are required in a correct interval. For horses taking part in events for a period shorter than six months per year, one vaccination per year is sufficient. In all cases the last booster must have been given within six calendar months + 21 days of the start of the any event. A document is available at the FEIF website: [www.feif.org/rules](http://www.feif.org/rules).

## FEIF TASK FORCE

Upon approval by the FEIF Conference in February, the FEIF Task Force has begun its work. Over the next three years, under the chairmanship of FEIF President Jens Iversen, a team will work on the harmonization and revision of all existing regulations. To this effect five experts for FIPO, FIZO, FIRO, and statutes from Denmark, Germany, Great Britain, and Iceland were appointed.

Since the foundation of FEIF some 40 years ago, the rules, regulations, and guidelines have changed due to the different demands and developments. "Now it is time to put them to the test, to reconcile them with each other and adapt to today's needs. We want transparent, logical, and coherent rules for all Icelandic horse lovers, which everybody can understand," said Jens Iversen at the end of the first working session in Copenhagen.

As a first step the member associations, committees, and interest groups will be interviewed on current regulations and asked to suggest improvements. In addition, internationally successful riders, breeders, and horse people of the Icelandic horse scene will be asked to share their personal thoughts and suggestions. "The feedback from these individuals is important to us, because they all have made the Icelandic horse what it is today. We must not miss this store of knowledge," said Iversen.

Starting in May and throughout the summer opinions and ideas were collected in an online survey. An initial evaluation will be given in fall in preparation for the committee meetings. The online survey is available at [www.feif.org/survey](http://www.feif.org/survey) and open for everybody to share their opinion with the FEIF Task Force.

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# REGIONAL UPDATES

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## CASCADE ICELANDIC HORSE CLUB

*Dawn Shaw writes:* The weather in the Northwest definitely slowed many of us in the Cascade Club down in our riding and training; it was cold and rainy throughout spring, which is unusual. We are all welcoming the current hot, dry sunny weather to enjoy our horses. The Club has had no Club-sponsored events this quarter, but our members have participated in several clinics, seminars, and competitions.

In early May there was a Spring Training TTouch clinic with Mandy Pretty ([www.icefarm.com](http://www.icefarm.com)) as clinician. The clinic was hosted in Ridgefield, WA by Claudia Rancore of Wrenhill Stables. The clinic emphasized Exercises to Limber and Rebalance Horse and Rider. The TTEAM approach uses a series of ground exercises to enable a horse to override old patterns and to learn without fear or force. These exercises result in self-control, focus, self-confidence, cooperation, balance, and coordination. Everyone enjoyed the clinic and felt they had learned some new tools in connecting and communicating with their horses.

In mid May, the Templetons of Red Feather Icelandics in Trout Lake, WA held a Rider's Choice clinic with Ann-Christin Kloth ([www.gait-ways.com](http://www.gait-ways.com)) as clinician. This was Ann's first visit to the Northwest. Her clinic was well attended by many of the Cascade Club members. In The Rider's Choice clinic, each rider had the opportunity to focus on areas that they felt needed improvement—with themselves or their horse. This format was very demanding of the clinician, and Ann was both enthusiastic and generous with each rider, taking the time to ride each horse herself to assess the horse and rider separately. The clinic started with private lessons on Friday and ran through late Sunday. Feedback from the clinic was all positive; each rider expressed glowing comments for what they were able to learn from Ann in this short period of time, and voiced a strong desire to have her return.

In June, the Tolt-Ally Icelandic Horse Show & Judging Seminar was held



In May, Red Feather Icelandics in Trout Lake, WA held a Rider's Choice clinic with Ann-Christin Kloth. Many Cascade Club members attended. Here, Ann works with Karin on Lukka.

in our neighboring Canada. This show, hosted annually by the Jones Family in Chilliwack, BC is always supported by and well attended by the Cascade Club. The competition this year was preceded by a weeklong judge's seminar conducted by Jens Nielsen (an International Sports Judge from Denmark) and resulted in three Canadian National Judges here in the Northwest (congratulations all)!

The Cascade Club will hold its summer meeting on August 29 at Red Feather Icelandics in Trout Lake. There will be camping and trail rides, a pot luck, and, of course, a meeting. The annual Cascade Club Beach Ride is coming up in September and is always a club favorite!

## CALIFORNIA ICELANDIC ASSOCIATION

*The CIA did not submit an official report, but Kathy Sierra of Kraftur wrote the following about the CIA Spring Open:* I just wanted to say that the sanctioned show at Flying C (Santa Ynez, CA) was wonderful, and to thank the hosts Will and Asta Covert,

and also Doug Smith for helping with the judging and announcing.

Highlights:

The judge was very friendly and approachable. For example, when my husband questioned a low score, the judge was happy—actually happy—to have been asked to clarify. The judge really sets the tone for the “vibe” of the show, and this judge made it a very upbeat learning experience.

The judge's comments after the preliminaries were both thoughtful and useful. Given that this is the only reason I do these shows, I'm deeply appreciative.

We all got to see some fabulous rides by world-class horses and riders including a 9.5 fast tolt from Asta Covert, and a 9.0 fast tolt from youth rider Lucy Nold. Wow! Like watching furry formula 1 race cars.

In pace, Will Covert appears to have developed the ability to suspend gravity. While I have no idea what it feels like to fly/ride that fast, it was exhilarating for the audience. When photos come out, I



The T1 finalists at the CIA Spring Open: Ásta Covert, Steindór Thórisson, and Heidi Benson with the judge, Nicolai Thye. Photo by Will Covert.

believe his face will look like what you see with astronaut high G-force training, skin pulled back from the bone, etc.

The sound system was perfect. (Note to other show organizers: never underestimate the importance of the tunes.) And the musical selections were festive, with just the right tolt beat and attitude. Being forced to slow tolt to Lady Gaga's Poker Face makes it physiologically impossible to take yourself seriously.

The youth classes were brimming. It was fun to see so many dedicated kids.

The judge appeared somewhat relaxed on horse cleanliness. This was deeply meaningful. I would take a bullet for my horse, but if I ever get another

pinto, I'm going for the genetically-altered poo-repelling coat.

Overall, it was an outstanding way to spend a weekend for both riders and spectators, and as we all hope for in these shows, everyone learned quite a lot.

### **FLUGNIR ICELANDIC HORSE ASSOCIATION OF THE MIDWEST**

*Wade Elmlad writes:* June was a busy month for the Flugnir group, with our breeding and young horse evaluations being held June 16-18 at Winterhorse Park in Eagle, WI. We had 37 horses participate in the evaluation program,



Halldor Viktorsson was the clinician and judge for a clinic and fun show held by the Flugnir Club at Tolthaven Ranch in Minnesota. Here, Jerry, Susy, and Kate Oliver and Jen Stevenson compete in the fun show. Photo by Deb Cook.

with judging by Barbara Frische and Johannes Hoyos. Participants from several states came in for the evaluation program and later stayed to compete in the Summermot hosted by Winterhorse Park, including Bixby, OK residents Stephenie Surby and Gunnar Eggertsson; Minnesota residents Kydee Sheetz of Proctor, Pat and John Curtin of White Bear Lake, Gloria and Vince Verrecchio of Marine on St. Croix, and Nick Cook of Lakeville; Bonnie Borgerson from Sylvania, Ohio; and Kentucky residents Gudmar Petursson of Crestwood, Kathy Love from Louisville, and Margaret Brandt of Eminence. Our Wisconsin contingent included Hanna Geyer of Kiel, Lori Fleming of Oconomowoc, Roberta Rose from Dousman, and Dan and Barb Riva in Eagle.

Flugnir youth members Megan Milloy, Kevin Draeger, Elizabeth Everson, and Haley Martens had the opportunity to experience riding before the breeding judges, as a second horse was needed on the straight track for the second day of evaluations with Gudmar Petursson's and Kathy Love's ten horses participating in the program. Adult Flugnir members could also opt for a full evaluation for half-price if they chose to ride their own horse before the judges. Nick Cook rode before the judges with his own gelding Svipur from Nordstjarna.

Division results were as follows: Top Domestic-bred Stallion was Sprettur from Destiny Farm owned by Kathryn Ruth Love, with a total score of 7.78. Top Domestic-bred Mare was Timbilta from Destiny Farm, owned by Kathryn Ruth Love with a total score of 7.89. Top Imported Mare was Glæta fra Brekku Fljotsdal, owned by Margaret Brandt, total score of 8.03.

Martina Gates provided the photography services during the evaluations. Her phenomenal photos can be found at her website, <http://martinagates.zenfolio.com>.

During the evaluations program and continuing through the Summermot competition hosted by Winterhorse Park, the food services and silent auction performed very well in providing money to benefit Flugnir youth member Kevin Draeger and his participation in the Youth Cup 2010 held in Denmark. Your continued support in making these fund-raising activities suc-



At the 2010 Midwest Evaluations, held at Winterhorse Park in Eagle, WI, youth members had the opportunity to experience riding before the breeding judges. Here, clockwise from top left, Haley Martens rides Brunsi, Kevin Draegar rides Mani, Megan Milloy rides Steinrikur, and Dink Everson rides Veisla. Photos by Martina Gates.

cessful is very much appreciated. A special thank you goes out to Amber Parry, Haley Martens, Elizabeth Everson, Kim Hartzler, Sharron Cretney, and Jessica Elmlblad for working the food services counter and to Dan and Barb Riva for their continued support for the kitchen facility.

Last May 14-16, the Flugnir clinic and fun show at Tolthaven Ranch was a great success. Deb Cook reports, "Fourteen riders participated in the clinic with an excellent clinician from Iceland. Groups worked on everything from controlling the energy of their horses to feeling the difference in trotty and pacy tolt. The fun show had 44 class entries and 13 entries in trail class. Eve Loftness again showed everyone how trail class is done on her young horse Demantur. The Olivers were fabulous hosts. They provided a bed for everyone who needed one and Cindy kept the kitchen running like a 5-Star restaurant!"

Looking forward to August 13-15, the

Flugnir group will be focusing now on the Flugnirkeppni competition, with judging by Einar Ragnarsson.

### **KLETTAFJALLA ICELANDIC HORSE CLUB (ROCKY MOUNTAIN)**

*Coralie Denmeade writes:* It wasn't easy this year to get the details for the riding clinic with Gudmar Petursson straightened out. The list and number of participants fluctuated continually due to a tough start into the year for some of our members, so the club had to change the venue to make sure that the event could take place. Despite a rough beginning, the final participants were thrilled that a solution had been found. People drove from as far as Jackson, WY, to meet at the facility of Tamangur Icelandic Horses in Monument, CO, and learn more about riding their Icelandics.

Even though Gudmar's flight on Friday evening got cancelled at the last second and he was only able to get in Saturday morning, both participants and auditors didn't let this spoil their good mood. Florie Miller and Coralie Denmeade, both certified trainers, took over with a theory session until Gudmar made it. And despite the late start, everybody got their share of input and support. It was a diverse mix of riders and horses that provided a broad range of examples and made the observing of the lessons just as beneficial as the participation, which was good, considering the high numbers of auditors.

An experienced dressage rider got her first rides on an Icelandic, some participants received the tools and inputs to make their previously purely three-gaited or pacey Icelandics tolt, while others worked on improving the gaits, self-carriage of the horse, and suppleness. A demonstration by Gudmar of how to gain leadership showed aspects of groundwork. During lunch break on Sunday four riders volunteered to do a drill team practice under Gudmar's lead. They were able to demonstrate how much fun, but also how difficult and intricate the timing and coordination can be. The drill with its successful moments and some moments of chaos and confusion sure made for some laughs, but it was inspiring to everybody.

The club is now looking forward to the schooling show with Alex Pregnitzer in Steamboat Springs, CO.

### **KRAFTUR (NORTHERN CALIFORNIA)**

*Laurie Prestine writes:* Spring was a time for celebrating friendship and riding at Kraftur. The club was busy learning, showing off at sanctioned and fun shows, and planning upcoming events.

Steinar Sigurbjornsson has been coming up and giving clinics at the home of members Bert Bates and Kathy Sierra. Attendees have been very pleased with the results of these informative classes. We have also all enjoyed reading about Holar from member Laura Benson's blog. Her writing is exceptional and her adven-



Having fun and trying hard to line up for the Klettafjalla drill team. Photo by Erika Trimbell.

tures educational and inspiring! Member Gabriele Meyer has been busy organizing exciting summer and fall clinics for us to look forward too.

The Los Angeles Icelandic horse show was a great event attended by Kraftur. Gayle Smith posted, "...cool weather, great riding." Members of the club who participated included Bert Bates, Lucy Nold, Cait Nold, Kathy Sierra, Doug Smith, and Gayle Smith. All enjoyed themselves.

Next up was a local gaited horse show held in Santa Cruz attended by members Kathy Sierra, Bert Bates, Lucy Nold, Dylan Denning, and their friend Austin Thornley. All the attendees agreed that the most fun was riding in the mixed breed class with Tennessee Walkers and Saddlebreds—especially when the Icelandics swept the medals! Bert said, "This was a fantastic promotional event for our breed because there were over 200 people watching us fly!"

We continued our packed schedule with an amazing turnout at the Spring CIA Open Show held at Flying C Ranch in Santa Ynez. Kraftur had 15 members present! The weather was perfect, the riding was excellent, and the camaraderie high. The Friday night BBQ was especially fun, with Kraftur member Doug Smith and Anne-Marie Martin entertaining the group with a

hilarious skit. Our Kraftur Kids performed a spirited and exciting youth four-gait victory lap at a heart-pounding gallop. The lap inspired many whoops of appreciation from the crowd. Member Alexandra Venable exclaimed, "What the heck, it was four-gait!" Members present at the show were Bert Bates, Heidi Benson, Dylan Denning, Jennifer Denning, Ayla Green, Sarah McWait, Cait Nold, Lucy Nold, Laurie Prestine, Madison Prestine, Kathy Sierra, Doug Smith, Gayle Smith, Alexandra Venable, and Morgan Venable. It was difficult to find a class where there wasn't a Kraftur rider to cheer for.

Upcoming events include the FEIF Youth Cup held in Denmark, July 9-18. We are proud to announce that two Kraftur youth riders made the U.S. Team. Madison Prestine and Cait Nold will be riding for the Stars and Stripes this summer. Madison said, "I'm so excited to travel, ride, and socialize!" Congratulations to members Madison and Cait.

### **NORTHEAST ICELANDIC HORSE CLUB (NEIHC)**

*Amy Goddard writes:* Late spring and early summer have been jam-packed with a variety of fantastic events for NEIHC members!

A FEIF breeding evaluation was held at Mill Farm in Ancramdale, NY on May 22 and 23. About sixteen horses were evaluated.

The following weekend, the first annual Thor Icelandics Schooling Show was held at Thor Icelandics in Claverack, NY. Steinar Sigurbjornsson was the judge. Brigit Huwlyer won the raffle horse, Princessa from Four Winds Farm, donated by Lori Leo. Much fun was had by all. For a full account of the show, see the article in this issue of the *Quarterly*.

Solheimar Icelandics hosted a fun-day schooling show on June 13 at Richard Davis's track in Waitsfield, VT. Jason Brickner was the judge.

Several members have been participating in a variety of events with their horses. Karen McDonald and her gelding, Haki, participated in their first ACTHA trail ride in Livingston Manor, NY. Karen writes: "This is the group that hosts six-mile rides across the country with obstacles that are judged at each mile. It took about two hours to ride and was really fun! Haki was very popular as the only Icelandic and won the 'best groomed' award, though I think they were just fascinated by his hair. This event will be listed in the Guinness Book of World Records for the most riders in the country simultaneously riding for a cause, equine rescue. I would encourage anyone who is looking for something interesting to do with their horse to give this a try. They have rides all year and new ones can be added if someone wants to host. The trail obstacle work we did with Bob Jeffries a while back was a plus. It may not be for everyone but we have an amazing, versatile breed and it certainly is something different to do."

Jenny Tuthill also participated in an ACTHA ride. She writes: "Gydja, Stefmir, my friend Laura, and I participated in the ACTHA ride in Dover, NH for the NH entry contributing to the Guinness Book of World Records ride June 13. It was about six miles long with six 'obstacles.' The trails were beautiful, the volunteers cheerful, food terrific, and there were three Icelandics participating, along with Percheron, Belgian, Gypsy Vanner, Irish Sport, and various other breeds. There are several more rides coming up in our region, NH



Kraftur members riding at the Fall CIA open: Myra-Dawn Ellis on Thengill frá Austvadsholti, Gayle Smith on Flygill frá Mosfellsbæ, and Laurie Prestine on Sleipnir frá Ey I. Photo by Willy Ma.

and VT, throughout the summer. Lots of fun!"

Susan Peters writes: "Sue Sundstrom, Jana Meyer, Caeli Cavanagh, and I have been riding with the North Country Hounds on a (no-kill) hunt in Woodstock, VT, and Martina Lussi has also been spotted hunting with the Northeast Kingdom Hunt Club. Some of us even ride first field, which is fast and with lots of jumps. The more timid ride second field, which is a bit less speedy and no jumps but lots of fun for all."

Susan Peters and Sue Sundstrom will be riding for the breast cancer cure on October 10. It is a 10-mile ride, on ten-ten-ten (Oct. 10, 2010) with the Green Mountain Horse Association. Donors welcome!

Anne Owen has been participating in demonstrations with her local fire departments on how to handle and remove horses from a barn. Anne writes: "Most of the firemen have no experience with handling horses and were all very pleased for the experience. We asked them to wear their full equipment so the horses could get used to it. We used Gna and Freyr and a couple of large horses. The firemen were very good with putting on the halters and learning about the way a horse thinks,

and explaining why horses run back into a burning barn and how to move them and put them somewhere safe. The police are not allowed to touch horses, and we

set up a call list if they find horses loose on the roads. I have had to get up at 2:00 a.m. to rescue a couple of loose horses on the highway. All the horses and firemen worked very well together."

We look forward to several upcoming competitions and clinics, including a sanctioned show on July 10–11 at Susan Peters' Silver Maple Icelandic Horse Farm and a schooling show on July 24–25 and sanctioned show on August 28–29, both hosted by Solheimar and to be held at the Tunbridge fairgrounds. Heleen Heyning will host a clinic with Steinar Sigurbjornson on the same weekend (August 28–29) at West Wind Farm in Delhi, NY. Thor Icelandics plans a pace clinic on August 14 and a competition clinic and schooling show are scheduled for September 10–12.

NEIHC members are encouraged to check the NEIHC Yahoo mail group, our website (neihc.com), and our Facebook page for news and info on upcoming events. Or contact club president, Brian Puntin by phone: 413-528-3003 or e-mail: bpuntin@bcn.net.



At the Thor Schooling Show, Johanna Gudmundsdottir presents Princessa from Four Winds Farm to the dinner crowd moments before the raffle was closed. Brigit Huwyler was the lucky winner of the foal. Photo by Betty Grindrod.



Thor Schooling Show judge Steinar Sigurbjornsson and scribe, Susan Milloy, pause for a photo between classes. Photo by Betty Grindrod.

## SAINT SKUTLA ICELANDIC HORSE CLUB

*Andrea Barber writes:* Once the snow melted the members of the Saint Skutla Icelandic Horse Club were off and running for the season! Two club members, Stephanie Sher and Cordy Sullivan, started it off by riding in a Bombproofing clinic taught by a local mounted police officer. Stephanie rode Ögri frá Saudárkróki (IS1991157002) and Cordy rode Flygill from Vesturbaer (US1992103541). Steady Flygill impressed with his calm demeanor through many of the obstacles. Ögri, on the other hand, was not so sure this was all such a good idea and expressed that he much preferred to be out on the trail.

The first group ride was the second annual "Steve's Birthday Ride." It was held in the beginning of May at the Keuka Lake Outlet Trail in Dresden, NY—a beautiful rail to trail running between the Finger Lakes of Seneca and Keuka. It included club members Amy Goddard on Randver frá Leysingjastöðum (IS1989156304), Cordy Sullivan on Lysingur frá Eyjólfstöðum (IS1992156186), Stephanie Sher on Ögri, Elisa Dann on Mön frá Enni (IS1996256769), Peggy Brosnahan on Flygill, Andrea Barber on Víkingur frá Götu (IS1989184930), and the birthday boy, Steve Barber (now age 40!) riding Nökkvi frá Lágafelli (IS1989184357). With seven horses and riders it was a good turnout for such a small club—and so early in

the season. It was an unusually hot day for spring with a high of 87F! So the group took a long break near the Seneca falls, where the breeze and the spray from the falls cooled both the horses and riders. The horses also enjoyed a cool dip in the Keuka Outlet near the end of the ride.

The Therapeutic Riding Program at Roberts Woods Farm in Massachusetts hosted a three-day clinic for children with cancer in conjunction with the Hassenfield Center on June-3. This was a new project for the program, and Esther Hefernan posted a request for volunteers on Facebook. Member Lori Horner offered to help with the horse side of the program (other activities were yoga and arts & crafts). Four Icelandic horses were used, and they stole the show with their very big hearts. On the last day of the program all of the children showed their parents they could ride their horses in tolt! This was a very successful and worthwhile program at an amazing facility with generous and caring staff and volunteers.

Towards the end of May the foals began to arrive. At Sand Meadow Farm owned by Andrea and Steve Barber, two foals were born, both by their stallion, Kalman frá Lækjamóti (IS1995155106). Gima frá Ytra-Dalsgerdi (IS1997265791) had a elegant black filly that will be named Aska from Sand Meadow, and Sædis frá Melabergi (IS1997225851) had a very large chestnut colt that will be named Magni from Sand Meadow. Elisa Dann's mare Tinna frá Árbakka (IS1993286703) also gave birth to a black filly. She is yet to be named and is by Elisa's young stallion, Völur from Penridge Farm (US2006103833). Elisa is also expecting another foal from Völur and her mare Kolbrún frá Sydri-Brennihóli (IS1995265420) a little later in the season.

In June Steve and Andrea Barber successfully competed in several local events. On June 5 they traveled to Dansville, NY to compete in a trail trial at High Standard Stables. Steve rode Kalman and Andrea rode Víkingur. Both horses had done well at trail trials before, and this day was no different. Steve and Kalman took first place, while Andrea and Víkingur took third. Not too shabby, considering

the second place rider was the mounted policewoman who had taught Stephanie and Cordy's bombproofing clinic! Then on June 19 the same pairings competed in a ACTHA CTC (trail trial) at the Highland Forest in Fabius, NY. This time the obstacles were quite a bit tougher, but Steve on Kalman still managed a very respectable fourth place finish out of 23 horses and riders. As usual Kalman was the only stallion competing in the event and was a great promotion of the exceptional character of the breed.

The following day Andrea on Víkingur and Steve on Nökkvi (affectionately known as "The Dream Team") competed in a hunter pace at Knight Farm in Honeoye, NY. The course was a challenging one with hills, mud, streams, etc. to traverse, but Víkingur and Nökkvi are very experienced and knew just how fast they could safely push it. The ride was also exceptionally beautiful, passing through bucolic fields, enchanted woods, and magical waterfalls. Even with their fast time the team ended with a second place finish in their division. But what's really amazing is Nökkvi's performance, considering he had major surgery (complete amputation of his penis and sheath) and came very close to death just a few short months ago. He is a testament to the resiliency of the breed!

Harriet Rubins' elderly mare Gjölf ("Gift") frá Reykjavík (IS1983225001) found a new calling in life to fill her retirement years. She is working in therapeutic riding at Bristol Valley Training Center located in Canandaigua, NY. With instruction from owner/manager Jennifer Lilly, Megan Doody, nine years old, is learning to ride on Gift. Megan is enjoying her instruction as well as doing her physical therapy exercises on horseback. Her favorite gait is the tolt! Gift's favorite part of the lessons is standing perfectly still while Megan performs her exercises.

Now that it's July and the heat is creeping up a bit, we Northerners often slow down a bit as we (and the horses) don't much like the heat! But we did manage to squeeze in one more group ride in early July right before the temperatures really started to rise. Andrea





Several Saint Skutla Club members take a break near Seneca Mills Falls on the Keuka Lake Outlet Trail. Photo by Andrea Barber.



Two of the foals born this year at Sand Meadow Farm, both sired by Kalman frá Laekjamóti. Magni (the black) is out of Sædis frá Melabergi, Aska is out of Gima frá Ytra-Dalsgerdi. Photos by Andrea Barber.



"We're free!" The herd at Sand Meadow Farm escapes the paddock (for a while). Photo by Andrea Barber.

Barber on Vikingur, Steve Barber on Kalman, Stephanie Sher on Ögri, Sandra Plumb on Flygill, and Elisa on Kitla from Rhythmhill (US199201396) met at Mendon Ponds Park in Mendon, NY, just a few minutes from Steve and Andrea's Sand Meadow Farm. Andrea led the ride through the park's very varied terrain, tolt-ing around the Deep Pond, galloping up the West Esker, trotting through the Fern Valley, cantering through the Pine Woods, and finally navigating the steep and scenic hills of the East Esker. There were also cherries to pick and snack on right off the tree along the way.

Currently, our horses are in the barn under their fans, and many of our members are either by the lake or pool, or inside in the air conditioning until our couple of weeks of very warm summer weather wears off. Then we'll be back out again, ready to hit the trails and enjoy all the beauty and fun our corner of the world has to offer. Tally ho!

### **WESTCOAST CAN-AM ICELANDIC HORSE CLUB**

*Kathy Lockerbie writes:* Summer has arrived in the Pacific Northwest. The week of June 14-20 two USIHC members attended the Sport Judge Seminar offered in Chilliwack B.C. by the Canadian Icelandic Horse Federation. Jens Nielsen from Denmark was the instructor. We wish to thank Jens and his wife Jenna for coming so far and giving us the opportunity to become sport judges. Jens has come to Canada several times to teach the course. He is easy to approach and always willing to answer any question, clearly and understandably. Both Jens and Jenna are friendly and fun to be around. I highly recommend asking him to teach this course if any other Regional Clubs are considering hosting this seminar. Dawn Shaw and Kathy Lockerbie both passed to become the newest U.S. resident Canadian National Sports Judges. Now the work

begins. As soon as Kathy is recognized by the USIHC as an Intern Judge, she is very willing to come work at any Sport Competition. The difficulty in improving our skills in the U.S. is getting experience. Thank you to our members, those from the Cascade Club, and the B.C. Icelandic Horse Association who came to support the Sport Competition which took place on the weekend.

In other news, a group containing several of our members is currently on its way to Iceland. Even though Landsmot was canceled, there are still plenty of exciting things to do and see in Iceland. We wish them a safe and exciting trip. We are looking forward to lots of pictures and fun stories about their adventure.

On page 29 of this issue is a story written by one of our members. I am sure you will laugh and perhaps even relate if you have ever tried to force your Icelandic's mane into anything other than its natural free flowing state.

# TUG OF WAR, PART TWO

BY BERNIE WILLIS AND ANN-CHRISTIN KLOTH

Last Thursday I sat in the dentist's chair, relaxed, waiting for him to start working on my teeth. After a few friendly words he asked me to open my mouth. The experience was great, basically painless and quick, but then I felt something strange. It was my hands. They were white between the knuckles, the fingertips were white, too, sore all over. My fear of pain or the anticipation of it made me tense. My reaction had been to grip my hands together until they hurt. Did I suffer from the dental work or from myself? I found the answer at the 2010 FEIF Education Seminar in Wurzburg, Germany.

You may recall my review of the book *Tug of War* by Dr. Gerd Heuschmann in the March issue of the *Quarterly*. Heuschmann was the presenter at this seminar. At our first meeting, in November 2009, Heuschmann promised to share with me his experience with Icelandic horses after he had had a chance to learn from personal experience about their unique gaits and how these related to tension in the large back muscles. At the same time the value of Heuschmann's research was being discovered in America, our FEIF leaders were arranging for him to share his concerns in Europe. Credit goes to Marko Mazeland, FEIF Sport leader, Thorgeir Gudlaugson, Judging group, and Ian Pugh, FEIF Education leader, for putting together the program, and to Uli Reber for hosting the event at his farm, Lippethof, in Wurzburg, Germany. Ann-Christin Kloth, a trainer working in the Midwest (who was featured in the June *Quarterly*) was in attendance at the seminar as well. We have cooperated in making this report.

The *Quarterly* published a statement two years ago that said that humane treatment of horses means treating them in ways that will result in their being able to work for man throughout their normal anticipated life spans. Heuschmann underscored this same principle, referring to the German military riding manual Heeresdienstverordnung 12, written in



The 2010 FEIF Education Seminar was held at the farm of Uli and Irene Reber in Wurzburg, Germany. Here, host Irene Reber rides Brjänn frá Reykjavík in the demo portion of the seminar.

the late 1800s. Its message is, if you rely on a horse for travel and in battle, you have a huge interest in making and keeping it a great, sound, healthy athlete. It is this principle, health for life, that Heuschmann has built his theory upon. This is classical horse training.

## THE SWINGING BACK

According to Heuschmann, every time a person mounts a horse, he or she becomes a trainer, because their weight changes the balance of the horse. Built like a bridge with support at both ends, the back of the horse carries the rider's weight, but it is not designed to do this. Each of the vertebrae is connected to the one next to it with soft material. The long back muscle with its complex attachments from the head to the withers, over the ribs and thoracic vertebrae to the pelvis, is needed to engage the hind legs and is not much good for carrying weight. It is the ligaments and the fascia material associated with the muscles that adjust to actually carry the weight. This soft tissue is supported by the lumbar vertebrae and rib cage. These tissues form the circle referred to as the bascule that supports weight on the back of the horse. The top line of the horse works like a crane. The

head and neck are like the arm of the crane. The higher the withers are, the easier it is for the horse to lift the neck. If the head goes down, the ligaments pull the back up. If the head goes up, the ligaments relax and the back goes down.

Quoting from *Tug of War*, "If a horse is ridden correctly, the muscle system of the upper neck develops into a beautiful, long,



Gerd Heuschmann, the presenter at the 2010 FEIF Education Seminar in Wurzburg, Germany, discussing the practical part of the seminar with an attendee. Heuschmann is the author of the book *Tug of War*, which was reviewed in the March 2010 issue of the *Quarterly*.



Henning Drath (moderator) and Freya Puttkammer (rider) during the practical part of the seminar.

convex-curved line. Apart from connecting the cervical spine with the shoulder, these muscles (most importantly the M. splenius cervicis) are responsible for raising the neck. When the head-neck axis is held in a low position, the nuchal ligament supports the neck passively while the active muscles tend to direct the long spinous processes of the withers forward. This enables the back to be raised via the suprapinous ligament and thus releases the longissimus muscle. *The result is that these longissimus muscles are now free to work properly, allowing the back to “swing”!* (pages 62-63)

A horse without a rider has no need to develop these tissues except to show off to a potential mate. Essentially what we are trying to do with classical training methods is to develop parts of the horse so that it can carry a person without injuring itself. All serious riders want to develop their horses correctly, but the educated serious rider has a better chance of success. Heuschmann warns on page 52: “When the horse’s head and neck are positioned too high, it tries

to support the rider by tensing its longissimus muscle, resulting in a ‘hollow’ back, resistance, poor gaits, and lameness. If the rider places the horse in an extremely deep and round position (‘hyperflexion’ or *Rollkur*), enormous tension is placed on the



Katharina Fritsch riding Sikill frá Sperdli (owned by Katrin Sheehan of the USIHC) in the demo.

upper neck muscles and ligament system, and the back. While the horse’s back does ‘rise,’ it is overstretched and tense, which restricts the hind limbs’ ability to step under the trunk. The result is an uncomfortable, unhappy horse that is on the forehand with trailing hind legs, and unable to truly collect.”

## THE BRACED BACK

At the FEIF seminar in Wurzburg, judges, trainers, and veterinarians acknowledged that they see problems associated with riding methods. Heads carried too high, hollow backs, uneven and short hind-leg steps were mentioned. One vet from Iceland admitted that she normally sees a couple cases a year of hind lower leg ligament problems. But in 2009, she treated 20 cases. Heuschmann sees a common relationship between all these problems. It is the braced back. A back held in abnormal tension does not allow the hind legs to move normally. There is a connection between the joints and the ligaments from the hip through the knee to the hock. If you lift the hind leg of a horse you can move the joints at the hoof and fetlock independently, but the joints further up the leg move together. You cannot flex the hock without flexing the knee, for instance. Imagine what happens if the long back muscle is tense and does not allow the hip to flex forward in its normal range, thereby limiting the range of flexion of the knee and hock. How does the back end of the horse keep up with the front? The fetlock and coffin

bone joints overcompensate. Their tendons are overworked, become inflamed, or worse.

What causes a horse to stiffen its back, shorten its stride, and potentially get hurt? It is us! We do it when we ask for too much too soon. It takes a talented horse seven years to make it to the Grand Prix level after basic training, or about 12 years total. Piaffe, trot in place, is normally done a few steps at a time. Passage, the slowly forward moving piaffe, may be done for some 50 meters. Our slow tolt, which approaches the passage in difficulty when done to the highest levels, is done for some 200-plus meters in T-1 classes. Are we officially asking too much in our classes?

While in Europe on this trip to the FEIF Education Seminar, I took time to visit the Spanish Riding School in Vienna. I learned that their horses start training at four years old, just like ours. They don't show until around seven and retire at 25. How many top Icelandic horses do we see in the World Championships in their twenties?

Asking too much too soon is not the only way to overtense a horse's back. Sometimes we demand instead of asking for things. Heavy hands and curb bits too early in the training process get results, but the costs are very high. Tensing the back can come from pain in the mouth, or from the anticipation of pain. I imagine a horse could overcome the anticipation of pain in the mouth in about the same time I could overcome the anticipation of pain from the dentist. Are some of our most talented horses ruined well before their prime? Heuschmann is convinced that many great dressage horses are buried well before they have had a chance to demonstrate their true talents. Those that survive are worthless for general riding. Stars in the arena have no market beyond the ring. He warned us not to follow their example.

Have you heard of leg movers and back movers? One of the problems in high-level dressage is horses that show very high front leg movements and very low hind leg action. According to Heuschmann, the leg action of the front radius bone and hind cannon bone should be parallel in trot. If they are not parallel, then the large back muscles are not working well. Such a horse can be labeled a leg



The audience in the theory room.

mover. If this is not corrected, the horse is on the way to lameness. Our guidelines for tolt call for suppleness throughout the whole horse. A well conditioned, trained, and ridden Icelandic ripples in movement from the chest to the tail. The loins demonstrate this flexibility as the fascia contracts, pulling the pelvis forward, lowering the croup, raising the back, and positioning the hind legs well underneath the rider. If you were in Holland for the World Championships in 2007, you may have seen Kormakur vom Lipperthof ridden by Thordur Thorgeirsson and his perfect score of 10 for tolt. Kormakur was a true back mover. His collection was not forced from the rider's hands but given from the hind legs. The croup lowered noticeably as the horse accelerated and the hind legs reached far forward. In 2009 in Switzerland, Asta Covert rode Dynjandi fra Dalvik in slow tolt at the highest level of collection, the whole horse performing a spectacular dance.

## A GOOD SEAT

Developing a good equestrian seat is a lifelong experience. Experts say most of our riding aids should come from the seat, next the legs, then the hands, and finally our voice. But what if we are not sitting in the right place to begin with? Heuschmann indicates that the thoracic vertebrae, those that are not connected to the ribs, cannot support a rider's weight without pain. Many of us who have ridden for many years can remember the

warning about not sitting on the horse's kidneys. The kidneys are protected far underneath the thoracic vertebrae. No one will ever sit on them, but we can cause pain by sitting on the bones that protect them. Pinching the long back muscles between the thoracic vertebrae and the saddle stiffens the back and lights the fuse for the flight instinct. Sitting in the wrong place puts demands on the horse that we may not intend. Heuschmann prefers to ask gently and take whatever the horse gives with thanksgiving. I was surprised when watching the riders in Vienna working on the levade. Their goal was to have the horse squat in the hind and come off the ground in the front. If the horse just lowered the croup a smidgen, it was awarded a lump of sugar. If it lowered the croup and lifted the front off the ground as well, it got the rest of the day off, starting immediately. The rider dismounted on the spot and after profuse praise walked the horse away.

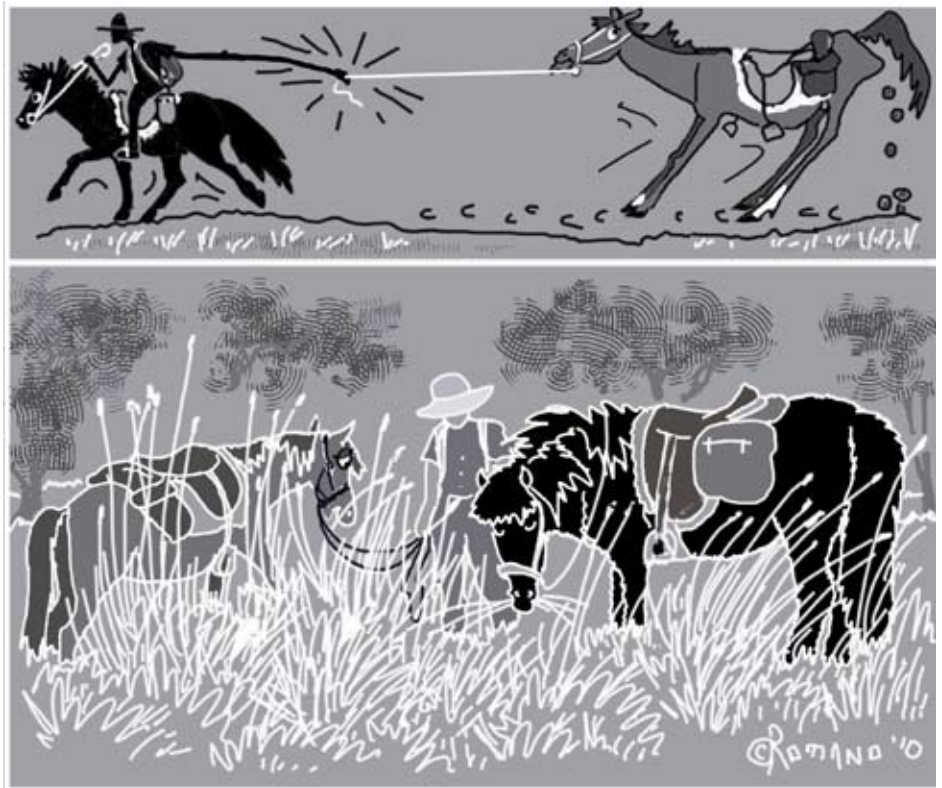
Heuschmann was full of diplomatic praise for FEIF. Meeting with riders, trainers, and judges all at the same time and place was a perfect and productive experience for him. Ann-Christin and I anticipate that our international leaders will take his message seriously and seek to modify our classes and tests to honor our horse. The judging guidelines have come a long way since they were all on one page, but they are up for further review as we develop a better understanding of the biomechanics of the horse.

# DASH FOR THE DANISH

BY CHRIS ROMANO

Our Icelandic horse adores Danish pastries. He has no thoughts concerning the centuries of Danish oppression of Iceland. His thoughts pertain only to Denmark's enticing buttery treats, topped preferably with apricots. This story, set in the San Francisco Peninsula's town of Woodside, describes our quest to ride from my home to our town's bakery and back to procure pastry. The journey has challenges, dangers, and rewards. Once a week we travel about 6 miles (9.6 kilometers) round-trip to the Woodside Bakery, part of a small group of stores with hitching racks nearby. Timing is everything, and if I saddle up too late in the afternoon, the bakery may have run out of apricot Danishes. The Icelandic horse will be sorely disappointed, having to settle for cherry or apple toppings, and he does notice the difference.

We have two horses, an Icelandic and my husband's Paso Fino, neither of which want to be left at home alone, so I pony one and ride the other. Normally we ride our horses with halters, which makes tying up to hitching racks and grazing easy. But when riding to town, the Icelandic has to wear his bit, because he's just that excited! I saddle both horses, enabling me to switch mounts. Naturally, they prefer to have lunch at the halfway point, so I pack saddlebags with two 5-cup containers (1.8 liters) of easily digested small-sized pellets. I'm able to add water to these pellets, thus making a slurry, if the day is hot. I must also bring at least four or five carrots, two apples, and emergency horse cookies. The saddle bags also contain garden clippers, a folding saw, hoof pick, tail comb, small horse brush, flea comb for ticks, spare straps, spare halter, spare clips and two one-pint (.47 liter) reusable water bottles. It is really important to balance the weight of the saddlebags, to avoid saddle slippage, seam stress, and discomfort to the horse. I carry two collapsible camp bowls for the pellets. I personally carry a daypack, which has a flashlight and spare batteries, insect repellent, sunscreen, Swiss army knife, magnifier, spare contacts and glasses kit, overshirt and/or coat and scarf, plastic emergency bag, leather gloves, rubber



gloves for rain, toilet paper, tampons, band aids, notebook, cash, and a snack of cheese, jerky, nuts, and crackers. These routine provisions prepare us for most trail rides.

## UNUSUAL INTERACTIONS

I'm headed toward dedicated town trails, but the nearest one to me is nearly a mile (1.6 kilometers) away, and to get there we must travel some steep, slippery, narrow asphalt roads. As soon as we turn toward town, the Icelandic's determination is inexhaustible; he wants his Apricot Danish and would bolt to get it, hence the bit. We live at the north end of town, on a 300-foot-high and mile- (1.6 kilometer-) long hill studded with an ever increasing number of homes only accessed by the aforementioned winding roads. I dismount at the steepest one-lane road, and lead both horses. The ponied horse's lead is longer and he can fall back behind. Often it is safest to lead both horses closely, with me sandwiched between the two. This is because there is little mobility when a car zooms around the corner, impatient for

me to find a pullout or driveway and get out of their way. However, some drivers slow down and smile as they pass.

The streets here are shaded by big oaks, with a good variety of bird songs. The spicy smell of California Bay laurel fills the air, and there is still water trickling in the arroyo. I mount again and sally forth. In minutes I'm jerked back, my arm nearly pulled from its socket. I've not noticed that the ponied Paso Fino wants to poop. I realize other horses always poop while moving down the trail. I have failed to convince my horses that this is a good idea, and my tugging is met with pouty pained looks.

A few people in the area still have horses, though sadly many paddocks throughout Woodside have been replaced by new big homes. It is a rule that people like views of rural nature. It is another rule that many buyers and their realtors, who like the look of rural nature, do not want to live with deer, coyote, or dusty backyard equines for neighbors. Our

town was once a backyard-horse owner's dream, with more horses than people. The town's planners have, at various times and because of various political pressures, made and enforced increasingly restrictive rules for backyard horsekeeping. Thus, only a single digit percentage of backyard horse keepers remain. The trend is for wildlife-proof fencing and big clanging automatic gates and a population that is no longer interested in maintaining horses at home or at stables. The recent town planners have strongly encouraged developers to maintain a "rural look and horsey feel" to properties. The result has been storage sheds or indoor basketball courts that look like barns, complete with fake paddocks, but these amenities will never be home to a horse. Fortunately, there is the Woodside Horse Owners Association, a town Trails Committee, and the San Mateo County Horsemen's Association, among other groups, that try to maintain equestrian life in our town and surrounds.

The expected and unexpected dangers need to be in the back of my mind, as I ride along. There is the ever-increasing traffic in our area. There are automatic gates that may start to open at any moment, or lunging guard dogs. There are tennis courts with automatic shooting dispensers and balls banging against court fencing. Other noises include screaming garbage trucks and screeching construction or utility cranes, and nail guns. Letting the horses graze nearby these items or giving them a piece of carrot during the encounter can be very calming.

I need to watch for new and unusual pets in town. Recently, one horse owner, whose property abuts the trail, adopted a really huge, friendly, full-grown rescue pig. I need to get the horses used to the pigs, llamas, alpacas, goats, and peacocks in town. These are the encounters for which I definitely dismount, taking time to let the horses graze and assess these new creatures. Here lies the beauty of the Icelandic's smaller stature, I easily mount and dismount when needed. Grazing really gives the horses time to calmly adapt to new situations. But, a bounding deer, flushed bird, running cat, or loose dog can be a problem for any trail rider, and these potential meetings need to be anticipated and a rider must retain a leadership role.

## RISK MANAGEMENT

Nothing is as dangerous as a wasp nest built into the trail. I repeat, no wildlife I've experienced riding—and that includes black bears, coyotes, mountain lions, or bobcats—is as dangerous as wasps boiling out of the ground underneath your mount and stinging you both. This has not happened to me going to town. It has happened to me on the local county park trails. I haven't a foolproof solution to this scary predicament, and each summer wasps are a looming anxiety for me. The mountain outfitters, who lead strings of mules and horses into the high country, have a saying, "It's not *if* a crack up is going to happen, but *when*..." Crack up refers to part or all of a pack string getting tangled up, getting sucked down and drowned in a river, getting hit by lightning, getting caught on snags or falling off cliffs, among other things, like wasp nests. Outfitters, the bravest, most capable folks I've ever met, must keep risk management in the back of their mind at all times. I suggest any trail rider needs to think that same way.

We come to the main busy two-lane road, Canada Road, which we cross and access a trail that lies between it and Freeway 280. For the next mile (1.6 kilometers) it is very noisy. There is the steady roar of traffic and the odd loud truck with flapping tarps,

wailing fire engines, police cars, and ambulances. At the stop signs, sports cars and numerous Harley motorcycles purposefully rev and roar off, engines backfiring. Some younger drivers play deafening music, as well. The route is a favorite of area motorcyclists. The backfiring really spooks the horses, even the Icelandic. Noise ordinances are not enforced, and we have to plug our ears as these vehicles roar by. I can't do much for the horses, except turn their heads away from the offending sounds.

Next comes a road drain, whose grate emits eerie echoing subterranean sounds. Often we experience road construction, with big machines replacing or grinding asphalt on freeway or this main road. The tree trimmers use cherry pickers to trim huge eucalyptus and other trees, branches swinging back and forth, crashing to the ground, and then the chippers wail and spew out their rendered piles. Local gardeners and road maintenance crews all use leaf blowers, weed whackers, and big mowers. There can be a street sweeper going by or garbage trucks lifting dumpsters, with ensuing crashing and shattering sounds. The last obstacle on this section of trail is riding under the freeway. Echos under overpasses can be frightening to horses. There can be loud thumps, too, as heavy trucks go over concrete sections, and the sections flex together. Then there are quieter items that might spook a horse,





but are more visual, like a pack of 30 or 50 bicyclists, perceived as a fast moving, hissing blob of color. They're on the area's famous and well-loved bike lane next to the trail.

## THE LAST MILE

It's only a mile (1.6 kilometers) to the bakery, now. Sometimes my husband drives down the hill to join me for this part of ride and often, on the way back, we switch and he takes the horses home and I drive home. Now, the only problems will be the more known obstacles. These are crossing the new slippery asphalt driveway, passing the barking dog at the vanity vineyard, and passing the barking dogs at the fake stable, throwing themselves against the fake horse fencing. In this part of Woodside, there's the ever-present sounds of mansions being constructed by the new gentry, even in these tough economic times. Fortunately, trash cans blowing around in the wind are not a problem, since the horses think trash cans mean grain bins. They actually like to sniff the green waste containers. You wouldn't think a horse carriage would be scary, and Four-in-Hand is quite beautiful to see, but many horses really get spooked hearing all those hooves on the pavement, and they wonder what is coming at them from behind. We have a very active carriage group in town, who like to loop through town.

The section of trail is now tree-lined and shady. There are fragrant roses or Spanish jasmine wafting around us. We see where one new resident is horsey, and the backyard looks like a happy scene from a Western stage set, complete with tipi. We pass riders, both English and Western; the equestrians are part of the essential tourist scenery of our town. The riders are coming and going to different dedicated town trails and county parks. The Icelandic has what amounts to a local fan club. Riders, and even drivers, cheerily wave and call out his name. We pass the mare who runs and kicks up her heels every time when we pass. We stop by the two old horses who wait at their fence all day for visitors bearing treats. We always give carrots to them (and to our mounts). Various joggers and dog walkers wave a hello. This last mile is a pretty nice stretch of trail.

Some infrequent events do happen on this quieter stretch of trail to our town's center. On my last ride there was fence construction, and the ponied Paso Fino got his foot caught in the plumb line string. One time a fire plug was hit by a driver, and the plug squirted up a 20-foot (4.8 meter) geyser. The ponied Icelandic didn't care, but the frightened Paso Fino was difficult to ride. In summary, our only solution to many of these problems is to take our time and

help the horses stay calm. If they can't graze we give them carrot bits or just try to ride by in a controlled, determined manner. Even then, there are some situations that are too much and that's when each rider has to quickly and decisively decide if dismounting is the safest option. That is especially true when ponying another horse.

There is the smell of pastry, pizza, and coffee in the air, and we are there. We dismount, tie up the horses to the hitching rack, and I exchange the Icelandic's bit for a halter. The Paso Fino is pawing for his lunch, and I bring out the pellets. There is a faucet nearby, so we can use the collapsible camp bowls to give them water. If it's hot, I feed fewer pellets and soak them. It's nice to be able to wash my hands and face, before going into an eating establishment.

While the horses are happily munching pellets, I march off to the Woodside Bakery and procure the treats, two chocolate chip cookies for the husband, a coffee and cherry Danish for me, and an apricot Danish for the Icelandic. We are in luck, there is still one apricot Danish left, and the clerk smiles, knowing that the Icelandic will be eating it. The Icelandic hears the bag rustling as I return, heading his way. His head is bobbing up and down with an intense excited expression, and he licks his quivering lips. The apricot Danish is presented; he eats it in nearly one gulp, and is then hoping for more. The Paso Fino gently shares the cherries off my Danish, carefully sucking one at a time off my fingers. He will not eat the buttery, flakey pastry. We feed an apple, half to each horse, and see a family coming out of Buck's Restaurant toward us. The children want to visit our horses. We let their parents lift the kids onto each horse. One parent takes snapshots. Hopefully, one of these children will become a horse lover. It is a happy Woodside moment for everyone. They leave waving, we have served our role as ambassadors for Woodside's horse community.

The sun is lowering, and a little breeze is up. We find a nice mounting rock and head home. The fog streams over the redwood and chaparral ridge to the west. It is the beginning of a nice sunset. The traffic has died down, a bit. The wild oats and Harding grass are at their peak, and we tolt and graze our way back the way we came. We have met the challenges of our quest. We safely and successfully made the Dash for the Danish, yet once again!



# A RIDE ON BELLE ISLE

BY SUE STAGGEMEIER

Almost everyone has heard of New York City's Central Park, the oasis in the city designed by Frederick Law Olmstead. Chances are, however, that unless you have lived in the Detroit metropolitan area, you've never heard of another inner city oasis designed in the 1880s by Olmsted, called Belle Isle. This 982-acre park is an island in the Detroit River, which separates Canada (Windsor) from the U.S. (Detroit).

Belle Isle has a long and interesting history, including Ottawa and Chippewa Indian tribal use. French white settlers moved onto the island in the early 1700s. In 1768, the British purchased the island from the Indian Nations with goods estimated at \$1,000 in value. In 1783, after the Revolutionary War, the Treaty of Paris was signed, which made Belle Isle an American Territory. Belle Isle was privately owned until 1879, when the City of Detroit bought the island for \$180,000, and it was set aside as a recreational area. Through the years it has been home to yacht clubs, a casino, a zoo, an aquarium, a conservatory, a golf course, a lighthouse, and a maritime museum. The island has also served as the race route for Grand Prix automobile racing. Currently Belle Isle boasts a beautiful Carillon Tower built in 1940, which is still operating, and a beautiful fountain, which is the centerpiece of the island.

At one time there was a riding stable, but it was closed decades ago. Since then, no horses except for Detroit Mounted Police animals have been allowed on the island. However, on May 15, due to the

efforts of the Michigan Black Horseman's Association (MBHA), Belle Isle saw horses once more—in fact, approximately 120 horses!

May 15 was the date of the first annual MBHA coordinated charity horse ride to benefit Detroit's Barbara Ann Karmanos Cancer Center and the MBHA's outreach efforts to inner city kids. Riders of all breeds and disciplines were invited to join in the historical event, which included an organized ride around the 5.5-mile perimeter of the island. The group ride was led by members of the Detroit Mounted Police, with Detroit Mayor Dave Bing giving a welcome and kick-off speech (see <http://www.tellusdetroit.com/local/10-trail-ride-051610.html>).

Riders came from as far away as Indiana, Ohio, and Chicago to visit Belle Isle on horseback. Many riders were drawn by their memories of fun family outings as children, their desire to connect with inner-city kids, or just as adults wanting to experience this special island park in downtown Detroit. The weather was beautiful and the ringing of the bells in the carillon tower added to the happy ambience of the day.

The benefit's theme was "Bringing the Country to the City," and horses came from near and far; but it's pretty safe to say none came farther than Iceland! Gumi fra Barkarstodum and Volki fra Olvaldsstodum (aka Kiwi) are two 19-year-old geldings who were born in Iceland, but currently call Michigan home. Born of different mothers, their sire was Vonar-Neisti fra Skollagrof. Their respective riders, Sue Staggemeier



Gumi and Sue on their tour of Belle Isle. Gumi is sure and steady despite car traffic and over 100 new equine acquaintances.

and Michelle Litkouhi, heard about the ride and loaded up the trailer for the trip through inner-city Detroit to Belle Isle.

Gumi's position of choice in the ride was to be leading the way, ahead of the mounted police escort, but in the interest of good country-city relations, he dropped back and settled for the front of the 120 member "guest herd" instead. Kiwi, consistent with his friendly nature, worked the crowd and visited up and down the long parade. Gumi and Kiwi were good breed ambassadors, and garnered their share of attention from on-lookers and other riders. The experience of being on an island in a large herd may have seemed vaguely familiar to both of them, but the Detroit skyline was like nothing they had seen in their youth; or anything their grandfather Hrafn fra Holtsmula 802 could ever have imagined.

For media coverage of the MBHA ride, see <http://detnews.com/article/20100515/METRO01/5150370/> [http://www.myfoxdetroit.com/dpp/morning\\_by\\_day/Horsemen%27s-Ride-Set-For-Belle-Isle](http://www.myfoxdetroit.com/dpp/morning_by_day/Horsemen%27s-Ride-Set-For-Belle-Isle)

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<http://www.fobi.org> (Friends of Belle Isle)  
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At the halfway-point rest stop: Detroit River and skyline in background.

# HAVOC IN ICELAND

BY THÓRUNN KRISTJÁNSDÓTTIR

As if Iceland hasn't suffered enough in the last two years with its economic woes, late this winter and early spring the country was hit by a double-whammy. In January a horse flu began spreading like wildfire. Then in March a "tourist-volcano" began erupting, which according to my friends in Iceland was just "pretty." That volcano was the warm-up act for the big show: On April 14, Eyjafjallajökull erupted, shutting down air traffic around the world. Whoever said that the small island of Iceland couldn't make a world-wide impact?

## THE FLU SAGA

Iceland hasn't allowed the importation of animals for over 900 years, and is strict about what else is imported. Therefore, we don't have viruses and sicknesses that other countries have. In January, a very serious horse flu spread around my native Icelandic shores. The horses, having no immunity or vaccinations, got sick with this flu—and quickly. At first, the Icelanders didn't realize the severity of the illness and how contagious it was. They'd never experienced anything like it. On April 7, the riding school Hólar sent out a notice (and acknowledgement) about the sickness,

and after that they knew that this wasn't just any cold, but that it was a very serious matter. By the end of April or beginning of May, just about every barn and herd was sick with a cold, nasal discharge, and respiratory problems. The sickness could be traced back to one training station, but they are not sure how the horses there contracted the sickness in the first place.

When my family and others here in the States heard the symptoms, we immediately thought that it must be a form of strangles. But we couldn't figure out how in the world they could have contracted it, knowing how careful everyone is with the horses there, down to what they bring into Iceland, right down to their clothes and footwear. No used tack is allowed into the country, and all riding clothes and boots must be sterilized.

In April I heard that they had got test results back from Europe. This was not a European flu or influenza. They weren't sure what this thing was. I heard some say that it must have come from North America because it wasn't European, but I can't confirm this. They were now saying that it was a form of Streptococcus. That's when it truly hit home for me, because if it was a form of Streptococcus, it can be

life threatening, especially for pregnant mares and their unborn foals. My mare was due to give birth to my foal at the end of May. I was on pins and needles, since this foal held so many hopes and expectations for me. Luckily, on May 25 I became the proud owner of a healthy foal. I was one of the lucky ones: I've heard stories of foals dying at birth because their mothers were very sick with the flu. Only four days after my foal was born, I got the word that Landsmót was cancelled due to the flu.

The flu is an on-going matter, and it is very serious. They don't truly know what it is. It is being spread from horse to horse, and it may be airborne as well. The latest worry now is whether it can be spread to humans. The people dealing with the sick horses are being warned to not get close to the sick horses' noses and mouths, to wear masks, and to clean up after handling the sick horses. Caution is key.

## THE VOLCANO SAGA

When the first volcano erupted in the end of March, I was of course worried for my family, friends, and horses in Iceland. I was assured that this volcano was not a big deal, and that it was just "pretty." They even went so far as to call it a "tourist eruption"



USIHC member Nancy Marie Brown, who took this photo, was one of 15,000 people who hiked, rode snowmobiles or jeeps, or flew helicopters or planes to the site of Iceland's "tourist eruption" over Easter weekend.

because of the number of tourists it attracted. This was the calm before the storm, however, because on Wednesday, April 14, Eyjafjallajökull erupted.

Everyone has heard the story: the empty airports, the empty skies, the smoke, the ash cloud, yada, yada. Personally, I could have cared less about that. No one was reporting the real story about what was happening in Iceland: the floods, the ash fall, the changing winds, the emergency evacuations, the endangered animals.

I literally spent days on the phone to Iceland, because my parent's horses were in Landeyjar, just southwest of the volcano, and they needed to be evacuated. The farm where they were located is in south Landeyjar and it reaches all the way to the river—the river that the run-off water from the volcano was coming down.

The volcano is underneath the Eyjafjallajökull glacier (jökull means glacier) and it was melting the glacier, causing a lot of run-off and icebergs (some the size of small houses). According to the information that I gathered, the majority of the water was collecting in a pool on the northwest side of the volcano, and the water was then trickling around the back of the volcano to the east, and then going south down through the rivers. I think that it was on the second day that the bowl into which the water was collecting burst its banks. There was an emergency evacuation of people, and no one knew how bad the flood would be, or what would happen to the animals and property left behind. Thankfully the levies held. But the question was now whether the levies would withstand another flood.

I was in a panic, especially after Elías, a good friend of ours, called and asked if he could move his horses from Landeyjar to our family farm, close to Reykjavík. The wind was shifting, and there was a threat of more flooding. This was late on Thursday, Day 2 of the eruption.

Since the eruption, the wind had been going east or southeast (over Europe), and until then Landeyjar had been spared. But by Saturday afternoon the wind was expected to change and they wouldn't be safe from the ash fall anymore. Everyone was advised to put animals inside with clean feed and water. I felt so helpless and useless, stuck in New York, unable to do anything for anyone except make phone calls and read the latest headlines on the Icelandic websites.



A few weeks after the “tourist eruption,” the volcano started emitting huge clouds of ash that grounded planes and closed airports across Europe. It also caused significant problems for Iceland's horse breeders. Photo by Sigrún Bjarnardóttir.

Elías was going to go on Friday and Saturday to get all of his 30-plus horses before the wind changed. I called our farmer friend, where my parent's horses were, to check on him. He said that they were trying to herd all of the animals inside to safety, and that they were okay so far. I asked him if he wanted Elías to pick up our horses. He admitted that it would be better, having fewer horses, and in case something were to happen our horses would be far away.

I called Elías back, and asked him to pick our horses up along with his. He was halfway to Landeyjar with a train of cars and trailers, and with people to help him rescue the horses. I breathed a sigh of relief. But it only lasted for a few hours.

My good friend Martina emailed me with the news. She was stuck in Germany. She had just spoken to our friend Elías, and he was on his way back to Reykjavík—without any horses! So began the tom-tom network. Martina was trying to get ahold of people in Iceland, then emailing me; I was then calling my parents, who were trying to get ahold of friends of ours in Iceland ... we had a world-wide network going.

We learned that there was another flood rushing down. In order to quickly evacuate all the people out of the area, the police told Elías (and others) to leave the horses—even the ones he had already loaded onto the trailers—and to also leave some of the trucks and trailers. All people needed to get out of there right away. Somewhere I heard that water was starting to come into Landeyjar, near where the horses were, and that people were panicking at the prospect that the horses might drown. It seemed like sheer chaos ... and I couldn't do a thing.

By the next morning, things were calmer. I spoke with our farmer friend, and he said that during the evacuation everyone who lives south of him was told to go to his farm, because it is on the highest ground in Landeyjar. They have calculated that if the flood is big enough to take out the bridge, the people who live south of him will be better off at his farm. He told me that they had close to 40 people with them all evening. Martina had also informed me that Elías said our horses were safe, because they were at that same farm, on the highest ground in Landeyjar. It didn't really make me feel that much better though.

The levies held again. And when I spoke with my farmer friend on Saturday, he said that due to the uncertainty, things were blown out of proportion the previous day, and that Landeyjar hadn't gotten flooded. Elías managed to safely evacuate all of the horses to our farm before the wind changed. I was now able to exhale.

The aftermath after the first week: flooded farms, ash covering certain areas of the south, Highway 1 taken apart to save bridges, disruption of life, but no loss of life to any man or animal, as far as I know. And in true Icelandic fashion and humor, at this point the jokes began to fly. You all know that our economy has been in the dumps since the fall of 2008, and when the online bank Icesave failed, many people in Britain lost their savings. And so one of the jokes went, “England wanted cash, but instead we sent them ash.” Such is life on the volcanic island of Iceland—there's always excitement, positivity, and a sense of humor regardless of what is happening.

# THE NEXT VALKYRIE

BY LAURA BENSON

Yesterday, June 15, was very special for me. Eleven years ago, one sticky summer morning in Kentucky, a family showed up at Gudmar Pétursson's Icelandic horse farm, where I was then working. They had two little girls; they said that their oldest daughter, Carrie, wanted to take riding lessons and that they were interested in Iceland and Icelandic horses. After a long lecture from her father about the importance of safety and how terrified he was that his daughter wanted to ride, I finally got Carrie onto a horse, a little grey mare named Linda. Carrie's legs didn't reach halfway down the saddle, but she glued onto that mare like a centaur. She was hooked.

We continued for a few weeks of lessons, and when Gudmar came back from Iceland he took over her teaching. That fall Carrie and her family got their first Icelandic horses and they haven't looked back since. Carrie has grown up under Gudmar's wing, doing very well in both competitions and breeding evaluations. Over the last year, Carrie has learned to speak Icelandic and she is doing it with style. Watching this transformation is like reliving my teenage years, dreaming of Hólar (the college in northern Iceland that specializes in horsemanship), learning the language, just living and breathing the whole new world of Iceland.

Today Carrie Lyons-Brandt took her entrance exam to Hólar. Eight years ago I was the first American to apply for the Equestrian program, and today I got to watch the second American do our land incredibly proud. Watching her, I felt every stress and insecurity that she was going through, but I also felt her self-assurance and utter excitement. It made me feel both young again and old at the same time.

The night before her test we practiced a "mock test" on my mare, Rimma. I gave her exercises to perform in Icelandic so that she could practice the language and make sure she understood everything. Not only did she understand everything I said, she performed it all with ease on a horse that she had never



The next Valkyrie, Carrie Lyons-Brandt with Langfeti frá Hofsstöðum. Photo by Laura Benson.

ridden before. Rimma was so relaxed and compliant for her, I don't think she will ever want me to ride her again!

Carrie is so achieved and talented for her age. This is the benefit of growing up with Icelandics and immersing yourself in them. We have so many talented, up-and-coming youth riders in the United States now, and they are our future. Watching these kids ride and being able to encourage them makes my job so wonderful, because I know that the Icelandic horse has an amazing future in our country. We must help these kids achieve their goals in any way that we can.

Eight years ago, I was the long-haired blond girl, proud and determined to embark on the adventure of Hólar and

Iceland, and many of you supported me, not just financially, but morally, and I am eternally grateful. Here I am at my third year at Hólar, while the "next generation" is about to take her first. Please cheer her on and support her the way you did for me. Hopefully there will be many more kids to follow. These are exciting times!

*Editor's note: Laura Benson (pictured on the cover of this issue) is the first American to complete the three-year Equestrian program at Holar University College, Iceland. This article is reprinted from her blog, The Valkyrie Chronicles (<http://valkyriechronicles.wordpress.com/>), which describes her final year of studies at Holar.*

# BLESSI HAS A BAD HAIR DAY

BY PAMELA S. NOLF

**B**lessi (denoting Blessing in Icelandic) and I attended a clinic at Roze-el Stables, Port Orchard, WA, to learn the different styles of braids used on a horse's mane and tail. Eight horses and braiders attended the session. One of the attendees was a five-year old girl who had brought a small ladder to work on her 15-hand horse.

Evie Tatara, the instructor, takes one look at Blessi and says she has never seen a horse with so much hair. She walks away because she needs to think about how to handle that much mane. In the meantime, I am supposed to use the Sticky Goopy Paste (hereafter referred to as SGP) to move the partial left mane to the right side with the rest of Blessi's mane. The first problem is that SGP comes in a light green, round tin, and Blessi is convinced that it is a Granny Smith apple just for him. He tries so many ways to get to the plastic bag with the braiding supplies that we have stuff—crochet hooks, yarn, ribbons, shears—scattered across the arena. It does not help that the SGP has a pleasant, apple scent to it.

The second problem is that SGP just isn't going to do the job. Nothing short of industrial strength glue is going to get the left mane to stay on the right. SGP holds the mane over for about the time of an Apollo countdown—10-9-8-7-6-5-4-3-2-1, *Reykjavik, we have lift-off*—and you watch the left-hand mane separate from the right side and move back across Blessi's neck. SGP does get the short 4-inch stray mane hair to stand straight up in the air.

Evie returns in about 10 minutes and I have made no progress. Blessi still has a full right and partial left mane. So Evie decides to do a long French braid across the bottom of Blessi's mane. We can pull in the left mane as we braid.

The third problem is that Blessi has shagged his mane. He has three levels of mane—about 16 inches, 8 inches, and 4 inches—each level has more hair than a normal horse. So we decide to do two rows of French braid. Evie shows me how, and it looks easy so Evie lets me on my own.

The fourth problem is that Blessi has now discovered that there are real carrots in the supply bag and he redoubles his efforts



Blessi, officially known as Veigar frá Búdardal, shows off his unruly mane as he clowns around in his home pasture in the Pacific Northwest. Photo by Pamela Nolf.

to claim them. At one point, he gets the bag and we play tug of war with the carrot bag until it bursts. All this time, the little girl's horse is standing perfectly still like an equine angel as she works from her ladder.

The two-hour clinic is almost over, and I have two rows of French braids down Blessi's mane. The other participants are starting to lead their horses around with beautiful braided manes and tails in short French braids, button braids, galloping braids, etc. One young woman has created galloping braids on her bay horse—picture wide braids done every 6 inches down the mane and then pulled over into overlapping arches. Entwined among the braids are ribbons in shades of purple. The black tail is braided with matching purple ribbons—just a beautiful picture.

Back to Blessi. He looks like Courtney Love on a bad hair day since that 4-inch hair at the top is sticking straight up at the crest of the mane. Evie has no advice on this, so I decide to take a gold and white ribbon

and sew down the top of the mane using a back stitch. This works and actually provides a touch of elegance. Blessi now looks like Courtney Love on a really good day.

Evie and I discuss what to do about the forelock, which is almost a 4-inch thick cylinder of hair. Evie suggests that when I have another hour or so I do a single braid and somehow glue the ends in a ball under the braid. There is no time to do anything with Blessi's tail.

The event organizer snaps a picture of Blessi. As I lead Blessi back to the refreshment table for people, all the braids start to come loose and we are back to the Courtney Love bad hair day look. Oh, and that little girl and her horse are adorable as she leads him around in his short French braid with green ribbons.

Note: Blessi has an average or less-than-average mane for an Icelandic. I think Evie might have had a breakdown if she had tried to work with an Icelandic with a "good" mane for the first time.

# WHO IS CORALIE DENMEADE?

INTERVIEW BY ALEXANDRA PREGITZER

## WHAT IS YOUR BACKGROUND?

I'm originally from Zurich, Switzerland. Both my education and my work were a combination of my biggest interests: animals and travel. I studied media communication and biology, with a focus on animal behavior, with the goal of becoming a science journalist (my dream was to work for *National Geographic* eventually). I then worked for a big Swiss newspaper in the areas of local news, travel, and automobiles as a freelance journalist, and I am still writing occasionally.

## WHEN DID YOU MOVE TO THE U.S.?

I was an exchange student in Colorado many years ago and always kept in touch with my friends here. When I came back to visit one time, I met my husband. Since Colorado has always been my second home and my work as a freelance journalist allowed it, we decided to settle here. I moved here in 2008.

## WHAT IS YOUR HORSE EXPERIENCE?

I started riding when I was a kid 20 years ago. My first lesson was at the biggest Icelandic horse farm in Switzerland, located only a few minutes from our house. My mother was afraid of horses, so she thought riding the small "ponies" would be safer. I think she would not have minded at all if I had quit, but that probably made me just more determined to keep going.

So I started taking lessons on Icelandics every week. Then for years I leased horses, before finally being able to afford my own. I started working a few afternoons at the ranch during college, even taking a semester off to do an internship there. My time at the ranch taking care of about 100 Icelandic horses and assisting in teaching and training was an important foundation. So were the bronze and the silver riding badges (a general test and



Coralie practicing the four-gait program in Wisconsin. Photo by Sharon Johnson.

a test specializing in Icelandic horses that included both theory and riding), especially since our instructor had high expectations. I was debating taking the Icelandic horse trainer course when I decided to move to Colorado instead.

Seeing the lack of knowledge, trainers, and support for Icelandic horse owners, especially in the Rocky Mountains area, just encouraged me to make more out of my experience with Icelandics. I contacted Gudmar Petursson within the first few weeks of my arrival and have been traveling to his place in Kentucky several times a year ever since to improve my knowledge about training, teaching, riding, and showing. I started my own business, Tamangur Icelandic Horses, and I'm now teaching and training full time out of Monument, Colorado. In the winter of 2009 I passed the FEIF Trainer 1 test at Creekside Farm in Georgia. I still continue to work closely with Gudmar and to go out east to help out with training and at breeding evaluations, shows, and drill team events whenever I can.

These are excellent opportunities to keep in touch with the more established Icelandic horse community in the U.S. and to bring connections, an overview of current developments, and new possibilities to our more isolated area.

I like to take advantage of every opportunity I get to go to clinics with Icelandic horse trainers. I have tried several disciplines and ridden many different breeds, but nothing has captured me like riding Icelandics. Still, it is interesting to give everything a try, as you can benefit from all of them. Once a week I train Quarterhorses with a trainer friend of mine. She has excellent horse sense, and I like to learn from her. I also just went to a classical dressage clinic and I have found that these methods with their long tradition can benefit the Icelandic horse.

## WHAT IS YOUR TRAINING PHILOSOPHY?

I like to combine elements from different disciplines that I feel are effective in creating a healthy and well-trained riding

horse. Of course my background with Icelandic horses in Switzerland plays a big role, but I have since extended my training to include elements of Western horsemanship, classical dressage, and, of course, Icelandic methods. I have also implemented ideas that I got from a recent clinic with Eyjolfur Isolfsson (“Jolli”) from Holar College in Iceland, who also teaches a combination of disciplines for training Icelandics. But even though I use these different inputs, I think in the end that the training of Icelandic horses requires familiarity with the breed and its special requirements.

I found that building a relationship with groundwork as applied in natural horsemanship is an excellent foundation. I can establish leadership, sensitize the horses to me, and define the rules and “language” that will be the base for further training. I apply the concept of pressure and release, showing the horse the desired reaction by making it more comfortable than the undesired reaction. Once they learn how to use their body and understand cues from the ground, the rest of the training is a lot easier, because they are more relaxed. It’s a process that doesn’t necessarily take long, but is the basis for everything else. This is also a good way for owners to work with their horses, because even less-experienced riders can work on their leadership and at paying attention to the timing, combination, and intensity of their cues.

For the rest of the training I like to work on the horse’s suppleness, forwardness, self-carriage, and of course the quality of the gaits. I work with circles and bending a lot, no matter what level of training or what issue I’m dealing with. Stiffness, gait problems, incorrect head carriage, even misbehavior I like to address this way. If the horse tries and cooperates and shows the desired behavior, I reward it by releasing the pressure and by letting it straighten out. With all that, I always make sure to have it think forward, and I like to be out on the trail as much as possible. But once they have learned the basic concepts, these training techniques can be applied out on the trail. I like to look at the trail as another “arena” where the horse can be trained and exercised, just the same way as inside.

My goal is to train a respectful, responsive, but calm horse that is trusting and trustworthy. I want the horse to learn how to use its body effectively to carry a rider and to be able to perform at its individual best.

### **WHAT IS YOUR TEACHING PHILOSOPHY?**

Since most of my students have their own Icelandic horse, I like to teach them just as much how to ride as how to handle and train their horse. Sometimes it’s a tight balance, especially with a less-experienced rider, but I want my students to become educated about the reasons and effects

of their actions around and on the horse. My lessons usually include a lot of theoretical information on horse behavior and gaits, for example. I want my students to understand the action-reaction dynamics that are involved with horses. Sometimes this means that tolt is not really the center of the lessons for quite a while if I feel that the rider needs to understand more basic things. I truly take pleasure in seeing those little moments of success that mean so much to both horse and rider when they find balance, applying the correct cues successfully to float through the arena in a clear tolt or realize that the horse’s “mistakes” are actually due to an unintended cue.

My goal is that the rider can communicate his or her intent with clear, fair, and understandable cues, and can help the horse to stay in its best possible form and health, so that both the rider and the horse can enjoy their rides and perform at their best in whatever activity they chose.

### **WHAT ARE YOUR HOPES FOR ICELANDIC HORSES IN THE U.S.?**

I hope that the Icelandic horse community will grow bigger and tighter. I think that the fact that some owners have no or hardly any access to support is hindering the breed from really taking off. Even though the Icelandic is a horse that can be suitable for almost any level and style of riding, if trained properly and matched well to its rider, it can require certain knowledge to enjoy them to their fullest. A lot of owners would have even more fun with their horses if they could get the help to enjoy the full potential of their horses. I hope we get to the point where people have reasonable access to support and well-trained horses and where there are Icelandic horse events all over the country. Only then can the Icelandic horse have success for what it is: a powerful, willing, and versatile gaited horse with a unique character.

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Coralie’s first encounter with Aradís from Tamangur. Photo by Shawn Denmeade.

# THOR ICELANDICS' SCHOOLING SHOW

BY THORUNN KRISTJANSDDOTTIR, PHOTOS BY BETTY GRINDROD AND LISA KELLER

The word on everyone's lips after Thor Icelandic's schooling show on Memorial Day weekend? Fun! "This was our first time hosting a show, besides a small birthday competition last year, so we didn't know what to expect. Fortunately Cindy, Krista, and Brian Wescott helped us out a lot. They helped us with the class registrations, paperwork, and more. We are so grateful to them," said Kristjan Kristjansson and Johanna Gudmundsdottir, owners of Thor Icelandics in Claverack, New York, (and my parents).

"We asked Steinar Sigurbjornsson of California-based Valhalla Icelandics to be our judge. We've known Steinar since he was a baby, and we shared some childhood stories about him at the show ... some at his expense," joked Kristjan. "We hadn't seen him for over 20 years, so we were very excited to have him visit our farm and judge our first show."

Saturday morning was set to start at 9 a.m., but there was a relaxed atmosphere. Everyone was enjoying coffee and Johanna's Icelandic kleinur (donuts) while chatting, with a lingering rain cloud overhead, which cooled things off for the show start at 10 a.m.

Martina Gates and Stigandi fra Leysingjastodum II started the day off in Open Four Gait with some very impressive moves. Open Four Gait was followed by classes the likes of Youth Tolt, Three Gait, and Intermediate Four Gait. There were over 80 entries with 20 classes to compete in, one being was a new Thor creation. The Thor Cup Challenge ended the Saturday competition before dinner; it was suggested by Lori Leo of Four Winds Farm. This class was conducted like a breeding evaluation: This is a good test, in a relaxed atmosphere, to test yourself as a rider or to test your horse to see if you are ready for a breeding evaluation, and what type of scores you would receive. The consensus among the riders and audience was that it was a great new addition and an exciting



Martina Gates on Stigandi and Kristjan Kristjansson on Adam frá Kviarholi provided some excitement on Saturday evening when Stigandi tolted at full speed, next to Adam, who paced.

class to compete in.

"The best part about the Thor Cup Challenge was seeing riders of all different levels, with horses of all different levels, testing themselves," said Kristjan.

## FEAST AND FESTIVITIES

On Saturday night, Johanna prepared a feast in true Icelandic fashion. Grilled lamb (done the Icelandic way of course), venison and chicken, with numerous salads, potatoes, side dishes, and an array of desserts, everything from a deluxe chocolate cake to ice cream cakes, strawberry rhubarb crumbles with ice cream, and more.

Dinner was followed by the booming voice of Martina Gates, as she called for everyone's attention: It was time for door prizes, drawings, and for someone to become the proud new owner of a promising young filly from Four Winds Farm.

We're not talking about small prizes here either. Folks walked away with a jacket from Astund's new clothing line, a Kubota

jacket from Cindy and Brian Wescott, a jacket from Pangaea Equestrian, a full bridle from Hrimnir, a leather halter from Jon Sodli as well as a bridle from Jon, an Icelandic wool sweater made by Johanna, two large photos by Martina Gates printed on metal, a wine rack constructed out of horse shoes by NEIHC president Brian Puntin, T-shirts from shoemaker Mustad, and many more prizes.

At one point everyone thought the drawing was fixed because Catherine Slatery ended up winning half of the prizes! But Catherine had simply gotten hold of her husband's wallet and entered the drawing a lot. The result: She went home loaded with prizes!

Now the crowd was excited: They wanted the filly. "Drum role please," said Lori Leo of Four Winds Farm, as Princessa was brought out and the crowd "ooooed" and "ahhhed." "And the owner is ..." Martina announced. And not a peep. No one was jumping up and down. "Who is it? Who won?" were the words on everyone's



lips as they looked around the tent.

Brigit Huwyler was the one. She missed the show due to a previous engagement, but wanted to support it by participating in the drawing. She said, "Having forgotten all about it I almost fell on my face when I received Thorunn's phone message on Saturday night that I had won the prize, the beautiful three-year old filly, Prinsessa! I feel ecstatic and so lucky to have won her! I look forward to the challenges ahead and to see her blossom into her talents as an adult riding horse."

## SUNDAY RACES

The competition kicked off Sunday morning with the Four Gait final, Martina and Stigandi narrowly beating Kristjan on Ejdodur by 0.1 point. They set the theme for the day, which was competition, excitement, and going for the gold. This was best shown in the Pace Race, Trail Class, and Beer Tolt.

In the pace race, riders had to be pacing at a certain point on the straight-away and pace for a full 100 meters. They had two runs to accomplish this and get the best time. It was so enjoyable to see young Gillian Gates, with a look of fierce competition on her face, competing against the likes of Lori Leo on the highly judged Adam fra Kviarholi, who is a pacing machine, and Nicki Esdorn on Haukur-Freyr who, we learned, does not stop for traffic!

To see folks having so much fun, challenging themselves and their horses, and seeing their competitive spirit was the most rewarding thing for me during this entire weekend. The Trail Class was my favorite to watch. Martina and I decided to make the class more challenging; you had to win it on points from completing the obstacles, as well as on time. During the first round, everyone went through the motions, but then Jesse "James" Chamberlain gave everyone something to compete against! He made Adam fra Kviarholi work for his grain that day! They whipped around the obstacles, receiving a time of just over a minute. That was enough to light a spark in the others. Gillian Gates entered the second round and blew everyone away. She rode very smartly, gaining great time, and she was in this to win it! She beat Jesse's time by 0.02 seconds. What a thrill to watch!

"Steinar was absolutely fantastic, taking his time with each and every rider,"



Nicki Esdorn was brought to tears when she learned that she was the winner of the Five Gait class.

said Kristjan. "It was a very positive and fun experience, so fun in fact that we have to do it again! Our next show is scheduled for September 10-12, and we're going to kick it off with a Friday competition clinic with Steinar and myself."

## RIDERS' COMMENTS

What best sums up this event, though, are not the comments of the organizers, but those we heard from the riders and spectators:

Susan Milloy said, "*You are welcome here* was the unspoken theme of the schooling show this weekend at Thor Icelandic. Everything from the hosts, the judge, the beautiful scenery, and the terrific people

to the wonderful horses screamed *enjoy* and everyone did! The show was run like a professional competition, but treated like a mini-clinic . . . lots of encouragement, positive energy, and support was shown to horses, riders, and spectators alike. It was wonderful to see first-prize horses compete among trail horses and everyone have the same level of enjoyment."

Nicki Esdorn said, "I came with the whole dog-and-pony show: my parents, two girls from Germany, my corgis, and two horses. Everyone felt welcome and loved the show. And I will never forget my first pace run in competition on Thor Icelandic's fantastic track."



Husband and wife team Brian and Cindy Wescott took a victory lap, having just won the gold and silver in their class.

Mike Theriault said, “Incredible seeing all the non-professional riders doing so well and having fun doing what they love so much. The show was a great success and the excitement brought back to our farm has a number of our younger riders excited and wanting to ride in the fall show. Great job.”

Lisa Mackey said, “One of the best times I have had in my life was the weekend spent at Thor Icelandic’s First Schooling Show. It was an Icelandic riding ‘party’ complete with music, food, friendly competitions and events, and an official judge. Not having ever been in any kind of riding event before, I didn’t know what to expect.

My friend and I discussed how we’d be throwing up from nerves, but that wasn’t the case at all. The atmosphere was relaxed and the other riders were there to have fun. The show was conducive to learning and correcting riding issues in a non-threatening environment. The judge was kind and constructive in his assessment of the rider’s performance and he made each rider feel positive about his or her abilities. I’m looking forward to future Schooling Shows at Thor Icelandics!”

Jesse Chamberlain said, “The Thor Icelandics show was the first Icelandic show I had been to. I didn’t know what to expect,



Kristjan Kristjansson on Háfeti frá Hrafnholum won the Thor Cup Challenge, Loose Rein Tolt, and the Stallion tolt.



Rick Houldsworth comes around obstacle number two during his second run of the trail class; he’s going for gold.



Gillian Gates galloping towards the finish line in the Trail Class, where she won by 0.02 seconds ahead of Jesse “James” Chamberlain.

but was greeted with open arms. The whole atmosphere of the show was terrific, everyone was very willing to help me out when I needed direction. The weather was perfect for riding and the show itself went very smoothly. The dinner that was put on Saturday night was delicious and the drawing was above and beyond any drawing I’ve ever seen. Steinar was very helpful on and off the track giving advice to anyone who asked. Thor Icelandics made this show a great experience for all and I can’t wait for the next show in New York.”

# THE STORY OF THE BEAN

BY CHRIS ROMANO

**M**y Icelandic does not drop himself so I can check his penis for a “bean.” A bean is a ball of smegma, and smegma is the natural lumpy, sticky, smelly, cheesy biological matter that accumulates in a gelding’s or stallion’s sheath and inside a little pouch in his urethra. The English have a slang insult, Smeg Head, and now I know its origin. I try to check for a bean when Mr. Opportunity presents himself, and without a crowd of people around. I wait until he has finished peeing and try to gently get hold of him before he withdraws. Sometimes I try stroking his inner flank and upper sheath. He certainly will not drop completely, but with a little cooperation I can check the opening of the urethra and gently squeeze out the bead. Two months ago the Icelandic developed a very dry, hard bean that would not come out with gentle squeezing. In fact, I just made matters worse. Washing didn’t seem to soften the bean. Soon it was blocking his urination. His pee started spurting out, rather than flowing out. I decided to call the vet. The vet tranquilized him, forced the urethra back a bit, and

worked the hard, walnut-sized bean into breaking up. The white inside surface of the urethra now poked out, looking like a little, wrinkled white flower. The penis was swollen and a few tiny drops of blood were present. The vet said it was a really big, hard bean! When he woke up, the Icelandic was a very sore horse, and his penis hung down for hours. The local nanny and her charges came by to see the horses and noticed him dangling. Naturally, she decided to take photos of the child and him, etc., to send to her family in Peru.

After this experience, I will check him more often. Once or twice a year is the recommended cleaning schedule, depending on which vet you ask, but apparently my Icelandic needs washing more often. Below is my simple guide to sheath washing and bean removal.

## A BEAN GUIDE

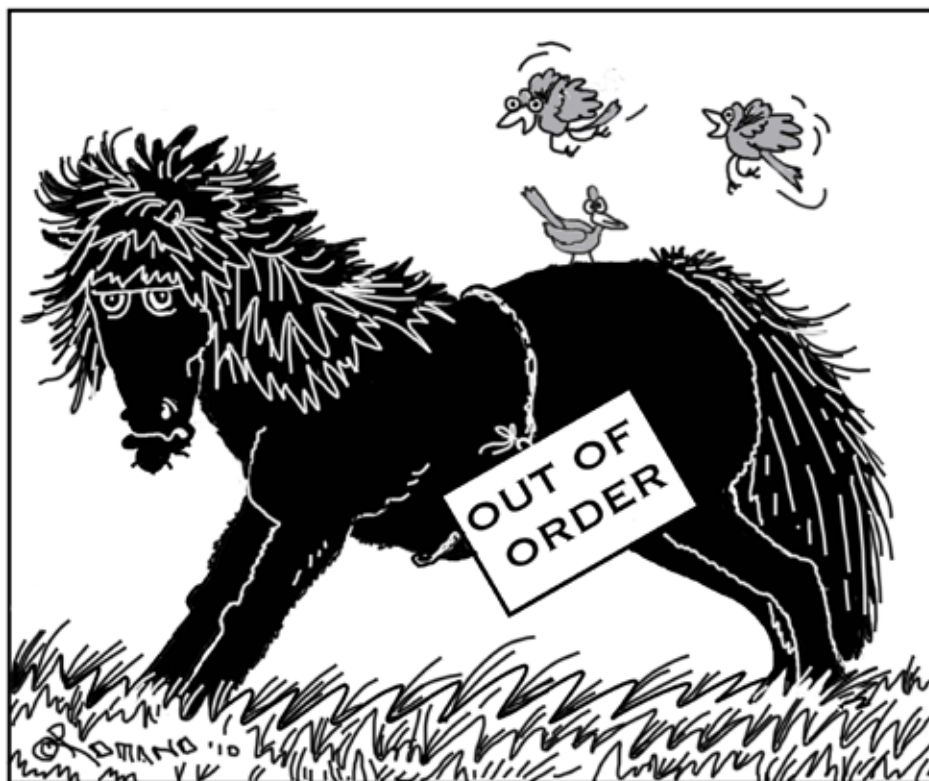
Several issues should be considered before starting the sheath-cleaning process. I have to bathe my horses in our front yard, which is very public. It seems best not to start the sheath washing when the uninitiated are

about; that may include “city folk,” irritable next-door neighbors, nannies and their charges, new romances...

It is important not to startle your horse. A jet of cold water or quick, rude hand movements might get you kicked. Long fingernails need to be trimmed and/or gloves worn. Brushing your horse before inserting your hand deep into what seems like an endless tunnel of folds helps calm the horse. Giving some hay to eat is helpful, too. Grooming and stroking around the inner flank and top sheath may help accustom him to you.

Excalibur, KY jelly, dilute Nolvasan Surgical Scrub (chlorhexidine), or dilute Betadine wash are some of the products recommended for sheath cleaning, but some of these might cause irritation—and lead to a bean. I use buckets of warm, mild soapy water and warm rinse water. Some people use the hose. Covering your hand with a thin soft sock works much better than a washcloth or sponge. The smegma will come off in little, nearly waterproof, sticky lumps, and these lumps will smell. You will have to crouch to clean, and wash water will run down to your elbow. Afterwards, one website recommends lemon juice to get smegma odor off of your hands.

If he will drop, you can clean off the little lumpy smegma bits clinging to the shaft. Then gently press the head between your thumb and forefinger to feel for a bigger lump of smegma. You are feeling for the bean, which accumulates in that little pouch just inside the urethra. If the bean is soft, like cream cheese, you may be able to gently wiggle it out. If the bean is a little harder, like Monterey Jack, you may try putting a little finger up the urethra and pulling the lump out. Make sure you wear a clean glove on the digit you intend to use. If the bean is hard like Parmesan cheese, consult your vet. You don’t want to make matters worse, like I did. After cleaning, rinse the area with warm water and your soft sock. Make sure you give your horse carrots, praises, and pats anytime you think a reward might reinforce his acceptance of the process.



# IS CORRECT SADDLE FIT A MOVING TARGET?

BY EILEEN GUNIPERO,  
ILLUSTRATION BY  
NANCY WINES-DEWAN

**D**o you know that look some people get when you're sitting around with a couple of other horse nuts yakking and yakking about all things equine? The sane people often get a glazed look in their eyes. Some tend to nod off or get up and go in search of conversation not so equine-centric. I feel like that when I get going on and on about saddles. Sadly, it's usually just me in the "conversation."

Yet even I found a lull in the brainstorm this hot summer. When I whined to the Quarterly Committee that I had no inspiration as to what to write about for this issue, fellow committee member Bernie Willis sent an email. Part of it reads:

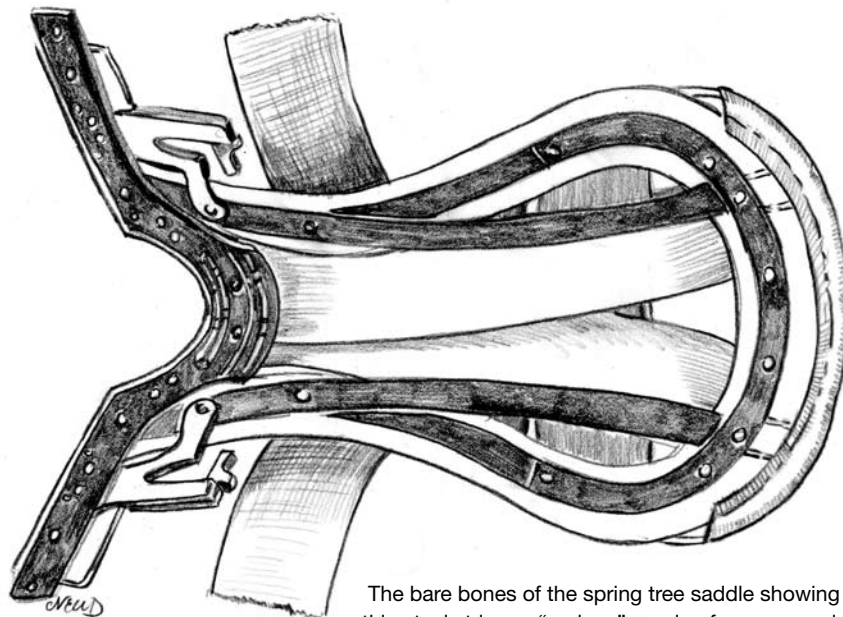
"I have a couple of concerns about saddle fit that so far I find unaddressed. First is the fact that the back of a horse changes with movement. The back comes up when the neck stretches forward and down. The back goes down when a horse is pulled up with the reins. The large back muscles ripple on opposite sides when the horse trots. This is fascinating to see when ponying. It seems that a perfect static fit is only perfect for standing still. Even in walk, the alternating hip movement is felt in the rider's seat. Does this mean that a rigid tree interferes with the walk? I'd like some answers to these situations."

Yum. Perfect opportunity to do the saddle-geek thing and go on and on to at least an audience of one.

## A SADDLE TREE

To begin with, a saddle tree is rigid, but not inflexible. A well-made wood laminate or poly carbonate tree has some amount of flex to it that is enhanced with the use of "springs." Thus you'll often see "spring tree" stamped on the flap or used in advertising. Those springs are straps of various materials (often steel) strung from the cantle to the pommel with enough tension to create a bit of a dip in the seat as well as from the front to the back of the tree.

The rider's weight down or up activates the springs and flexes the tree.



The bare bones of the spring tree saddle showing the two thin steel strips or "springs" running from pommel to cantle.

It is not as flexible as a treeless pad, but that's on purpose. Flexible trees, by their very nature, deeply flex and cannot evenly divide weight. Anything that flexes cannot distribute weight consistently, equally, and evenly. Treeless saddles can work for some lightweight people. The limitation is that treeless saddles do not have a foundation. All of the rider's weight is focused on the seat bones, and there is little relief for your horse in that area. In order for a saddle to effectively distribute the rider's weight over the most available area on the horse's back, some amount of rigidity is needed.

Pressure, in physics, is force per unit area; that is, force divided by the area against which it is applied. A common unit of measurement for pressure is the pound-force per square inch (often called simply pound per square inch and abbreviated psi). Since pressure depends on both the area and the strength of a force, a given force can produce widely differing pressures. For example, a 10-pound force applied to an area of 1 square inch exerts a pressure of 10 psi. The same force applied to an area of 10 square inches exerts a pressure of 1 psi. You can see why it is desirable

to have the largest surface area possible to avoid pressure points transferred from rider to horse. The tree acts to distribute the rider's weight over and through the panels, which should be as large as possible and fitted correctly to the angles of the horse's back.

## DYNAMIC OR STATIC

The horse is dynamic. The rider is dynamic. The saddle is practically static. It has, as explained above, some flex, but to a lesser degree than either horse or rider. Rounding the horse's back means the horse has lifted his back, is using his hindquarters well underneath, and is moving in a circular energy, as opposed to horses with inverted or hollow backs and trailing hind legs. The ligament that runs from the top of a horse's neck down the spine into its tail is the spinal nuchal/supraspinous ligament. When the horse's neck and back lift correctly, this is the ligament that supports the collection and suspension.

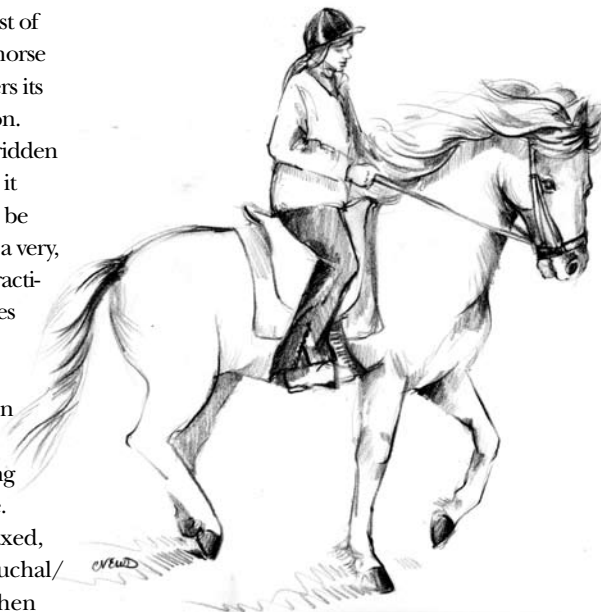
An appropriately wide gullet (the channel between the panels of the saddle) allows the uninhibited movement of this ligament. The degree of upward bend that occurs

muscularly is probably imagined by most of us to be greater than it actually is. The horse does not arch like a cat, but rather lowers its haunches when ridden in true collection. When fitting a horse that is frequently ridden in a highly collected or engaged frame, it is suggested that a degree of “lightness” be incorporated into the saddle fit. This is a very, very small amount of bridging that is practically undetectable. Most Icelandic horses have relatively short backs and are not capable of such an extreme degree of engagement, nor are they usually ridden for extended periods of time in such a frame, but that same lightness in fitting would be appropriate for those that are.

When a horse is ridden on a relaxed, loose rein, the head lowers and the nuchal/supraspinous ligament is engaged. When the horse stretches his neck forward, the nuchal ligament is put in traction, pulling on the withers’ spinous processes, causing them to rise. This effect extends all along the horse’s back—the traction is transmitted to the tendon-like supraspinous ligament, which, as a direct continuation of the nuchal ligament, connects all of the back’s spinous processes. As all of the back’s spinous processes rise, upward and to the front, the thoracic and lumbar vertebrae follow. Think of it as being like a see-saw. The head goes down, the back comes up. Thus, the horse’s back lifts. In nature, for example, when the horse is out on pasture, this happens almost all of the time. Although the back rises, the muscles that support the saddle panels do not greatly change shape from when in a static position. In other words, the neck lowers and the saddle area lifts or comes up. The belly muscles contract.

## THE RIDER

It is correct to assume that “static fit is only perfect for standing still.” It is also the only place to begin! So much more influences the fit of a saddle, certainly not the least being the rider. Is the rider balanced? Does the rider have postural or conformational issues? Does the rider collapse to one side or the other? Thermography studies have shown that well-fitting saddles can become less than optimal under some riders, while saddles with less than perfect fits do quite well by the horse under better balanced riders. The saddle may fit the horse, but does it fit the rider? Seat depth and center location, stirrup bar placement, pommel



A correctly collected horse does not arch its back like a cat

shape and size, saddle flap length, and ride alignment all have direct impact on rider balance and comfort.

The following is a quote by Joyce Harman, DVM, MRCVS, from *The Horse’s Pain-Free Back and Saddle-Fit Book*: “It is important to realize that *perfect* fit is elusive. Once you have matched a saddle to both horse and rider as best you can, don’t worry about ‘perfect.’ Sometimes ‘good’ is good enough, especially if you ride recreationally. If, on the other hand, your horse exhibits performance or behavior problems that could be related to saddle fit, it is best to keep trying to improve the situation.”



When the horse stretches forward and down, the nuchal ligament is put in traction which raises the spinal process of the withers and subsequently raises the back.

No saddle fit should be considered complete at the static phase. If a professional saddle fitter is employed, the process should include a mounted fit evaluation. Many times the saddle will pass muster up until the rider takes a spin.

A well-fitted saddle allows the horse free and expressive gaits, especially a walk that the rider can both enjoy and participate in. Most of us reading this article have felt the walk while in a treed saddle. The movement of the horse’s hips comes up through the saddle and influences the movement of our own seat bones and hips. Some Centered Riding exercises liken the feeling to “riding a bicycle backwards.” When the equine’s shoulder movement is allowed to be free and uninhibited, then the rider can enjoy the opportunity to join in that movement through the seat bones and hips. A saddle built on a tree that is appropriate for the horse and its use should never interfere with the equine’s movement. If it does, it is the wrong saddle, absolutely.

A saddle should fit like a glove, not like a girdle. The saddle should follow the angles and contours of the horse’s back and muscles. At best it should enhance the riding experience for both partners, whether or not it is treed. At worst, it should not cause discomfort to either horse or rider. At the end of it all, the saddle is the unifying piece of equipment between two dynamic beings making an effort to move in unison. It’s a daunting thought.

# CENTERED RIDING FOR ICELANDICS

BY NANCY MARIE BROWN

Last spring and summer, Solheimar Icelandics in Vermont organized a series of Centered Riding clinics for Icelandic horses and riders. It was the brainchild of rider Richard Davis, who had taken lessons from both clinicians, to put Solheimar's Sigrun Brynjarsdottir and Centered Riding instructor Lucile Bump into the training ring together.

Centered Riding is "the process of understanding how the human mind and body interact with the horse through the use of centering," according to a brochure published by Centered Riding, Inc. It is "a new way of expressing the old classical principles of riding." At its foundation are the Four Basics:

1. *Soft Eyes* allow a greater field of vision, increased awareness of your own and your horse's body, less tension and easier, freer forward movement.
2. *Proper Breathing* also reduces tension in your body, helps to lower your center of gravity, and allows the horse to become quieter and more responsive while reducing your fatigue.
3. *Centering* takes you to your center of control and energy deep in the lower body. This also allows your seat to be stable and secure. Centering releases tensions that block the flow of energy through your body and leaves you ready for the next movement or exercise.
4. *Building Blocks* aligns your body and gives you true and consistent balance over the horse's center of gravity which allows for the fluid and comfortable movement of your horse.

Centered Riding was developed by Sally Swift, who was born in 1913. When she was eight, she was diagnosed with scoliosis of the spine, probably caused by polio. For therapy, her doctors suggested she learn to ride; though she loved riding, it didn't solve the problem. "By 1967," Swift writes in her classic book *Centered Riding*, "my back had deteriorated. ... At this time I was standing



Sigrun Brynjarsdottir riding Parker frá Sólheimum in a schooling show in Tunbridge, VT. Centered Riding instructor Lucile Bump watched Sigrun ride—and then rode Parker herself. Her comments convinced Sigrun to add more Centered Riding instruction to her training toolbox.

tipped to the side and was frequently in pain." She embarked on a quest that included learning several kinds of martial arts and other body-awareness techniques, including the Alexander Technique frequently used by actors and singers. Then she applied what she'd learned about strength, balance, and breathing to riding. As she writes, "I began to realize that there was a great gap in most people's riding knowledge. Even the best riders and instructors, with their innate coordination, were not teaching people how to *handle* their bodies. They were teaching them only what to *do*. We who have struggled with physical disabilities can often teach and explain coordination more easily."

## WE FIXED OURSELVES

"In my experience, when you suggest Centered Riding to Icelandic horse people," Richard said, "they say, 'I've done that.' But there are many levels of Centered Riding. Lucile Bump is a Level Four Senior instructor. There's a big difference between that

and Level One."

There are 600 Centered Riding instructors in the world—more now in Europe than in the U.S. But few are Level Four: only about 17 worldwide. Fewer still are Level Four Senior, which is tops: Seniors are instructors who studied under Sally Swift herself. Some of the photographs in Swift's second book, *Centered Riding 2: Further Exploration*, were taken at Lucile's farm, Southmowing Stables, in Vermont.

My husband, Chuck Fergus, and I attended the second clinic in the series Richard had organized at Solheimar Icelandics; Chuck rode his young horse, while I audited. This clinic was like no other clinic I'd ever seen. It was held in a small indoor arena, and both clinicians (and their stools) were in the ring the whole time. Sometimes there were two auditors' chairs, two dogs, and a mounting block in the arena as well. The nine students and their horses entered the arena two at a time. Sigrun worked with one student at one end of the arena, while Lucile worked with the second student.

After 15 minutes or so, they switched off, passing the students back and forth like two tennis balls in play. The students walked, trotted, and tolled, sometimes using the full arena, sometimes just half; because of their “soft eyes,” no one (surprisingly) ran into each other, even when Sigrun was loudly showing Debbie how to keep her horse from pretending to spook at the open gates by shouting “Ears on Me!” Each lesson was 45 minutes long; each student had two lessons a day (except for Mark, who had four lessons, since he was riding two different horses).

While Richard and I watched from outside the arena at one point, he commented on how working with Lucile had helped him and his wife Marilyn Blaess. “The way into this for me,” he explained, “was the idea of comparable body parts. The way Lucile explains it is that the skeleton of a horse and the skeleton of a human are very similar—except for the collarbone. So there’s this uncanny relationship between what we do and what they do. We influence the horse, and the horse influences us in corresponding areas.”

I was familiar with the concept Richard was trying to explain: Several trainers had pointed out to me that when my jaw is stiff, my mare’s jaw is stiff; when my neck is stiff, my mare’s neck is stiff.

Said Richard, “Lucile always talks about those kinds of relationships. We’re always working with the jaws and the poll and moving the shoulders. With me, it’s always about my right shoulder. I drop that shoulder, and it disturbs the horse. In fast tolt I can create a roll on just about any horse with what I do with my right leg: I drop my shoulder and I draw up my leg. Sigrun can tell me to stop dropping my shoulder, but if I hadn’t done the work with Lucile I couldn’t actually *do* what Sigrun was asking. I couldn’t isolate the area that was a problem.

“When Marilyn and I started training with Lucile,” Richard added, “we noticed the horses would go better when we fixed ourselves. But I never could explain the intricacies of the gaits of the Icelandic horse to Lucile. I’ve been suggesting this combination clinic for several years, and this time we got it to happen.”

At the first clinic this spring, Sigrun rode her stallion Parker fra Solheimum for Lucile, and then Lucile rode Parker. “Lucile showed Sigrun some things with Parker that really helped her,” Richard said. “My regular lessons with Sigrun now are a lot more like my lessons with Lucile.”

Sigrun herself has begun taking lessons with Lucile, with the goal of becoming a Centered Riding instructor herself. “We’re

talking about the same things,” Sigrun explained. “We’re really very much alike. But sometimes I can see you’re doing something wrong but I can’t see how to tell you to fix it. Lucile can *always* see how to fix it.”

## AWARENESS

“We find strength by moving our bodies correctly,” Lucile explained. “It’s soft strength. Awareness is the first thing. You have to be aware of the body before you use it.”

How long, or short, is your back? Are you tightening your back muscles, and so shortening your back, without knowing it? Lucile taught us an exercise to find out—and correct it.

First, we had to find a flat stretch of pasture (without too much dry manure on it) to lie down on. It took a little looking: like much of Vermont, Solheimar Farm is hilly. When all ten students and auditors were lying flat on the ground, legs extended, Lucile instructed us: “Stretch one heel down, then the other. Check the arch of your back—how much arch is there? Now breathe out and pull your iliac crest”—those are the bones that stick out at the front of the pelvis, what I’ve always, mistakenly, thought of as my hip bones—“toward your nose. Breathe them both up



The view from Solheimar Icelandics in Tunbridge, VT, where the Icelandic Centered Riding clinics are held.

at once. Now, check the arch of your back again—it's flatter, isn't it? This exercise lengthens the back. You can do it in the saddle. Most people have a short back and a longer front, and to ride well you want a long back. The only two places where you can lengthen the whole backbone are at the neck and the pelvis. The Alexander Technique concentrates on the neck. In Centered Riding, we go for the pelvis."

Having studied the Alexander Technique for over five years, I knew how to find and relax the muscles in my neck and so lengthen my back. It was a great way to relieve stress and to let me loosen my clenched jaw (and thus my horse's stiff jaw). But this exercise, I discovered when I went home and got onto my horse, was even better in the saddle: my seatbones immediately engaged with the horse's back in a soft, relaxed way, while all the stiffness melted out of my hips.

## TWO INSTRUCTORS

How did it work with two instructors in the ring at the same time? The first student I watched, Marilyn, was doing something I always do: tipping my shoulders when walking (or worse, tolt) in a small circle. She started out with Sigrun. "As soon as your shoulders tilt in," Sigrun noted, "your horse

goes with it. Your right shoulder should not drop—you should point your shoulders where you want to go. Don't change anything as you go into tolt, just keep sitting. Find your seatbone first—don't rush into tolt before you know where your seatbones are."

A few minutes later, Sigrun passed Marilyn over to Lucile, who said, "How's that right seatbone? Stretch your calf—what happens when you did that? It lengthened the right side. Every time you go around the circle, stretch the right calf once. Ah, now you're standing in the stirrups—do you feel it? Get back into the saddle. It's very important that the horse can feel your calf and feel your seatbones. Don't push on your feet, see if you can feel those seatbones."

While Marilyn was concentrating on her feet, her horse decided to trot. What happened? "As soon as she did that," Lucile explained, once the horse was walking again, "you stiffened up and you took your seatbones off her—and your seatbones are what will allow you to stop, so that was counterproductive." She had Marilyn stand still, on a loose rein, and concentrate on breathing out with one hand on her hipbone. She was trying to show Marilyn how to relax her hip by stretching a different muscle—a counter muscle—to the one that was too tight. By concentrating on the counter



Lucile Bump's own favorite riding horse is not an Icelandic. On this foggy morning, she and a friend are getting ready for a drag hunt with the Guilford Hounds.



Richard Davis and Marilyn Blaess after their class at a schooling show. The couple had taken lessons in Centered Riding for many years from Level Four Senior instructor Lucile Bump, and in Icelandic riding from Sigrún Brynjarsdóttir. This year, they managed to get both instructors into the training ring together. The combination was magical.

muscle, Marilyn relaxed the tight one, and Lucy said, "So I tricked you!" To me, she added, "Marilyn's got an exercise she's got to do a lot of thinking about."

Back Marilyn went to Sigrun, who had her circle at a walk to the left without using her left (inside) rein very much. "The more you pull the inside rein, the more she runs into the wall. Use the outside rein, no inside rein. This is called counterbending. You have a short rein on the outside and you use the outside leg. Keep bending her toward the wall. Push her toward me with your outside leg, and walk. What happened with the seatbone? Where did she go?" Out of the circle. "As soon as you lost the seatbone, you lost her."

Back Marilyn went to Lucile. "I had somebody come over from Denmark because they lost one seatbone," she joked. "Pick up your right seatbone and put it back down," she said to Marilyn. "Then the left. Pick up the front of your pelvis and put it back down. Your whole trouble is you're tight, and then nothing moves. You're tight in your shoulders too." Lucile then did more hands-on work with Marilyn, encouraging her to stretch her right side.



## IN YOUR CENTER

Feet, not shoulders, were Chuck's problem. Lucile took him back to basics. "Move your foot more into the stirrup," she said, after watching him walk his horse in a small circle for a moment. "This balances you. You need to put the weight all over your feet, not all in the heel. All over the soles of your shoes it should be the same. Feel like your feet have rollerskates on. Rollerskate around the arena. Or, do you ski? Put skis on your feet. You don't want the tips or the tails to catch on the ground. You have to keep them parallel to the ground. When you get weight into more of your foot, that puts your foot underneath you. It allows your knee to move."

His foot repositioned, Chuck picked up a walk again. "Now we need soft knees," Lucile said. "Can you feel the horse's back leg moving your seatbone? If you push your feet out front and brace, it stops your seatbones—it stops your horse too! He needs to move through you—your knee needs to slide a little, just a little slide, not much."

After a lesson with Sigrun, Chuck moved back to Lucile's side of the ring and heard the same thing again: "You've gotten into the pattern of doing things so much with your seatbones that you're not following the motion any more. Rather than having the seatbones be the beginning of movement, you're letting your feet do it, and your seat gets stiff and the movement goes into your hands. This is a lot about feeling. Your seatbones are to *allow* the movement from his hind end. Not to impel it. Feel how that moves your knees. You have to allow that. It bends your knee slightly. If you took the horse out from under you, the knees would be the first thing to hit the wall—not your toes."

She had him pick up a trot, but when he started bracing his feet again, she took away his stirrups. "Now your feet don't go out in front of you so much," Lucile noticed. "The weight of your torso should go into your seatbones, not into the stirrups. Only the weight from the hip joint down the leg should go into the stirrup. If you tighten something, you take the weight up. You're not down in your center. You need your feet on the ground, then you grow up from your center."

To help him feel his seatbones, she had Chuck close his eyes and hold onto the mane while she led the horse. "When



Chuck riding his young horse for the very first time at a clinic Sigrun gave at the Tunbridge Fairgrounds in 2008. Note the feet.

the horse's foot is underneath him, that's when he pushes. His right back leg moves your right seat bone. Hold your breath—he slowed down, didn't he? If you push with the seatbones you'll hurt the horse's back. When you get on the horse, the first thing to do is follow the motion of the horse."

Watching the lessons over the course of two days, I picked up several other pointers—enough to know that next time Solheimar Farm offers a Centered Riding clinic, I'll have to ride, not just audit! But the one idea that will stick in my mind

longest is what Lucile said to Chuck next: "Only after you can follow, can you take over and lead," she said. "And you only have to lead a little bit."

### FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Sally Swift, *Centered Riding* (Trafalgar Square Books, 1985)

Sally Swift, *Centered Riding 2: Further Exploration* (Trafalgar Square Books, 2002)

[www.centeredriding.org](http://www.centeredriding.org)

[www.southmowing.com](http://www.southmowing.com) (Lucile Bump's website)

[www.usicelandics.com](http://www.usicelandics.com) (Sigrun Brynjarsdotir's website)



Lucile Bump has often worked with Icelandics before—just not in conjunction with an Icelandic trainer. Here she makes the acquaintance of an Icelandic at Sue Sondstrom's farm.



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## USIHC ELECTIONS

### Key election dates:

Notice mailed September 1  
Nominations due October 1  
Ballots mailed October 15  
Ballots due December 1  
Results announced December 15

Candidate nomination and voting are open to all adult Congress members of record as of August 15, 2010.

Nominations must be accompanied by the candidate's written acceptance and the names and signatures of two Congress members who nominate and second the candidate for election.

The 2010 Election Committee chair is Pat Moore. Questions regarding the election should be directed to her at either [election@icelandics.org](mailto:election@icelandics.org) or USIHC 2010 Election Committee, c/o Pat Moore, 3481 Sanders Lane, Catharpin, VA, 20143.

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