

ISSUE FOUR

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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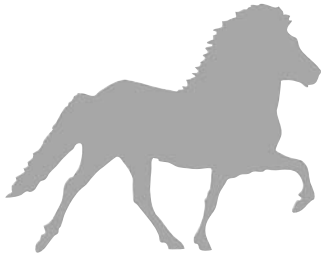
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THE  
ICELANDIC  
HORSE  
QUARTERLY  
Issue Four 2010

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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**On the cover:** Winter ride with Kitla. Photo by Alexandra Pregitzer.





## 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; foreign friends, \$70. 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 US team members—Cait Nold, Kevin Draeger, Madison Prestine, and Rachel Ng—with their many fans and helpers at the 2010 FEIF Youth Cup, held at the Kalo Agricultural College, Århus, Denmark. See the story on page 18. Photo courtesy Rachel Ng.

## ANNUAL MEETING

The 2011 Annual USIHC Members Meeting will take place on Saturday, January 15, at the Wyndham Riverfront Hotel in New Orleans, Louisiana. The meeting will follow the same format as last year's meeting in Reston, Virginia. The morning will be dedicated to reports from the officers and committees, as well as any official business. In the afternoon there will be a presentation by Barbara Frische (see below). Saturday evening features the annual awards dinner, catered at the hotel.

The group rate at the hotel is \$99/night for single or double occupancy. This room rate is available for several days before and after the meeting, for those who wish to attend the Board meeting Friday night or spend a few days exploring New Orleans. Hotel room reservations must be made by calling the hotel directly at (866) 907-0611 and mentioning that you are part of the "U.S. Icelandic Horse Congress" group. Reservations must be made before December 13, 2010, to be guaranteed the \$99 rate.

The Wyndham Riverfront Hotel is approximately 15 miles from the Louis Armstrong New Orleans International Airport. The hotel is located in the his-

toric warehouse district of the city. The Riverwalk Marketplace and Aquarium of the Americas are steps away. The French Quarter, with all it offers, is within walking distance. The hotel's website ([www.wyndham.com/hotels/MSYRF](http://www.wyndham.com/hotels/MSYRF)) includes links to tours ranging from historic and cultural to gastronomic and ghostly. There is something for everyone in New Orleans!

## MEETING SPEAKER

FEIF International Breeding Judge Barbara Frische will be the keynote speaker at the USIHC Annual Members Meeting in New Orleans this January. Her presentation, "Spirit, Conformation, and Gait," will help us to better understand how these factors affect a horse's performance. Special attention will be paid to the question of a horse's suitability for the owner's chosen activity—can our horses perform the tasks we set for them? After her presentation there will be a short break for coffee and brainstorming, followed by a question-and-answer session.

Though she now lives in the U.S., for several years Barbara was the assistant breeding leader and then breeding leader in Germany. She was the first German Breeding Judge to be awarded

the license of an International Breeding Judge. She has evaluated breeding horses throughout Europe and has judged breeding horses presented at the World Championships.

She was influential in bringing together the German evaluation system for breeding horses and the FEIF evaluation system, probably the single most important modern step in the unification of evaluation systems throughout the Icelandic horse world community. In addition, she has been one of the creators and certainly the driving force behind the development of the Young Horse Evaluation system started in FEIF and presently being tested worldwide as a means of assessing the future conformation and gait qualities of horses at an early age.

In keeping with her dedication to the Icelandic horse as the ideal riding horse, her presentation at the Annual Meeting will focus on the relationship between various conformational features and riding traits. She will provide clear explanations about how the conformation of the horse results in certain behaviors and movement patterns because of the horse's need to achieve balance. She will provide information about how the rider can help the horse achieve that balance, utilizing



In August, the USIHC regional club Kraftur in California hosted a Riding Badge level 2 seminar with instructor Heidi Benson. Seven youth riders earned their badges. Here, Allison Moerer shows trot on Punktur. See the story on page 26. Photo by Heidi Benson.

its conformational strengths and minimizing the aspects of conformation that are problematic.

In addition she will discuss the needs of the American market, based on her observations as she has traveled around the country and her knowledge of developmental histories of various countries in Europe over the past many years. She will discuss appropriate breeding goals for the United States and how we can best produce the kinds of horses that will be valued by American riders and will create the kind of foundation of domestic-bred horses that we need to grow in a positive direction.

## NO ELECTIONS

Nominations for members of the USIHC Board of Directors closed October 1. The election committee, chaired by Pat Moore, announced that no nominations were received. The 2010 elections were therefore canceled. The three Board members up for re-election, and running unopposed—Kathy Lockerbie, Katrin Sheehan, and Doug Smith—will serve for three more years.

## ARTICLE PROJECT

In response to member requests, the USIHC Education Committee and Website Committee are working with the Quarterly Committee to put selected educational articles from back issues of the Quarterly

up on the USIHC website. Links to the articles will appear on the Education and Quarterly committees' pages, as well as in the "Learn About the Icelandic Horse" section of the website. The articles will provide a resource of helpful information for both USIHC members and non-members. The goal is to reach out more to non-members by making educational information widely available in this way, to further knowledge of the breed and to help all Icelandic horse owners. By creating a convenient, searchable archive from Quarterly back issues, the committees also want to encourage USIHC members to look up and re-read important articles long after they have been printed.

## BOARD MEETINGS

Highlights of the August and September 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).

Barb Riva announced that she will be stepping down as chair of the Regional Clubs Committee by the end of the year due to family obligations. "I have asked the members of the committee if anyone would be interested in taking over my position. So far I've had no luck. I will continue to work on that in the next months."

Karen Olson-Fields also plans to

step down as chair of the Pleasure Riding Committee. She reports that she has had no response from her committee and will continue as chair until a replacement is identified. She will contact Barb Riva to see if someone from the Regional Clubs committee can take over.

Katrin Sheehan, chair of the Breeding Committee, has agreed to act as the point of contact within the Congress for any horse rescue-related questions. Doug will create an appropriate email alias to be added to the "contact us" pages on the website and in the *Quarterly*. Katrin reported that the circumstances of the California Icelandic Horse rescue situation have become complicated. The Breeding Committee discussed waiving the registry fee for rescue organizations in general, but decided that no waivers should be granted. "Rescue groups have the same obligations with registering Icelandic horses in the USIHC Registry as anyone else," the committee decided. "Rescue groups can ask for reimbursement of the money spent when horses get adopted. Our fees are in the financial range of normal adoption fees for horses."

The Breeding Committee is investigating a proposal from Juli Cole to organize a Stud Service Auction as a fundraiser for the World Championships team. A working group of the committee endorsed the concept, though one committee member objected to the idea. Katrin



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and Juli will work together to formulate the procedure to be used for publication on the website and in the *Quarterly*.

The Breeding Committee is at work drafting the USIHC Procedures on Breeding and Young Horse Evaluations. It hopes to finish revising the checklists and forms proposed to serve as future guidelines in time for the November board meeting.

The Education Committee announced that Katrin Sheehan applied to host another FEIF trainer course at Creekside Farm, Georgia, in March 2011. The course will offer FEIF level 1 and level 2 trainer certifications. The clinician will be Nicole Kempf, and the examiner will be Marlise Grimm along with Nicole. Creekside Farm fulfills all the requirements the Education Committee has in place for such events, and the committee recommended the seminar be USIHC-sanctioned. The Board approved.

Alex Pregitzer, chair of the Education Committee, also noted that the planned USIHC seminar on conformation and riding traits, to be conducted jointly by judge Barbara Frische and trainer Birga Wild in October, was cancelled due to lack of interest. The committee is in the process of planning locations and dates



Show scores and rankings are on the web at [www.icelandics.org](http://www.icelandics.org). Here, Jana Meyer competes at the Solheimer Schooling Show in Vermont. Photo by Kim Morrison.

for this seminar for 2011. *See the story in this issue, "The Fantastic Seminar."*

Doug Smith reported that the Website Committee discussed the concept of free link exchanges on the USIHC website, [www.icelandics.org](http://www.icelandics.org). "The strong consensus was that we should not take any action to jeopardize our relationship with paid sponsors. There was weak support for creating a links page that would include 'sister organizations.' The strongest support was to allow anyone to pay for a link, and include links to sister organizations (FEIF, the World Championships, Landsmót, etc.) throughout the site as appropriate."

Doug also announced that the USIHC website was moved to an upgraded server by FutureQuest, our Internet Service Provider (ISP). "We are now on the most modern hardware and software our ISP offers."

A new service for organizers of Schooling Shows and Sanctioned Shows was made possible by the change to the new server hardware, Doug said. The service simplifies the process of printing competition judge/score cards for shows that do not use IceTest "live." Explained Doug, "The show organizer enters the number of starting combinations for each FIPO test and indicates whether the test includes a final or just preliminaries. Based on the organizer's entries, a single PDF file is created with all the necessary judge's cards for a single-judge show. This translates to one file to download and print for the entire show." The new service is available on [www.icelandics.org/competition.download.php](http://www.icelandics.org/competition.download.php).

The Sport Committee noted that it had identified an oversight in the March 2010 update to the competition rules. "We neglected to recognize that the changes to V3 adopted by FEIF make it more difficult to achieve high scores in V3." The committee recommended—and the Board agreed—that the ranking and tally of scores used to advance riders out of Intermediate Four Gait eligibility be reset to the beginning of the 2010 competition season.

The Board discussed the policy on non-member fees at USIHC-sanctioned

shows and events. The board decided that membership status for all Congress events should be determined at the conclusion of the event. Any participant who is not a member in good standing at the conclusion of an event will be required to pay the appropriate non-member fee. The event organizer is responsible for collecting the fees. The non-member fees for Breeding Evaluations and Sanctioned Shows were set at \$25; the Education Committee will discuss bringing its fees into line with those of the other USIHC events.

Anne Elwell and Katrin Sheehan are working to establish a Standard Blood Profile for Icelandic horses. "A Standard Blood Profile," Anne explained, "is a profile created from blood taken from a reasonably large number of horses (minimum of 25) to which blood of a sick horse can be compared." At the Chairmen's meeting of the FEIF conference, Anne asked if anyone knew of a Standard Blood Profile for Icelandic horses in any country; no one was aware of one. Katrin has approached veterinarian Robin Barrow at the University of Georgia, who has agreed to create the standard profile. "Experience shows that Icelandics have a slightly different profile than other breeds," Katrin says, "but there is no research available on this topic." The University of Georgia has developed a protocol and Katrin will report back on what is needed from the USIHC. The final report will be available to any vet in the U.S. through the nationwide veterinary email lists, as well as to anyone requesting it online or via fax.

The phone numbers for general USIHC information and the Registry have been changed to the new toll-free number 866-292-0009. The phone number is configured to route membership calls to Kathy Lockerbie and registry calls to Ásta Covert. Voicemail alerts are delivered via email (and include a .WAV file of the message) so the messages can be checked directly from the computer.

The electronic *Quarterly* is now being sent to the national chairmen of all FEIF member associations, as well as to the editors of all FEIF national magazines.

## WC VOLUNTEERS

The organizers of the 2011 World Championships of Icelandic Horses are calling for volunteers. The championships will be held at Islandpferde Reithof Piber in St. Radegund, Austria, August 1-7, 2011. Write Elke Beckedorf and Carmen Baldus, "A major event like the World Championships needs to be supported by an ambitious team of volunteers to guarantee that things run smoothly—both at the front as well as behind the scenes. Due to this fact we are searching for many volunteers who are willing to support the World Championships of Icelandic Horses in St. Radegund in 2011 with all their enthusiasm. Certainly we offer free catering and campsite or gym place for your dynamic assistance on your working days. Access to the tribunes is also free. We expect enthusiasm and team spirit, a high level of responsibility and a representative appearance."

Application forms are available in the back of this issue of the *Quarterly* and on the web at [www.islandpferde-wm.at](http://www.islandpferde-wm.at). Send your application by post or fax to Islandpferde Reithof Piber KG, Schwabenlandl 10, A-5121 St. Radegund, Oberösterreich; fax: +43 (0) 6278-8517-4. For more information, email Elke or Carmen at [e.beckedorf@islandpferde-wm.at](mailto:e.beckedorf@islandpferde-wm.at) or [c.baldus@islandpferde-wm.at](mailto:c.baldus@islandpferde-wm.at).

## FEATHER PRIZE

The 2010 FEIF Feather Prize was awarded to Bo Cavens (Netherlands), one of the participants at the 2010 FEIF Youth Cup. Bo rode Tyrson vom Saringhof. The aim of this prize is to encourage good riding and good horsemanship; it is a tribute to featherlight riding. The awarded rider sets an example to the Icelandic horse world.

## EVA-MARIA GERLACH AWARD

Five young riders were awarded the 2010 Eva-Maria Gerlach Award at the FEIF Youth Cup: Bo Cavens (Netherlands), Carolin Nase (Germany), Elisabeth Marie Mai (Germany), Lisa Kroon (Netherlands), and Tora Lindheim (Norway). Apart from the honor they will receive free entrance tickets for the 2011 World Championships. The prize is awarded in honor of former FEIF Director of Youth Work Eva-Maria Gerlach, and is handed out at the Youth Cup to the five most promising and versatile young riders.

## DNA DIAGNOSTICS

The correct registration of a horse pedigree is essential for horse breeding. Many breeders rely upon the pedigree information in their breeding work, and the BLUP evaluation is based upon the

pedigree information as well. In order to support studbook work and verify horse pedigree registration, the DNA diagnostic has become a very important tool. By demanding a proof of parentage for all stallions participating in a breeding show, FEIF is supporting more accuracy in the pedigree registration of breeding horses. Of course it should be a concern of all breeders to have all mares DNA tested as well. A new FEIF document is available to explain the procedure of DNA diagnostics for breeders and registrars. It can be downloaded in PDF format at [www.feif.org/Download/Breeding/tabid/204/Default.aspx](http://www.feif.org/Download/Breeding/tabid/204/Default.aspx) under "Procedures."

## HORSE FLU IN ICELAND

In late September, *Iceland Review* Online reported that a foal had died from the horse flu which has caused havoc in Iceland since early last spring. The foal was buried immediately at the request of a veterinarian, who didn't believe it was safe to keep the carcass over the weekend to send it for an autopsy. For more information on this upper respiratory tract infection in horses in Iceland, please visit the webpage of MAST, the Icelandic food and veterinary authority, [www.mast.is](http://www.mast.is).





# REGIONAL UPDATES

## ALASKA CLUB

*Alys Culhane writes:* That our club activities began this year in mid-April and ended in early October attests to the fact that the Alaska Icelandic Horse club members are eager to work together, in hopes of learning as much as we can about all aspects of Icelandic horse care and training.

Our October teleconference was reflective of this. It was our first four-way interaction, with folks chiming in from Fairbanks, Southcentral, the Kenai Peninsula, and Tok. There was considerable talk about clinics past and present, in part because we in Southcentral were finishing the first day of an end-of-the-season, two-day clinic. It was duly noted that we are forging good relationships with reputable clinicians, who are now making repeat visits to the state. This past summer, TTeam Practitioner and Connected Riding instructor Mandy Pretty did a four-day clinic in Fairbanks, and TTeam Practitioner and Centered Riding Instructor Susan Faulkner-March did a three-day clinic.

Oregon-based Equitation instructor Bill Burke did three two-day clinics in Southcentral Alaska in May, August, and October. Burke's clinic provided us with what we most needed—consistency in training. The sessions were structured so that each participant had two individual 20-minute sessions on both days. This worked well because Burke is adept at quickly figuring out where each horse and rider are at, and then going from there. This was no mean feat, because the range of riding-expertise was so varied. The three clinics consisted of both newcomers and experienced riders, with the majority of us fitting into the intermediate class. The former school teacher was clear in his directives, and able in his subsequent visits to build on what he'd previously taught each individual. Equally impressive was the fact that the horses' ages and levels of expertise varied. Drottning, Kohlfaxi, Rjupa, Undrun, Lysa, Lysy, and Roskova are now seasoned campaigners, while Penniger, Raudhetta, Raudi, and Elsa are new to arena work.

We concluded our discussion by



A scene from the Rider's Choice Clinic at Red Feather Icelandics on Sept 11-12. The instructor is Ann-Christin Kloth and the rider is Lori Birge on Geisli from Vermont Icelandic Horse Farm.

talking about our plans for next year. The most exciting thing of all is that for the first time ever, we might have clinics in Fairbanks, Southcentral, AND Kenai. This will be in addition to our regularly-scheduled winter activities, two of which might include Bernie and Jeanette Willis's Christmas and Iditatolt get-togethers.

## CASCADE CLUB

*Linda Templeton writes:* The Cascade Icelandic Horse Club held their summer meeting in late August and decided to focus on a "back to basics" direction. The club wants to focus on regional parades, geographically dispersed fun days, supporting our youth, and our drill team.

The club is in the process of building a new website that will better provide a service to our members, as well as be a supportive and informative presence for Icelandic Newbies.

We will be doing a club calendar as a fund raiser, to support parade participation, our drill team, and youth—we are trying to figure out how best to involve more young people.

Though not a club event, Ann-Cristin Kloth's clinic at Red Feather was attended by mostly club members. Ann conducted a Rider's Choice clinic, allowing the participants to work on issues that they

had concerns with. As always, Ann was a dedicated and tireless clinician, and every rider left with new skills and tools. Karen Brotzman, Lisa Roland, Kathy Lamb, Janet Boggs, Dawn Shaw, and Lori Birge were the club members in attendance.

One of our members, Dawn Shaw, made sure that the Icelandic horse was represented at the recent Western Washington State Fair in the popular "Animals of the World" exhibit. She spent five days there with two Icelandics, dispersing information and answering questions. On Saturday alone an estimated 70,000 people came through the barn. Many people had never heard of an Icelandic horse.

One of our members, Cheryl Hernon, spent a week in a program called "School of the Horse." She had the only Icelandic among assorted other breeds, including a Fjord. The program combines classroom with field application, and Cheryl got a chance to test the versatility of her Icelandic, who came through with flying colors. From waterfalls to stream crossings to herding cattle, she did it all. It was a wonderful opportunity to share the history and information about Icelandics to people from all over.

## FLUGNIR CLUB

*Barb Riva writes:* The Flugnir Icelandic Horse Association of the Midwest again organized its annual Flugnirkeppni competition, sanctioned by USIHC. Attendance was a bit higher than past years. Winterhorse Park in Eagle, Wisconsin, where this show has been hosted over the years, had to rent stalls to accommodate the additional participants. In the light of our poor economy, this was good news.

After having minimal interest in a camping outing this fall, we have decided to try a group event at an equine resort. Woodside Ranch in Mauston, Wisconsin, is our destination the first weekend in November. Woodside offers 1,250 acres of wooded land for riding, a trading post/game room/tavern for evening gatherings, a theatre/conference room for seminars, and much more. Accommodations are either small cabins or motel rooms on the ranch. The weekend price includes all meals and, while they do not normally allow people to bring in their own horses, they are making an exception for the Flugnir group. Eileen Gunipero of Dunne & Krumm will be offering a saddle-fitting seminar and private saddle fittings for those who might be interested. We are looking forward to what looks to be a very fun time with our members.



Toasting the successful first Icelandic show in Colorado, the Klettafjalla Schooling Show, after the beer tolt.

## KLETTAFJALLA CLUB

*Florie Miller writes:* It was a good summer for members of the Klettafjalla Icelandic Horse Club. The weather in our Rocky Mountain region was just beautiful, and even late into fall there where great opportunities for wonderful trail riding.

The highlight for the club was the first annual Schooling Show! It was hosted by Ann Kruuse and Dave Irish, and the location was their amazing Viking Horse Ranch in Steamboat Springs, Colorado. The facilities were excellent: nice riding arena, stunning 360-degree views, and of course an oval track. Great food and drinks could be enjoyed on the patio,

while making plans for the future and catching up with old friends. Alexandra Pregitzer was our judge for the weekend. She provided us with tons of valuable information and encouragement!

Here are some of the results: the winner for the kids' class and Sit-A-Buck was the very poised Zoe Johnson on Hrafn. It is nice to see we have some young and enthusiastic members in our club. The T8 was won by the always beautiful combination of Coralie Denmeade and her Freydis, these two have really grown over the last two years. They also shared first place in the V6 with Dave Kruuse and Hafli. Dave and Hafli also won the two-gait, walk and tolt. Linda McLaughlin and her Brana won the two-gait, walk and trot. The Andi cup, a very special award in honor of Ann and Dave's late stallion Andi, was appropriately won by Ann on Glotti fra Saudarkroki. Karen Olson and her handsome Omur fra Brun won the three-gait and the pleasure tolt. Beer tolt was won by Florie Miller and Gata fra Efsta-Dal. Full results can be reviewed at the club website, [www.klettafjalla.com](http://www.klettafjalla.com). Thanks to all the sponsors and of course Dave and Ann for making this super fun weekend happen!

Even though winter is forcing all of us to slow down our horse activities a bit, it is also a great time to make plans for next year. Klettafjalla is looking forward to another exciting year of having fun with friends and Icelandic horses.



Nokkvi Gudmarsson on Grasida fra Grimstodum prepares for a tiny tot class at the 2010 Flugnirkeppni with assistance from Kevin Draeger. Photo by Hannelore Geyer.





Scenes from the Mountain Icelandic Farm Show in September. Left, riding in T2, is Morgan Venable on Fjalar fra Skardi. Right, Lucy Nold riding Andri fra Solbrekku in T3. Photos by Alexandra Venable.

## KRAFTUR CLUB

*Bert Bates writes:* It didn't feel like that busy a summer for the Kraftur Club of Northern California until we started putting this dispatch together... First off, Cait Nold and Madison Prestine had a blast at the FEIF Youth Cup. You might think the Youth Cup is all about competition, but Cait says it was much more about getting to know kids from around the world and getting to learn a lot about horses and horse training. For Cait, highlights included late-night discussions with her Norwegian cabin mates, great training sessions (including an outstanding dressage lesson), and the opportunity to learn how to work with a brand-new loaner horse in the context of quickly getting ready for a competition. My only question is this: How old is too old to apply for the Youth Cup? (See the article by Rachel Ng in this issue of the Quarterly.)

Back in Santa Cruz, Gabriele Meyer organized a great double event in August. The first half included a badge-test-preparation clinic led by our own Heidi Benson. At the end of the prep-clinic Svanhildur

Stefansdottir joined Heidi to administer the badge participants' final exams, and everyone passed! The very next day Svanhildur started her well-attended and well-received two-day clinic, informally hosted by Coast Stable veterans Morgan Venable and Heidi Benson.

Threaded throughout the summer were more in a series of ongoing clinics led by Steinar Sigurbjornsson. With Steinar's help, all of us are getting our horses more supple and energized, and it's safe to say we're all making happy progress in our shared quest to dance with our horses.

We were blessed with a very mild summer which allowed for a lot of great local trail and beach rides, and which set us up nicely for Annette Coulon's summer-closing show at Mountain Icelandic Farm. The week before the show a flotilla of Kraftur members steamed over to Annette's farm and lent a hand getting the oval track and the guest stalls ready for the show.

Not surprisingly, Kraftur riders were an overwhelming presence at the show. All told, Kraftur fielded 14 riders, and

without a doubt, the youth riders were the highlight of the show. Kraftur youth riders included Dylan Denning on Katina, Elizabeth Robertson on Tjara, Esme Brigham on Elskan, Julia Hasenauer on Birta, Allison Moerer on Punktur, Madison Prestine on Sleipnir ("Slippy"), Cait Nold on Sara and then later on Kani, and finally Lucy Nold on Andri. Wow!

The Kraftur adults who rode were Laurie Prestine on Ran, Annie Dillon on Batman (oh okay, Glampi), Bruce Edwards (and his mug of beer) on Lettir, Morgan Venable on Fjalar, Kathy Sierra on Draumur, and yours truly on Eyra. Thanks go to our many friends from southern California who made the long trek up to Santa Cruz to join us for the show. Thanks to Will Covert for a really thoughtful job of judging, and thanks to Doug and Gayle Smith for announcing, scribing, and braving IceTest one more time.

We're looking forward to an equally action-packed fall with clinics galore, a show at Flying C, and finally the perennial holiday parade in early December.



## NORTHEAST CLUB

*Amy Goddard writes:* With so much going on in the northeast, the Northeast Icelandic Horse Club (NEIHC) members had a wide assortment of events to choose from—all summer and into fall!

Catherine Slattery, B Rathey, Alyssa Puntin, and Linda Gero and her husband rode in the Monterey, Massachusetts, Memorial Day parade. Catherine said, “It was a great parade for first-time ‘paraders’ to try out the experience!” Catherine’s horse, Arnie, was photographed for a Puma phone ad in New York City. Catherine exclaimed, “We shot in New York at 5 a.m. and were gone by 10 a.m.!” The ad can be seen online at: [lreps.wordpress.com/2010/09/13/puma-campaign-shot-by-nick-meek/](http://lreps.wordpress.com/2010/09/13/puma-campaign-shot-by-nick-meek/)

Walter Davis on Efstur frá Icelandic Magic and Betz Haartz on Stigur frá Storadal participated in a series of three schooling shows at the Green Mountain Horse Association (South Woodstock, Vermont) over the summer. Walter and Efstur won Reserve Champion and Betz and Stigur won Champion in the Modified Adult Amateur Equitation division for the whole series. Walter/Efstur and Betz/Stigur also rode in the Hartland, Vermont Riding Club horse show in August and tied for Adult English Reserve



Fridrik Kristjansson, one of the youngest riders at the show, going for the gold in the stallion tolt competition at the Thor Icelandics Schooling Show. Photo by Thorunn Kristjansdottir.



Susan Peters of Silver Maple Icelandic Horse Farm competing in the Open Four Gait on her mare, Aska, at the Thor Icelandics Schooling Show. Photo by Thorunn Kristjansdottir.

Champion. “We typically trail ride, but riding in these shows adds diversity to our activities, which I think the horses think is fun,” says Walter. Betz adds, “We get funny looks from all the hunter-jumper folks, but when we come out with awards, people always want to know what kind of horses these are!”

Lots of Icelandic sport competitions in Vermont! Susan Peters hosted a sanctioned show on July 10–11 at her Silver Maple Icelandic Horse Farm in Tunbridge. Sigrun Brynjarsdottir and Jason Brickner of Solheimar Icelandics hosted a schooling show on July 24–25, and then a sanctioned show on August 28–29, both held at the Tunbridge fairgrounds. Susan then held a second sanctioned show October 2–3.

Heleen Heyning hosted a clinic with Steinar Sigurbjornsson August 28–29 at her West Wind Farm in Delhi, New York. Twelve riders attended; all were greatly pleased with Steinar’s instruction. See Stephanie Sher’s story in this issue of the Quarterly. Due to overwhelming enthusiasm from the August clinic participants, Heleen Heyning will host a three-day clinic with Steinar Sigurbjornsson October 22–24 at West Wind Farm.

Jenny Tuthill and Gydja participated

in a second ACTHA 10-mile competitive trail ride in Greenfield, New Hampshire, where they placed 12th out of 42 horses; her gelding Stefnir, ridden by Laura Zerra, placed 20th. On July 17 she participated in the White Memorial Conservation Center’s “Icelandic Days” in Litchfield, Connecticut, along with Icelandic sheep, chickens, dogs—and great Icelandic food! In late July she rode in an open horse show in Belmont, New Hampshire, where Gydja won reserve champion, due to placing 1st or 2nd in four classes—in her very first horse show! The last show of this same series was held at the end of August and Gydja was the overall champion, placing 1st in all her classes. In September, Jenny attended her first Icelandic show, the Thor Schooling Show, where she did well, placing third twice and second once, and tolt in a show for the first time! Her gelding Stefnir continues to perfect his driving skills and she plans to participate in a few fairs this fall in the obstacle-driving classes.

The second Thor Icelandics Schooling Show and competition clinic were held September 10–12. There were over 20 riders in Friday’s competition clinic with clinicians Steinar Sigurbjornsson and Kristjan Kristjansson. The clinicians aided

the riders and their horses with both specific issues that they wanted to work on, as well as coaching them on the track, where the rules and regulations of a sports competition were discussed and explained.

Clinic participant Heleen Heyning writes: "I don't really have a particularly good 'competition horse,' nor do I feel up to competing seriously—so why bother? Well, the answer to that question is the same as always: Just to learn a little more, and to understand a little better what this Icelandic horse thing is all about ... and having lots of fun in the process! It was quite thrilling, really. Going around the track, there was no escaping the critical eyes of Kristjan and Steinar. What luxury! The comfort of being able to ask questions right then and there! Being schooled around the bend—literally step-by-step—proved hugely helpful. Ultimately, wouldn't we all like our horses as well as ourselves to have more limber and flexible bodies to achieve that elusive lightness, speed and energy?"

Nicki Esdorn said: "It was great to have the clinic day before the show, especially when you are trying something you have never done before. It also takes the nervousness down a few notches on the big day."

The schooling show kicked off Saturday morning. There were a total of 20 classes to compete in during the show weekend, with close to 100 entries. Andrea Hanson said of the show: "Can anyone forget the pace demonstration shown by Kristjan Kristjansson and Martina Lussi's gelding? They barreled down the track, an embodiment of power, speed, lift, and sheer, breath-taking, mane-floating beauty."

Lisa Keller commented: "The show helped give me a huge boost with my riding confidence. I have since been practicing all the new techniques that I learned. Tyja and I are looking forward to attending many more schooling shows. We had a blast!"

Thorunn Kristjansdottir said: "My favorite part of the weekend was the side-line-parents coaching. Gillian Gates and Fridrik Kristjansson were neck-and-neck for the gold in the stallion tolt competi-

tion. On one side of the track stood Martina Gates yelling, 'Go faster! Go faster!' to her daughter and stallion, while on the other side stood Kristjan Kristjansson yelling, 'Slow down ... keep collected ... high leg action ...' to his son and stallion. Maybe we need to incorporate a special side-line-coaching award at the next show!" There will be at least three competitions and a number of clinics at Thor Icelandics in 2011.

Cerice Berndsen writes: "Pangaea Equestrian is organizing this year's Icelandic breed demo and breed segment at Equine Affaire in W. Springfield, Massachusetts, November 11–14. We will provide more details, and photos, for the next issue of the Quarterly." Pangaea client Aimee Leopold and Cerice were interviewed (and photos used) for a feature article in the October issue of The Equine Journal.

Marissa Dillon is "absolutely thrilled" to announce that she and Demba frá Gimli were chosen again for this year's versatile horse and rider competition at the Equine Affaire in November! The other Icelandic horse participant is Caeli Cavanagh.

Susan Peters and Sue Sundstrom will "Ride for the Cure" for breast cancer on October 10. It is a 10-mile ride, with the Green Mountain Horse Association in South Woodstock, Vermont. They thank their many Icelandic horse friends who contributed!

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

## SAINT SKUTLA CLUB

Lori Horner writes: August ended with a terrific clinic with Steinar at Heleen Heyning's beautiful farm in Delhi, NY. A few club members rode in the two-day clinic and a couple of others were there to give a helping hand. Steve Barber assisted Steinar during the lessons. There were three riders of varying experience in each group, so there was quite a bit of individu-

alized attention. Everyone improved and we're looking forward to his return in October. (See the story in this issue.)

Stephanie Sher writes: Steven Barber on Kalman frá Lækjamóti (IS1995155106), Andrea Barber on Víkingur frá Götu (IS1989184930), Cordy Sullivan on Lysingur frá Eyjólfstöðum (IS1992156186), and Stephanie Sher on Ögri frá Saudárkróki (IS1991157002) rode in a trail trial on September 26 to benefit Happiness House. Happiness House Cerebral Palsy Association supports disabled children and adults in Western New York. A lot of money was raised, but in addition it was a wonderful ride. We survived the obstacles, which included pushing through giant carwash hanging strips, dragging a sack of cans not only forward, but backward, and a hunting scene complete with turkey calls. It was a beautiful day, with the fall colors just beginning to shine and a perfect temperature in the 50s. The planning and support that went in to this trail made even the occasional backwards bolt (that was the turkey call) fun. According to one of the judges, the Icelandics also had the distinction of being the cutest horses at the ride.



Steve Barber on Kalman frá Laekjarmoti and Stephanie Sher on Ögri frá Saudarkroki at an earlier trail trial. Photo by Andrea Barber.



# THE FANTASTIC SEMINAR

BY ALEX, ED, LORI, SUE, & REISHA

*This is the story of a European clinic concept—"horse conformation in correlation with performance"—getting exported to U.S. riders who were starving for knowledge. It's a team-work article, with contributions from Lori Akari, Ed Hilgaertner, Sue Anderson, Reisha Toby, and Alex Pregitzer, who begins.*

## ALEX'S VIEW

I remember USIHC president Anne Elwell emailing me in my capacity as head of the USIHC Education Committee. Anne told me about her conversations with Barbara Frische concerning this "fantastic seminar" that Barbara had developed and had been giving in Germany. The success of these seminars was so huge that at times there were 50 people waitlisted to participate. Can you imagine? I plain thought "wow" and shared Anne's excitement right away.

Here was a concept, already developed and proven. And even better, the person who had developed it and who had given the seminar numerous times was living now right here in the U.S. She not only was available to teach it, she had a 10 for 'spirit and willingness,' to speak in breeding terms. Barbara's specialty, as a certified FEIF Breeding Judge, is being one of the few international experts on young horse judging.

The fantastic seminar includes two clinicians, an Icelandic Horse Breeding Judge and an experienced Icelandic Horse Trainer, working together closely and complementing one another. Bar-



Barbara Frische (right) explaining the correlation between the horse's conformation and form under saddle to Ann-Christin. Photo by Alex Pregitzer.



Barbara Frische explaining Pegasus's conformation for all participants. Photo by Chris Schweizer.

bara and trainer Gudmar Petursson had already exchanged ideas and discussed the project, and they had agreed to give the clinic together. So here we had two experts to work with us. Even better!

Gudmar arranged the location for the clinic. Jim and Marianne Welch from Locust Hill farm in Kentucky were overly generous and offered us their farm exclusively for the whole weekend. We were welcome to use the stalls, the oval track, and all facilities. And so we did. We took over the whole place while our hosts were gone, simply trusting us to leave their place so they would be able to recognize it upon their return. The roomy, shady stalls were all open to allow the horses to socialize while we studied. Personal fans included, of course.

Theory class was going to take place at Gudmar's own training facility, which is only a puddle jump down the road.

To make all arrangements perfect, the two clinicians as well as the USIHC Board decided to add some much-needed financial support to come up with a reasonable price that would make the seminar attractive to all those interested in participating. And off we went advertising it and planning the details. Participants

were still signing up until two minutes to 9 a.m. on the first morning of the seminar.

On July 31, a hot and humid Kentucky day, 16 participants gathered in front of Gudmar Petursson's office, coffee in their hands, chit-chatting with old friends and new acquaintances, and eager to learn about the correlation of a horse's conformation and that horse's performance. So eager were we, that all of us squeezed into Gudmar's office. I am not knowledgeable in square feet measurements, but you could say it's not larger than a good-size stall. That would not be appropriate to say, so let's just say we all fit in there and it was a good opportunity to get to know one another and no escape possible for those not sitting right at the door.

We quickly learned that we had two outstanding clinicians who not only knew all that we wanted to learn but were more than willing to share their knowledge. They were friendly and patient and in a great mood. We, the participants, were not so bad either. We showed lots of willingness to learn and have fun, and zero attitude. Here are different viewpoints from participants.



## ED'S VIEW

*Ed Hilgaertner traveled the farthest of all the participants, flying in from California to audit the clinic.*

One might reasonably ask, "Why would I leave 80-degree balmy weather, and 30 percent humidity, put up with airline regulations and discomfort, and sleep in a noisy hotel to attend a clinic in Kentucky where the daytime temperature was 104 with 80 to 90 percent humidity, and the night time temperature over 70 degrees?"

The answer, of course, is "that is where they held the clinic on Icelandic horse conformation and how it relates to performance." I have spent at least 20 years of my life studying this very issue, so I couldn't wait for the clinic to come to me. Besides, the combination of clinicians, Barbara Frische and Gudmar Petursson, was irresistible.

No matter what you think you know, seeing the Icelandic horse through the eyes of these two people and then seeing the horses demonstrate the movement predicted by Barbara and Gudmar was an exhilarating experience. We actually learned to "see" the performance through looking at the conformation. Sort of a "mind's eye" training session.

I was an auditor, not a rider, but I am certain that the riders had the same "got it" experience that I did. One of the really good things about the clinic was that a wide variety of horse talent and rider skill participated, providing a sort of "check" on the clinicians as to the accuracy of their predictions. Among the participants, there was no "my horse is better than your horse" stuff going on. It was strictly a what-do-you-see versus what-do-you-get educational experience.

Over the years, I have come to trust the marks assigned to competition and breeding horses, partly because I have educated myself by attending many different clinics on a variety of subjects, and I am convinced that the grading system is consistent throughout the Icelandic community. This particular clinic, matching conformation to performance, was the most "eye opening," in that the connection to the marks was visible and demonstrated.

As always, the horses gave what was asked of them, including demonstrating that elusive "willingness" that we so often



Sara and Toppur getting instruction from Gudmar Petursson. Photo Alex Pregitzer.

under estimate. We humans simply need to learn how to ask.

## LORI'S VIEW

*Another participating rider was Lori Akari who came from Carolina.*

On the weekend of July 31 to August 1, I had the pleasure of participating in the USIHC Educational Seminar presented by Barbara Frische and Gudmar Petursson in Kentucky. I was riding a great little mare that I'd been on maybe ... twice. She's a blue dun named Sarabot, owned by Sara Lyter. Sara brought two other horses, Melkorka and Toppur, and luckily for me, two were enough for her to ride. My personal goals for the clinic were to catch up with some old friends, make some new ones and hopefully learn



Clinician Gudmar Petursson works with Susan and Riddari. Photo by Alex Pregitzer.

a few things along the way.

Day 1 started in the classroom with a presentation by Barbara on conformation and how it affects gaits. As hard as it is for me to sit still in the mornings, I felt it was the best way to start the weekend, making certain everyone was on the same page with the terminology and setting a foundation of knowledge that we would apply for the rest of the clinic. Barbara is obviously knowledgeable and experienced, but was also very willing to look to Gudmar for his opinions throughout the seminar. Between the two of them and Barbara's wonderful drawings, they did a great job setting participants up for success in the rest of the clinic.

That afternoon we moved on to practical application of the information presented in the morning. With Barbara's guidance we critiqued the conformation of two horses that were going to be ridden over the course of the weekend. We discussed conformational faults and weaknesses and how they affected gait and performance. We then split into two groups and critiqued the rest of the horses that had been brought along by participants on our own, regrouping when we were done to discuss our observations with Barbara.

Next all horses were presented by their owners on the oval track. Gudmar then rode all the horses in the clinic very briefly to get a feel for how the horses were under saddle (it was a very busy day). We were able to see almost immediately whether our predictions of gait and movement based on conformation were accurate or not.

Day 2 was broken up into two short

lessons for each rider, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. Getting ready for my first ride, I was surprised to find out I was nervous. One of my first jobs involved riding horses for sales videos, often horses I'd never sat on and some with very little training. Maybe I should say I was shocked that I felt nervous about riding in this clinic. I needn't have worried, as Sarabot exceeded her conformational limits due to an overabundance of willingness. And I didn't fall off, which is always nice. Gudmar and Barbara were both very positive and encouraging in their remarks. I think Sarabot may have more heart than any horse I have ever worked with, and after applying Gudmar's recommendations, she performed even better in her second lesson that day.

Gudmar proved to be a patient, observant instructor, often picking up and correcting very subtle imperfections from



Looking at Pegasus from all different perspectives. Photo by Chris Schweizer.



Curtis and his young mare waiting their turn. Photo by Alex Pregitzer.

both horses and riders. Both Gudmar and Barbara were available for questions and presented a tremendous amount of information. Both were consistently kind in their instructions and their manner with the horses. They worked well together, not only having complementary teaching styles but excellent timing, trading off the responsibility of explaining what they saw with our horses.

I was very pleased with the overall experience of the clinic. If I were forced to find fault it would be that I didn't get to see all the participants ride in both their lessons, being busy preparing and cooling down the horse I rode. Also, it was hot. Really, really hot. I felt I met all my personal goals and the seminar exceeded my educational expectations. I even learned some new words like, raven's nose and dromaeognathous.

Coming from a background in thoroughbred racehorses, where understanding of conformation and how it affects gait and soundness is imperative, I was very happy with the information provided and even how it was presented. I have enough experience with horses and conformation to look at a horse and know if it would be more trotty or pacey in the tolt, but I certainly couldn't tell you why. So for me it was great to have

someone like Barbara explain it. If you want to know not only how your horse's conformation informs the gait but also have a tool box to make it better, go to the next clinic!

## OTHER VIEWS

The feedback we received for this clinic was very positive and encouraging.

Susan Anderson said, "I just wanted to thank you so very much for running a superb clinic. It was so well organized, and there is no question that you put in a lot of very hard work to make it successful. I feel very grateful to you for your contribution. It was truly one of the most informative clinics I have been to in my riding career and I look forward to going again."

Reisha Toby, who owns a Rocky Mountain horse farm, came to audit for the theory portion and writes, "I very much enjoyed meeting you, along with everyone else, at the clinic! I can hardly wait to attend the next Icelandic event in our area."

The fantastic seminar concept will be offered in different locations in the U.S. in 2011. Please check the events calendar on the USIHC web site for dates and locations, or email Alex at [education@icelandics.org](mailto:education@icelandics.org).



# THE SPAEJARI AWARD ESSAY

BY RILEY MCGITTIGAN

*Editors' note: Spaejari is the Icelandic name of the endurance horse commonly known as Remington. Owned by John and Marilyn Parke of Santa Ynez, California, Spaejari is one of the only Icelandic horses—one of the only horses of any breed—to have clocked over 10,000 miles in sanctioned competition.*

*Spaejari is known for his determination, passion, and indomitable will. This award is intended to inspire and encourage these same qualities in our youth members. Each year, the USIHC organizes an essay contest and selects up to three winners, who receive a plaque and \$50 at the USIHC Annual Meeting.*

*The award is given to those youth members under age 18 who most clearly demonstrate their commitment and love for the Icelandic horse. This commitment can be shown by taking part in any kind of riding activity, including, for example, recreational trail riding, showing, driving, gymkhana, endurance riding, dressage, team penning, jumping, trail trials, and competitive trail riding. Desirable participation can include 4-H programs, volunteering with therapeutic riding programs, rescue programs and adoption programs. Simply training or caring for Icelandic horses can also show the requisite commitment.*

*The following is this year's award-winning essay.*



Riley and Haeringur.

## ICELANDICS ARE SPECIAL

I woke up at 8 a.m. and got ready for my big day, the day that changed my life. We arrived at Boulder Ridge Icelandics in Limington, Maine, at 9 a.m. for my first riding lesson on an Icelandic horse. I was nervous at first, but when I saw the horses my heart melted and I felt joyful. The horse I rode was Haeringur (Harry). His color is dapple gray and he is a gelding. He is 17 years old and his name means dapple-gray. I love him!

My name is Riley McGittigan. I am 10 years old and in the fifth grade at Oak Ridge School in Sandwich, Massachusetts. I have three pets, including a dog, a cat, and a hamster. I love all animals, especially horses. Someday I hope to become a veterinarian.

Icelandics are special to me because they are very friendly. Their coat is gorgeous. I feel safe because they are lower to the ground. I have taken lessons for the past two years on larger horses. It always made me feel uncomfortable to ride the taller horses, so I usually rode on a Shetland pony.

The Icelandic horse originated in Iceland. They are smaller than other horses, but they are not ponies. There is no Icelandic word for pony. Their attitude is better. They usually don't kick, bite, or buck. Icelandic horses are gaited. That's what makes them really special. They have two unique gaits called tolt and flying pace. Not all Icelandics have flying pace, but they all have tolt. Tolt is an amazingly smooth gait and most importantly, I love to ride it!

There are no bugs in Iceland, so when they come to America, Icelandics can get a reaction to the bites called Summer Eczema. The horses in Iceland have no diseases. When a horse leaves Iceland they can never return so that they don't bring any diseases back. Iceland doesn't let other breeds of horses come into their country, so that insures a pure breed.

My teacher's name is Krista Wescott. She is a great teacher. She likes children and makes learning fun. After my week of riding camp, I had too much fun to leave,



Riley McGittigan won the 2010 Spaejari essay contest.

so I asked Krista if I could stay and help her with the horses and her other camps. I spent most of the rest of the summer at the riding camp, and each day was more exciting than the last one.

One day, Krista informed me that she was going to a horse show in Tunbridge, Vermont, and asked if I wanted to go, too. I asked my mother if I could go, and she said yes. I was so happy I was dancing and doing cartwheels!

On the morning of the show, I was the first one awake because I was excited and nervous. I had never been to a horse show before. I entered four events. They were the youth four-gait, novice four-gait, youth tolt, and mix-in-a-bag. I was very happy to win three second-place medals. After my last event, the judge was walking toward me. I thought I was going to get another second-place medal, but I was surprised and proud to find out I won first place!

My teacher, Krista, won the Featherlight trophy. That didn't surprise me because she is such a great rider and teacher. She is kind and gentle with her students and her animals.

I am very grateful to have had this experience. I met many nice and interesting people at the show and saw so many beautiful horses. Krista taught me so much about riding and Icelandic horses. I hope someday to own a horse of my own.



# AN UNFORGETTABLE SUMMER

BY RACHEL NG



The country teams gather with their flags for a photo at the FEIF Youth Cup. Photo by Rachel Ng.

*Editors' note: The FEIF Youth Cup is an international Icelandic horse competition held in a different European country in July of even-numbered summers. International teams are made up on the first day of the Cup, with each team having six teenage riders from different FEIF countries. Renowned Icelandic horse trainers train the riders the first three days. The competition among the international teams is held the last two days.*

*Ages for the competition are 14-17.*

*Applicants must be a member of the USIHC. Each must fill out an application, include two personal character references written by an adult other than a relative (teacher, church youth leader, etc.), and send a DVD showing a four-gait or five-gait program, and a tölt program. The DVDs are judged by a FEIF judge and the minimum tryout score is presently 4.5 for each program. The applications are scored by an independent four-person panel.*

*The following essay is by a member of the 2010 team.*

When I found out that I had made the USIHC Youth Cup team, I was so excited I couldn't start my homework for another three hours. I was excited about traveling to a new country, riding in a big competition, meeting new people, and getting to know my teammates. School ended, about a month of summer passed, and on July 6 my mother and I flew a long, long flight to Amsterdam, to Copenhagen, and then finally to Århus, a small city about 45 minutes from Kalø, the agri-

cultural college that would be hosting the FEIF Youth Cup. We spent a day in the city, and Cait Nold and Madison Prestine and her family joined us the next day and we visited the "Old Town" and went shopping. Jasmine Ho, our country leader, and Perry Rothman-Ostrow, our team leader, later joined us for a great dinner.

On July 10, we drove out to Kalø and checked in to the Youth Cup. We first made our way up to our new "home," which we would share with the teams from Norway and Great Britain for the next week. We then entered the food tent, where most of the other teams had already settled in for lunch. Nerves overcame us as we looked around the tent and saw all the other talented riders. I remember thinking, "Wow, these 69 other people seem like they already know each other" and "Oh boy, the Icelandic team looks *really* intimidating, with their matching shirts and their own little table." I don't think that I had ever seen so many kids who rode Icelandic horses sitting under the same roof and I was looking forward to meeting kids that I could talk to about horses without having to explain what Icelandic horses were or what type of riding it was or say "just Google it."

We met our other teammate, Kevin Draeger (aka Marty) in the food tent and then we all went down to the barn to meet our horses. My horse was a chestnut gelding with a small blaze named Blesi

frá Nr. Felding 11. Cait's horse was a blue dun gelding that she borrowed from one of the Danish girls also competing at the Youth Cup, and Maddie borrowed a black gelding. Kevin had gone to Germany earlier, so he brought a horse down from the farm that he had been training at.

After a stressful search for mattresses and frustrating vet checks for me and Cait, we finally had time to settle down in our room, where we met our roommates. We found it easy to start talking



Rachel Ng carries the flag.

and laughing, bonding over card games, yoga balls, and millions of bags of candy. Cait, Maddie, and I quickly agreed that we would definitely have a great time with these girls.

Completely full from candy, we all went down to dinner that night, where we were split into our international teams: 12 teams made up of riders from different countries. We would not only compete for our own country, but also compete for our international teams. Each of the teams had to create a team name based on a letter that was given to them. I was the first of the U.S. team to be called out, so I joined the "L" team, led by the Dutch team leader. It took a while to think up a name because there are not many words that start with L related to horses, but in the end, my roommate from Norway suggested "Looney Tunes" and it stuck.

After dinner, we went down to feed our horses again, and then we lugged ourselves up to the showers and then back to the rooms and fell asleep after an exciting and long day. Our bedtime for the next week would be around 11 to 12. For the next few days, we would wake up around 6:15 and head down to the barn by 6:30 to feed the horses and get more hay for later on. Breakfast and lunch would be with our international teams. Training was also done with our international teams, with the five different trainers. We worked on gaits, tolt, dressage, trail, and flag race/pace tests and got to know our horses better, as well as figure out which three classes we would want to compete in. In between these riding classes, we also attended horse welfare and theory classes. After long and intense days of training, we would eat dinner with our countries and shower and go to bed.

One night after dinner, there was a ridiculous freak thunderstorm. We were all slowly going down to the barn to feed our horses. Luckily, Cait, Maddie, Kevin, and I were already down at the barn when it just started pouring and pouring down rain. Every other country began complaining and screaming while we jumped around and screamed for joy because we loved the rain, and everyone else was just sick and tired of it. Unfortunately, the thunderstorm was directly above the barn and lightning was just overhead, so we had to wait the storm out all cramped up in the humid barn, dripping wet and



Rachel Ng rides Blesi in tolt at the FEIF Youth Cup in Denmark.

freezing cold. That was a rough and very, very muddy night.

Tuesday night was Youth Cup's Country Night. Each country had to prepare some sort of performance, whether a skit or dance or game, and present in front of everyone. Germany had a hilarious puppet show, The Netherlands showed us their favorite Dutch games, the Swedish team had us play a huge game of tag, and Iceland sang a famous song and gave us little jars of ash from the recent volcanic eruption. We also set up tables with famous foods and candies from our countries. Denmark dressed up like their Santa Claus and served us a Christmas dinner. Germany's table seemed like a buffet of candies, drinks, pickles, and sausages. We had really good goat cheese from Norway and amazing Swiss chocolate. Kevin, Cait, Maddie, and I set up a table with different American candies and we arranged them in interesting designs and patterns. For our performance, we followed what the previous team did and performed Cotton-Eyed Joe on a big stage in the university's gymnasium. We had so much fun and to our surprise, we got lots of kids to come up and dance along with us!

On Wednesday, we all took a day off from training and went to Sommerland, an amusement park in Århus. We joined

the girls from Norway and explored the park. Our first ride was this huge rollercoaster, where we convinced Cait to go with us even though she was terrified at first. She ended up having a great time and we went on again and made goofy faces when we passed the ride's camera. After lunch we headed over to the water park section of the park and cooled off on the huge waterslides and crazy water rides. We ended the day by stopping at a Haribo store in the park and restocked our candy supplies. When we finally got home, we fed our horses and tried to get a good night's sleep for the next day's competitions.

On the first day of competitions, we woke up extra early to go through a final vet check and country and international team meetings. Our Looney Tunes' team leader gave us the schedule for the day, and we all scrambled to see when our classes were. I chose to ride in the V4 special four-gait class, the T7 tolt class, and all of us U.S. riders participated in flag race for fun.

The opening ceremony began at 2 on Thursday. We entered the track last, due to the alphabetical order of the countries, wearing our blue USA raincoats and white riding pants. Jasmine held the flag and Cait held the sign that



read "USA." We lined up on the grass next to Switzerland and listened to the opening speeches and introductions of the five Youth Cup judges. We then broke into our international teams, wearing our team vests, and left the track together. The competition overall was so exciting and fun; it was a great experience to ride in a big competition with lots of people watching, multiple judges, loud music, and other distractions. The flag race was quite an interesting experience for each of us representing the U.S. I had never competed in one before and it was fun to try it out even if I was not the most graceful or successful at it. Though none of us made it to the finals, we still had a great time gaining more show experience and knowledge of riding. We cheered on our roommates from Norway and Great Britain who had made it into the finals. We must have been the loudest out there besides the crazy Dutch fans with their giant orange hats.

We rode on our horses with our international teams in the closing ceremony. We dismounted and waited and listened to closing speeches and thoughts and a quick recap of the overall success of the Youth Cup. I then left my internation-



Blesi, the horse Rachel Ng borrowed for the 2010 FEIF Youth Cup.



Members of the U.S. team in their blue jackets walking in the opening ceremony at the FEIF Youth Cup. From left, they are Kevin Draeger, Rachel Ng, Madison Prestine, country leader Jasmine Ho, and Cait Nold.

al team and joined the rest of my country and we slowly left the track with our horses, waving to the crowd and singing along to "California Gurls." After showering and dressing in the nicest clothes we had brought, we joined parents and friends in the dining hall for a banquet to celebrate the closing of the FEIF Youth Cup. We sat with Norway and Great Britain, as we had become great friends over the past week and wanted to enjoy the last night all together. We sat around the table laughing at jokes and talking about highlights of the week and taking silly pictures of each other. After the banquet was over, everyone moved into the tents where other awards for individual people were given. Though the U.S. team did not win any tolt or four-gait finals awards, we all received awards for our international teams and team tests. I think we all placed in the top ten with our teams for both. After the parents left, the night ended with a dance party that was held under a big tent. Originally, I wanted to finish my packing and get some decent amount of sleep, but I could not give up the opportunity of spending the last night dancing with my new friends. We danced

and talked until one in the morning and when we got back to the room, we still talked and laughed and ate more candy instead of finishing up our packing.

It was hard to imagine leaving our great new friends, especially our roommates from Norway and Great Britain. We ran around getting each other's emails and phone numbers and promised to add each other as Facebook friends so we could always chat and keep in touch. We were all close to tears on that last night and next morning. It was great to meet so many other kids that shared a similar passion. It was definitely hard to leave my new friends, but I hope to meet them again soon, whether it be at the next World Championships or on a visit to Norway and Great Britain. I miss my friends and this whole experience so much, but my memories keep replaying in my head every day and will continue to forever. This summer definitely topped any imaginable, and it is a great honor to be able to say that I represented my country in an international competition, and I hope to be able to do so again at the next FEIF Youth Cup.



# SUPER STJARNA

BY FLORIE MILLER

Thanks to Garry and Sharon Snook, a couple of Icelandic horses were donated to a local therapy program, Sopris Therapy Services. One of these horses is Stjarna, or Star as most of the Americans call her.

Star came from Iceland in 2001. She has an unusual appearance, with her shiny black coat and one blue eye. She was used as a trail riding horse at the Snook's Hanging Valley Ranch, a job she liked a lot. Like most Icelandics, she is sure footed, dependable, and has a big heart. She was a favorite for overnight camping trips, and had no problems crossing the most difficult terrain.

Unfortunately she started to have some problems with being on grass. It was just too rich for her, and her feet were paying the price. This was a problem because all the horses live in big green pastures, and this just didn't work for her. She was the only one who would have had to stay in the barn for most of the time. It was hard to tell her that it was for her own good! More grass and she would founder again...

It became clear that we would have to think of a solution for Star. How could we make her life productive and healthy? Sopris Therapy Services came to mind, an awesome program where I have volunteered off and on ever since I came to America. They work with kids and adults with a wide range of special needs. I called the director and let her know about Star. Immediately she sounded interested. Hey, after all these years I know how to promote an Icelandic!

Within a week Star moved to her new home. This was wonderful. Star gets to live in a dry paddock with excellent care, and she didn't have to be alone. Now all I had to do was keep my fingers crossed to see if she was cut out to be a therapy horse. It didn't take long to get the answer to that question. Star was doing great. She is as gentle as can be and clearly takes pride in her new job.

Last Sunday I was lucky enough to catch up with Star. A special program called Horses for Heroes is going on in America and it is about taking people who have been in the war in Iraq or

Afghanistan on horseback rides. (The program is also known as The Wounded Warrior program).

When we introduced our guy to Star he seemed a bit disappointed. The others in the group got to ride big quarterhorses and there is even a Belgian draft horse that comes along. And here he was stuck with a short black pony. I told him not to worry, and that we would show them who was having more fun. He gave me a nice smile, but I could tell it was not heartfelt.

Before going out on the trail ride we went to the large riding arena to do some warming up and to get to know the horses. It immediately became apparent that our guy was not a bad rider! Star noticed this too and seemed to like it. She stepped along in her nice Icelandic clip, passing first the big quarterhorses and then the Belgian. This was fun! The smallest horse was more energetic than all the other ones. I could see the beginnings of a genuine smile on our guy's face. Pretty soon it was time to try our hand at trot. Well, trot for all the other horses, of course, but tolt for us. And yes, here it was, the tolt smile! The smile we all know so well! All the others were bouncing around uncomfortably and our guy was sitting as smooth as could be in the saddle. He was sold.

After this the trail ride was wonderful. The beautiful blue Colorado sky, hinting at fall but still in summer glory, hung over us as we explored the trails. "All I have to do now," said our guy, "is try to figure out a way to get her on the airplane to Alabama so I can take her home."



# WHO IS FLORIE MILLER?

INTERVIEW BY ALEXANDRA PREGITZER

## WHAT IS YOUR BACKGROUND?

I was born and raised in Amsterdam, Holland. I went to college to study Spanish and English when I decided instead to pursue a Wild West adventure. That was over twelve years ago now.

I first came to the United States in 1997. I was just going to be here for a summer. I found a very fun job on a dude ranch where we took tourists on rides and on cattle drives. Of course I fell in love with a cowboy and decided to stay a bit longer ... my first son was born in 2001, after which I decided Holland would be a better place to live for us. My second son was born in 2004 in Holland. But as it turned out my husband was really not happy over there and he convinced me to move back to the States. So in 2008 we moved to America for good this time. This was a hard thing for me, but I decided to make the best of it!



Florie riding Gata at Hanging Valley Ranch. Photo by Christy Spencer.



Florie having fun with Loftsteinn. Photo by Christy Spencer.

## WHAT IS YOUR HORSE EXPERIENCE?

I started riding lessons when I was ten. Even though I grew up in the middle of the city I always loved horses. Luckily my parents took us out to the country a lot so I could see a horse every now and then. But they both are not into horses, so it would drive them crazy if we had to stop at yet another field so I could pet a horse. Finally when I was ten my stepmother convinced my parents that it would really be a good idea if I took some riding lessons at a riding school just outside of the city. This was fantastic!

When I was 13, I came into contact with Icelandics for the first time during summer vacation, when a friend and I got to go to a pony camp. Wow, what a change from the very proper riding school that I was used to! The pony camp was owned by a peculiar old lady. She had 20 or so Icelandics who all looked very wild and exciting. She had no saddles because she never had any money—so we had to ride without. This pony camp was more like





Florie training Gata at Hanging Valley Ranch. Photo by Christy Spencer.

boot camp, and if you fell off your horse there was a good chance the group would just keep riding—and you would have to walk. You better believe we learned *real* quick to hold on for dear life!

Luckily around that time I also met some more normal people with Icelandics. Here I learned about tolt and good riding. After that I took a detour and rode Arabian horses for a few years. I also rode Haflingers for a while and, of course, after coming to the States, quarterhorses. But something was always missing, so when we were living in Holland again I jumped at the chance to start riding Icelandics again!

I tried to take as many lessons as I could and after a while started giving some lessons myself. When we came to Colorado in 2008, one of my first priorities was to find new Icelandic horse friends, because I knew that would make the transition a lot easier for me. This is how I came into contact with the Snooks, who asked me to come work part-time on their beautiful Hanging Valley Ranch. In 2009 I went to Georgia and passed my FEIF trainers exam. It was such a wonderful time at Creekside Farm. It was absolutely great that USIHC member Katrin Sheehan organized that seminar.

## WHAT IS YOUR TRAINING PHILOSOPHY?

My training is focused on trying to create a forward thinking, energetic horse—a proud horse that is excited about going places. I try to keep training light and fun. Just like kids, horses learn better when they are having fun and when they feel that they are appreciated. For my inspiration I mix and match all my experiences with good horse trainers. Right now I keep my own two horses at a stable with a race horse trainer. His name is Mario Tarin. You will never see him trying to sell a DVD, but he is one of the best horse-men I have come across and I learn a lot from him.

## WHAT IS YOUR TEACHING PHILOSOPHY?

When I give lessons I try to keep in mind what it is that people want to get out of it. Not everyone has the same goals. But I think balance and confidence are the cornerstones of riding no matter what you want to do. So with the kids lessons, I let them ride without stirrups or without saddles and we do exercises on the lunge line. With adults you usually have to be a bit more ... subtle, as fear is holding a lot of people back from finding their balance and confidence. I like to tell people that they don't have to reach all their goals at once. They should break up their goals into smaller portions and be happy with "one step at a time."

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

My hope for the Icelandic horse in the United States is, of course, that more and more people discover this wonderful breed. But also that we keep a close eye on what kind of horses we breed. Not only do we need to use good stallions, but also good mares. Also, a natural upbringing in large pastures and herd-like groups is extremely important. This way we keep breeding athletic horses that are sound in body and mind.

## CONTACT

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# RIDING BADGE FAQS

BY ALEXANDRA PREGITZER

## WHAT IS THE RIDING BADGE PROGRAM?

The Riding Badge Program is an educational tool developed by the Education Committee of the USIHC. It has relied heavily upon the German Riding Program, with additional information from the U.S. Department of Agriculture 4-H program. The program consists of seven achievement levels. The subject areas have been selected to provide an overall background on the equestrian sport, with a special emphasis on riding Icelandic horses. Students go through several units of riding instruction or theory classes, followed by an exam. The main difference from a regular clinic is the number of instructional units and the intensity of the seminar or lessons.

## WHERE CAN I FIND OUT MORE?

Please see the detailed information we have online at [www.icelandics.org/badge.pdf](http://www.icelandics.org/badge.pdf) or contact [education@icelandics.org](mailto:education@icelandics.org) at any time.

## IS THIS PROGRAM FOR KIDS OR ADULTS?

The Riding Badge Program consists of seven different levels with five of them being open to children and all seven of them being open to youth riders. All levels are open to adult riders.

## IS IT EXCLUSIVE TO USIHC MEMBERS?

This program is open to everybody, members and non-members.

## WHAT KIND OF BADGES ARE THERE?

There are seven badges altogether. Two are general badges at two different levels; these cover general horse knowledge. Three are competition badges in three different levels, covering the basic knowledge but emphasizing competition riding. Two are pleasure riding badges in two different levels, covering the basic knowledge but emphasizing trail riding. The different badges have very different requirements.

## WHAT IS THE LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY?

Within the seven badges, there is a very big difference in difficulty. Some of the easier badges cover basic theory topics and ask for



Fee enjoys taking beginner riding lessons to prepare for a riding badge seminar. Brothers Sky and Cobe enjoy watching and helping out. Photo by Alex Pregitzer.

basic riding skills such as walk, trot or tolt, and some simple arena figures in the practical exams. Other badges are extremely challenging—closer to a trainer seminar—with highly demanding in-depth theory and equally highly demanding riding skills. Exams might ask for a T1 and V1 or T2 and F1 performance, a dressage test, jumping, ponying, and riders switching horses.

## DO I HAVE TO START WITH LEVEL 1?

No, you can start at the level that seems suitable for your knowledge. There is no order you have to follow.

## WHAT ARE THE PREREQUISITES?

The only prerequisite is your age. Five of the badge programs are open to children, minimum eight years old, youth, and adults. Two are open to youth and adults only, due to their level of difficulty.



## **CAN I TEST OUT WITHOUT TAKING THE SEMINAR?**

For the basic riding badges, level 1 and level 2, we offer an option to test out without taking the seminar. For all the other badges, participation in the instructional units is a prerequisite to attend the exams.

## **CAN MY LESSONS BE SPREAD OUT?**

Yes. The required instructional units can be presented in a multi-day seminar or they can be taught hourly over a longer period of time. The program was created to be as flexible as possible.

## **WHAT IS THE COST FOR PARTICIPATION?**

The basic cost is determined by the organizer of the seminar/lessons and depends on factors such as the cost for the instructor, the cost for the examiner, the cost for providing schooling horses, etc. Each participant is also charged \$20 by the USIHC. In addition, non-USIHC members will be charged \$40. These fees cover the production of the riding badges and mailing fees for the certificates and badges, and contribute to our administrative costs.

## **WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO TEACH THE PROGRAM?**

Anybody who feels confident that he or she is an experienced riding instructor and has the knowledge being asked for at each individual level is eligible to teach this program. This decision was made with the intention to not limit the program to certain areas of the U.S.

## **WHO CAN CONDUCT THE EXAMS?**

Exams can be conducted by any international FEIF Sports Judge for Icelandic horses, any certified Icelandic Horse Instructor, or any certified USIHC Intern Judge.

## **WHO CAN HOST THE SEMINAR OR LESSONS?**

Anybody able to offer a suitable facility can host a riding badge seminar or riding badge lessons.

## **WHAT DO I GET WHEN I PASS?**

You will receive a certificate, as well as a badge that shows the USIHC logo and the badge level and that can be sewn onto your clothing to show off your achievements.

## **WHAT HAPPENS IF I DON'T PASS?**

You can repeat the exam. There is no limit to the number of tries and no limit timewise.

## **DOES THE EXAM HAVE TO BE PART OF THE SEMINAR?**

No. Exams can be conducted either right after the seminar or lessons, or at a different time if it is more convenient.

## **WHOM DO I INFORM IF I WANT TO HOST A SEMINAR?**

We kindly ask organizers, instructors, and examiners to inform us ahead of time of their plans so that we can order the badges and create the certificates. There is an online form available for download that organizers send to [education@icelandics.org](mailto:education@icelandics.org). The form can be found at [www.icelandics.org/badge.xls](http://www.icelandics.org/badge.xls).

## **WHY WOULD I WANT TO TAKE A RIDING BADGE SEMINAR?**

It is an outstanding learning opportunity that is different from most clinics offered in the U.S. The riding badge seminars and lessons include more riding lessons and more theory lessons than most clinics, thus making them a very intense learning environment in which riding instruction is combined with classroom style theory for best results.

## **WHAT MATERIALS CAN I USE TO PREPARE FOR MY EXAMS?**

All the information you need to prepare for your exams can be obtained in the riding lessons and theory sessions taught during the seminar or lessons. In addition, we are happy to refer to literature that is easily available and covers a good part of the knowledge needed. The Education Committee's goal is

to create manuals that will be distributed to participants. Volunteers are working on those manuals, but it is a long term project.

## **WHY WOULD I WANT TO OFFER A SEMINAR AT MY BARN?**

It is a great tool to provide more knowledge to your students and boarders beyond simply offering riding lessons or clinics. It is a good way to further friendship among students and to encourage students and boarders to further their knowledge, resulting in more knowledgeable riders and happier, healthier horses, safer horse handling, and thus less risk of injury for both horses and riders. Offering clinics and seminars at the barn is also a good way of bonding and getting to know one another better for all participants: horses, hosts, riders, teachers, and examiners.

## **HOW DOES THE USIHC SUPPORT ORGANIZERS?**

There is a great deal of support for organizers available through the USIHC. Organizers can advertise their riding badge seminars free of charge on the USIHC web site, as well as in the *Quarterly*. We offer to talk to instructors and examiners, explaining the procedures, and we always have an open ear for questions or suggestions.

For more information, please go to our website and read about this program at [www.icelandics.org/badge.pdf](http://www.icelandics.org/badge.pdf) or email Alexandra Pregitzer, chair of the Education Committee, at [education@icelandics.org](mailto:education@icelandics.org).



Riding lessons and theory sessions can be fun and educational for the whole family (even the dog). Photo by Alex Pregitzer.

# CALIFORNIA RIDING BADGE ACHIEVEMENT

BY ALEX PREGITZER, PHOTOS BY HEIDI BENSON

In August, the USIHC regional club Kraftur in California hosted a Riding Badge seminar level 2 with instructor Heidi Benson.

The seminar at Coast Road Stables in Santa Cruz was well received and seven youth riders participated successfully, studying theory topics that included detailed information about horse health, care taking, tack, feeding, grooming, riding technique, tolt, other gaits, and general basics.

The riding portion of the exam asked riders to show correctly the horses at walk, trot, canter, and tolt, including mounting and dismounting, arena figures, correct seat and aids, and transitions between the gaits..

On August 20, Ayla Green, Julia Hasenauer, Kajsa Johnson, Madison Malkon-Pedersen, Sarah McWaid, Allison Moerer and Alexandra Venable passed their exams with certified FT trainer and examiner Svanhildur Stefansdottir.

Congratulations to all participants!!



Alexandra Venable, riding Aegir at the tolt.



Svanhildur Stefansdottir explains the procedures for the Riding Badge's ridden exam to Allison and Madison.



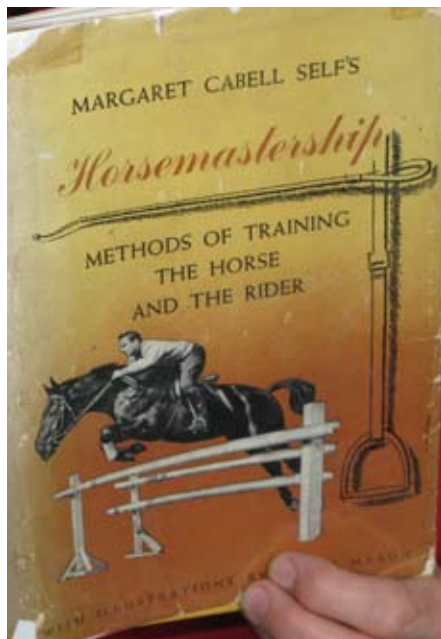


Clockwise from top left, Svanhildur Stefansdottir and Ayla Green with Skuggi; Kajsa Johnson toltng with Skuggi; Sarah McWaid showing tolt on Draupnir; Tigull and Madison wait their turn; Julia Hasenauer on Birta, and Ayla Green; Allison and Punktur cantering.

# BOOK REVIEWS

BY BERNIE WILLIS

## HORSEMASTERSHIP



*Horsemastership*, by Margaret Cabell Self, is a comprehensive volume of 440 pages published by Barnes and Company in 1952. My copy is of the sixth printing. The subtitle is “Methods of Training the Horse and the Rider.” I had been offered a selection of horse books from the library of Bill Burke. Most of them had color pictures and seemed modern at first glance. *Horsemastership* was not attractive, old looking, it went to the bottom of the reading list.

It was a mistake to leave it to last. The author weaves history, my favorite subject, into each of the methods of training the horse and rider. Huge egos dominated horsemanship centuries ago. How their methods translate into modern times helps me understand the “why” of what’s happening now. There are 162 illustrations to complement the written description of the techniques. I was only a few chapters into the book when I went to find a copy for myself.

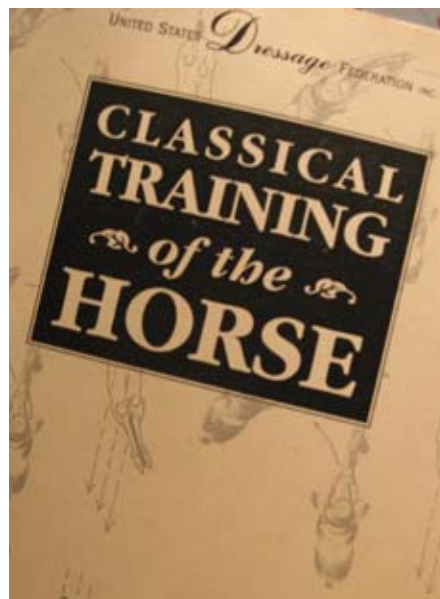
Part One is about the training of the horse. The horse is finally mounted in Chapter 5, at the end of the first stage. During the second stage, the aids are developed from the various rein methods through leg yielding. The third stage

deals with methods of training to develop longitudinal and lateral flexion. This is followed by Haute Ecole and jumping chapters.

Part Two is all about the rider, the seat, the instructor, and the student. “How to” is the general outline of Chapters 4 through 9. Then in Chapter 10 I found some answers to such questions as, When should a child start to ride? The development of a new rider is generally dependent upon their age when first in the saddle, according to Self. If you’re interested in marketing, pay attention to Chapters 10 through 13. There are stages in life where horsemanship makes more sense than others.

This excellent book winds down with stable management and starting as an instructor. *Horsemastership* is not only about horses, it is about the people who work with horses and how we can be more successful with each other in the horse business.

## CLASSICAL TRAINING



It was my privilege for several years to answer or find answers to questions posed to [info@icelandics.org](mailto:info@icelandics.org), the USHC’s general information line. This question was repeated often: “Is it necessary for an Icelandic horse to hollow its back to be able to tolt?” I knew the answer was

NO, but I had to ask myself, Why was it done so often? The answer came after a long trail of discovery, a personal journey into the history of horsemanship. Along the way a book came to my aid, entitled *Classical Training of the Horse* by the United States Dressage Federation, Inc. (USDF), First Edition, published in 1998.

*Classical Training of the Horse* does not have an author, it has 29 of them—and maybe more depending upon how you classify some of the source material. It is organized into 23 chapters. The training exercises were of particular benefit to me. Each chapter is divided into sections, definition, gymnastic purpose, qualities desired, aids, training advice, and common mistakes. The USDF has addressed each of these sections with appropriate comments from one or more of the 29 sources.

The terms of the classical training scale—rhythm, looseness, contact, impulsion, straightness, and collection—are expanded into a chapter about each quality. All of the rider’s aids are examined and explained in a succinct way. There are no anecdotes or stories. It is 92 pages of hard-hitting information for the serious rider.

The word *tolt* is not found in the book, but the riding concepts and theory, when practiced, develop a horse that tolt well without a hollow back.



# HAYLAGE

BY BERNIE WILLIS



Wrapped haybales, looking like giant marshmallows, can be seen all over Iceland. Photo by Bernie Willis.

*Digestibility and Metabolism in Icelandic Horses Fed Forage-only Diets*—now that’s a mouthful, pun intended. This “book review” is actually about the doctoral thesis of Sveinn Ragnarsson, a scientist at Holar University, Iceland.

But why? We don’t live in Iceland. This thesis is about haylage, and we use dry hay!

Frankly, it’s all about value for the dollar. This article will summarize Ragnarsson’s thesis and list some pros and cons for the use of this form of feed.

My personal experience with haylage began about 15 years ago when a friend in Iceland got a shipment of hay. I was ready to help unload. I had my long sleeve shirt on to protect my arms from sharp stems. I anticipated bucking heavy bales into a large stack. What a surprise to see a truck coming with huge marshmallows on the flatbed. We just rolled them off onto the ground and into a row beside the drive next to a rain soaked ditch. I knew I had a lot to learn. One bale was rolled into the stable and opened with a knife through the plastic. Inside was green, sweet-smelling grass, almost like fresh-cut. Later I took a handful home to Alaska and had it tested at the local university lab for comparison to

my usual feed. Though it was the same species of grass as I use at home, it was higher in nutritional value.

Since then I’ve discovered several things about forages:

1. Grass is the basis of all equine diets.
2. The timing of the cutting of grass in relationship to its life cycle determines the potential nutritional value of the feed.
3. The weight of a bale is only a very rough indication of the nutritional value of the feed.

## MAKING HAY

Every farmer who has ever put up hay is faced with the dilemma of when to cut. If it gets rained on, it will lose color and nutrition and may become useless and an expensive burden to get rid of. If it’s cut too early, the weight, hence income, will be reduced. If it’s cut too late, the nutritional value will be less. The farmer is faced with variables he can’t control. Preservation of the product is the problem. Drying hay has been the only way of preservation until recently. Fermentation has been used for

centuries to preserve food, now it can be done for forage with the use of plastic wraps. But at what level of moisture should the cut grass be wrapped? This question was on the list for my July trip to Iceland.

My local hay supplier was as frustrated as me trying to make a quality product with the inclement weather. He worked hard every year; some years he made good money, but other years he went behind. He confessed to me that his cows wouldn’t eat some of his hay. He had to do something different or give up. Maybe I could find out something in Iceland about making haylage. The Internet was full of information, but it was often contradictory. I knew where to start, at Holar University, in particular with Sveinn Ragnarsson.

Little did I know that he had heard I coming and was looking forward to my visit. He had recently completed his doctoral thesis at the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences on the very subject of concern. We met in his stable, where he was trimming hooves. I asked about the proper moisture levels in grass before bailing and wrapping for haylage. My question was turned around. In their system, it was the

dry matter content that was of concern. It was the dry matter that cost money; this is where the nutrition is that the horse eats. Water is essentially free. It is very important to understand the terms related to this issue, because high moisture content and low dry matter ferments into silage, with increased potential for botulism. This isn't a problem for cows as much as it is for horses. Horses are more susceptible to this kind of poisoning, so risk is reduced with a higher dry matter content and less moisture. We both became aware that our discussion would take more time than either of us had. The next day I was presented a copy of his dissertation. I summarize and then comment on his findings below.

## **PRESERVED FORAGES**

Hay is the traditional preserved forage for horses. It is gradually being replaced by ensiled forage (haylage or silage) because it depends less on weather conditions to make quality feed. There is less loss during harvest and collection. Historically ensiled forage has been regarded as unsuitable for horses. However, such recommendations are not new, having been available since the mid-1900s.

There is no clear definition of the difference between haylage and silage. For the purposes of this study silage, has a dry matter of 50% and haylage 68%. When compared to hay, haylage has fewer airborne allergens. When compared to silage, haylage has a higher pH, more soluble carbohydrates, and lower levels of fermentation acids. Clostridial and enterobacterial activities are normally minimal. Some growth of lactic acid bacteria occurs when the dry matter is as high as 50%. The risk of botulism is reduced, as well as the adverse risks of fermentation.

## **MATURITY AND DIGESTIBILITY**

A grass cell's contents provide the protein, starch, sugars, lipids, organic acids, and soluble ash found in the plant. The cell's wall is resistant to the digestive enzymes produced by the horse, and must be digested by bacterial fermentation. The proportion of the plant that is cell wall increases with maturity, but decreases with high latitude factors of lower temperatures and long photoperiods.

Timothy grass was used in this study both in Iceland, at 62 degrees North, and Sweden, at 59 degrees North. The

grass tested was all the first cutting of the year. Early maturity grass was cut in early July. Later maturity was cut later in July and mid-August. The early cut grass provided all the necessary nutrition for active horses in competition. The more mature grass was adequate for the maintenance of mature horses. The decrease in nutritional value with advanced stages of maturity was due to the increased fiber and decreased protein content. The feeding level, or amount of feed provided, impacted the digestibility and energy value of the early cut haylage. Increased feed availability decreased the time in the digestive tract and the amount of nutrition available.

## **BREED DIFFERENCES**

It has been suggested that Icelandic horses have lower energy requirements than other breeds. This study compared Icelandic horses to Standardbred horses. There was no difference detected in the digestible efficiency between the two breeds. However the Icelandic horse used less energy because of its smaller size and slower metabolism. The German and US-NRC recommendations for horses with low requirements are comparable for Icelandic horses in sedentary maintenance.

## **PLUS AND MINUS**

What are the practical implications of feeding haylage? One big positive is that allergies from dust molds are virtually eliminated. Another is that the farmer can cut the grass when it is at its highest level of nutrition. Only a day or so is needed to wilt the grass before it can be baled and wrapped. Handling is done by machine, eliminating all the hand stacking. Manual labor is reduced, hence the price on a dry matter basis for very high quality feed. Each bale comes with its own very effective little barn. It is normally stored outside in the rain and snow.

There are some negative aspects of feeding haylage compared to dry hay. Once a bale is opened, oxygen begins to spoil the haylage. If it isn't all eaten in a week to 10 days, it may become spoiled, depending upon the dry-matter-to-moisture ratio. If you have one horse and a 1000-pound bale you will have a lot of waste. A puncture hole will cause spoilage of at least part of a bale. (Packing tape is handy for fixing damage to the plastic wrap.) The risk of botulism poisoning is not limited to the

use of fermented feeds. According to university studies, central Kentucky and some northeastern states have the botulism bacteria in the soils. It develops in left-over hay walked into the mud or frozen down until spring. Wherever moisture is present and oxygen is limited, there is a risk of botulism. The large bales typically wrapped for haylage can include small animals that could bring the disease. There are at least six varieties of botulism. One variety can develop in an external wound and has nothing to do with feed. Fortunately a new vaccine is available that is reputed to be very effective against botulism B, the variety most likely to come from contaminated feed. (Botvax-B, 5 doses \$79.95, valleyvet.com)

The left-over plastic can be a problem depending on where you live. In Switzerland it must be taken to a special incinerating facility for disposal. In Iceland it is recycled. It burns well, but burning it may be an environmental hazard. Land fills will take it, but that's not free either.

## **COST**

How much does this high-quality feed cost compared to dry hay? It is difficult to make a comparison that will be applicable to every situation, but for me it breaks down like this. This next year I plan to feed nine horses. If I had no pasture and fed preserved forage year round, it would be like this. On a dry matter basis, each 50-pound bale of dry hay at 15% moisture content contains 42.5 pounds of feed and costs \$9.00 delivered. Each round bale of haylage weighs 1035 pounds (I weighed eight of them at a truck scale and took the average for this report). These bales were at 37.5% moisture, or 647 pounds of feed at a cost of \$100. I figure 13 pounds of feed per day per horse. Feeding dry hay would take 854 bales and \$7,686. Feeding haylage would take 66 bales and \$6,600. I save a \$1,000 and my back for something else.

## **SOURCES**

For an online summary of Sveinn Ragnarsson's thesis see <http://epsilon.slu.se/eng/index.html>

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# CLINIC WITH STEINAR

BY STEPHANIE SHER



Betty Grindrod and 3-year-old Perla listen intently while Steinar explains the importance of softness and flexibility. Photo by Amy Goddard.

My husband Larry and I used to go to Icelandic clinics quite often, but it must be about five years now since I've been to one. I wasn't at all sure about going, as Ogrri is end-of-summer fat, and I'm both fat and old! These days I'm concentrating on the joys of just being on a horse. I've had horses for maybe 30 years, and Icelandics for about 15 years, being smitten with them after we rode at the Vermont Icelandic Horse Farm. But time spent riding does not ensure skill. I expressed my anxieties on the Worldwide Icelandic Horse mailing list, and people were very encouraging, so my friend, Cordy Sullivan, our horses, and I left at 4:30 a.m. on Saturday to go to a clinic.

The clinician was Steinar Sigurbjornsson of Valhalla Icelandic Horses in Lakeview Terrace, California, and the clinic was held at Heleen Heyning's farm, West Wind, in Delhi, New York. This is a beautiful spot with excellent accommodations for horses. It was even possible to get our horses out in a pasture for a break when they weren't working. There was a nice indoor arena, and even a spectator's gallery—the hay loft. Heleen thought of everything. You've got to taste her home-

made blueberry-blackberry pie! USIHC members Amy Goddard and Steve Barber were there, helping with anything that needed it. Their help really made a huge difference. Often when Steinar was busy with one rider, Steve could coach the other two so you could keep working.

I met so many old friends and also people that I've only known from email lists. This clinic really was the best Icelandic clinic I've been to. There were only three horses in a group, and that gave Steinar the opportunity for very personalized training, both within the group and between the groups.

All of the groups worked a lot on bending and flexing at each lesson before we actually mounted. You patiently asked your horse to bend his head toward the side, without moving his rump. The horses got very good at this, almost bringing their heads to touch the sides of their rumps. We also asked them to relax their necks and reach down to get that nice front-to-back stretch. Steinar gives lots of praise and encouragement to the students and their horses, and this lets you move out of your comfort zone to do things you never would have imagined doing. The horses got nice and flexible on the ground. I

have to admit that when it was time to mount I was not nice and flexible, too stiff to get my foot in the stirrup, so Steve had to shove me into the saddle like a sack of potatoes. Hey, I never said I was in shape!

Mounted, we were doing turns on the haunches and on the forehand around Steinar, and then yielding hips and shoulders on the long sides, first at a walk, and then at tolt. Steinar wanted rapid, straight changes of gait, without pulling. Ogrri never trotted, only tolted, but that didn't matter for the exercises we were doing. Steinar asked for smooth collection and extension and balanced turns.

I thought the most exhilarating exercise was a line of about six barrels maybe 8 feet apart and 6 feet from the wall. Turns out once your horse is flexing beautifully and listening to you, you can just slalom through that line of barrels at a very rapid tolt. A touch of rein, out to the side, a shift of weight, and we were flowing through. And yes, we did knock a few barrels down, but Steve quickly ran over and set them up again for the next rider, and the horse didn't care. I just can't tell you what a dance that is with your furry partner. No pulling, no laboring, just the dance.

We were able to do some really fast tolt, which was exhilarating. We flew! Toward the end of the clinic we worked on canter departures, on the correct lead, please, and Steinar reminded us of so many things from my dressage days that I had either forgotten or never thought about applying to my ordinary riding on Ogrri. Outside leg to inside hand to get that correct lead. I can't say that Ogrri and I pulled that exercise off all that well, since our last run was in a kind of pace-gallop-valhopp and we definitely ran out of space! I ended up just being extremely grateful that Ogrri kept himself and me upright for a happy ending.

The clinic was a very intense experience, but only because there was so much to learn. It was a happy experience. Steinar is very quick to praise and gentle in corrections. He takes everyone where they are in their riding and tries to help both horse and rider to improve. Would I go to

# THERE IS NO TOLT IN DRESSAGE BUT THERE IS DRESSAGE IN TOLT

BY PAMELA S. NOLF

**H**ave you ever faced this situation with your Icelandic horse, or any horse for that matter? Riding down the trail, you ask for a side pass (or leg yield for the English riders) and the horse moves beautifully. Fifteen minutes later you ask for the side pass again, with what you think are the same aids, and the horse doesn't move off your leg or moves in a different direction. So you thump harder with your leg and the results just get worse. So why do your aids work one time and don't work the next?

The effectiveness of your aids have a lot to do with timing and coordination. For example, did you signal that leg yield when the horse was picking up his feet so he had time to react or when the foot was already on the ground and it was too late?

"The horse is a dynamic surface, which rotates and swivels side-to-side and forward and back as the horse moves. Biomechanical research, as well as good old experience, shows that the horse's body and the rider's body move in conjunction with each other. As your horse's hip lowers, your same hip also lowers, and not just forward and back, but side-to-side and up and down as well." (M. Anderson 2007, p. 18) Check your knowledge on cuing your horse with some questions adapted from M. Anderson's article on "Feel Your Horse's Footsteps." (See answers below.)

1. When the horse is walking, when is the horse's right hind leg moving forward? As the horse's belly moves from side-to-side and....

- a. your left stirrup moves to the left
- b. your right stirrup moves to the right
- c. your horse's head moves up
- d. your horse's tail swishes

2. If you want your horse to move under himself and to the right at a walk, the best time to give the aid is to push with your:

- a. left leg as his left hind leg moves forward



Svanhildur Stefánsdóttir on Fyrstur from Cedar Bluff Farm demonstrates how to ride a basic dressage exercise, the shoulder-in. Photo by Jean Waller.

- b. left leg as his left hind leg steps down
- c. right leg as his right hind leg moves forward
- d. right leg as his right hind leg steps down

These are hard and confusing questions, but they lead into the question, "So why dressage for the average Icelandic rider?" Have you ever ridden in a trail obstacle course and faced the dreaded open-the-gate-but-don't-let-go-of-the-gate-and-don't-fall

-off-your-horse obstacle? Or had to open a gate while trail riding? You can ride this obstacle several ways: keep pulling on the reins and hope your horse goes where you want, power the horse through, or apply gentle and subtle aids to finesse your way through the gate. Dressage is a riding discipline that has been developed over hundreds of years to help a rider better communicate with her horse with just those subtle aids.



3. The best definition of the French word “dressage” is:
- force
  - classic
  - costume
  - training

As Ruth Schaefer explains, “While dressage at the highest levels is its own riding style, basic dressage training can apply to all riding disciplines. It is a general training of the horse based on gymnastic exercises that enable the horse to use his body in a comfortable, effective way to fulfill the rider’s wishes. Whether you ride trail or endurance horses, jumpers, Western or gaited horses, a fundamental understanding of dressage makes it possible to handle any horse safely and easily.” (Schaefer, p. 10)

*Answers: 1 b, 2 c, 3 d*

### ICELANDICS & DRESSAGE

What does “dressage” have in common with the average Icelandic horse and rider? Probably more than most people would think. Many trainers of Icelandic horses incorporate basic dressage exercises into their training of the young horse and into improving the tolt. Some Icelandic owners are starting to explore the benefits of classical dressage

for themselves and their horses. The following is a conversation between Pamela Nolf, Icelandic horse owner, and Dannelle Haugen, her dressage trainer.

*Dressage means many things to many people. For the purpose of this article, let’s discuss how to define dressage.*

*Pamela:* I like Bryant’s definition in *The USDF Guide to Dressage*. She says that dressage is *communication*. “With dressage, you develop a vocabulary that helps you talk to your horse in terms he can understand so you get his cooperation. The longer you do dressage, the bigger your vocabulary” (Bryant, p. 7). I got into dressage to better communicate with my horse. With a dressage background, I can, on a good day, control how each of Blessi’s legs move, ask him to move his shoulders over, put his head down and stretch, control his speed, round him to bend in a circle, and come to a nice, square stop with minimal aids. Not every day is a good day of course. Some days we ride circles that are shaped like potatoes.

*Dannelle:* I think it is also important to know that the aids work because they are based on biomechanical principles. I love what Lendon Gray says, “Traditional dressage aids are not something dreamed up long ago by some dead maestro who said ‘let’s



Blessi also does obstacle courses. Photo by Linda Templeton.

do things this way,’ rather they comprised a language which, biomechanical, the horse would understand from day one.” Gray goes on to explain that asking with the inside leg at the girth stimulates a nerve to cause the horse to lift through the back. A leg aid applied behind the girth causes a slight rotation of the mid part of the horse’s spinal column away from source of stimulus, which causes the horse to bend. (Gray, p. 14) You don’t really have to know the exact biomechanics behind the request, but it helps to realize that the aids work for a reason.

*Let’s move on from the textbook definitions and talk about why you personally became interested in dressage.*

*Pamela:* As a child, I always wanted a pony for Christmas. Santa never brought me a pony, so at age 50 I went and got my own pony—an Icelandic horse named Veigar frá Búdardal or Blessi. I had had a few riding lessons and really thought I was an intermediate rider. Blessi quickly let me know that I had no idea what I was doing. All I knew how to do was pull on the reins, and Blessi went in any direction he wanted with his nose pulled to either knee. He would always take me through the tricky stuff on the trail—he would cross the creek, walk through the ditch—but then we would get into a pulling contest over whether to go left or right on the trail. It became apparent within the first few months of getting Blessi that I needed lessons on how to ride better. I went to a local English riding instructor for help.

*Was that successful?*

*Pamela:* Yes and no. I started learning about leg aids and how to use my seat to better communicate with Blessi. However, that



Dannelle Haugen and Blessi demonstrate a collected trot. Photo by Pamela Nolf.





The sequence of steps in a leg yield, demonstrated by Svanhildur Stefánsdóttir on Fyrstur from Cedar Bluff. Photos by Jean Waller.

## BASIC EXERCISES TO HELP WITH TOLT

BY SVANNY STEFÁNSDÓTTIR,  
FT, HOLAR GRADUATE

**HALF HALT:** “A momentary increase of collection, or an effect of the aids, which increases the attention and improves the balance of the horse.” (Quote from the USDF Glossary of terms)

**BACKING, ONE STEP AT A TIME:** The rider asks the horse for one step only then halt. Repeated for a few strides: step, halt, step, halt.....

**TURN ON THE FOREHAND:** The horse’s inside foreleg remains approximately in the same place, pivoting while the hind legs describe a circle around the forehand. (The outside front leg pivots around the inside front leg.) The horse is tilted slightly away from the direction of movement.

**TURN ON THE HIND:** The horse’s inside hind leg remains approximately in the same place, pivoting while the front legs describe a circle around the hind. (The outside hind leg pivots around the inside hind leg.) The horse is slightly bent into the direction of movement.

**LEG YIELDING:** The horse is positioned straight, with a slight tilt away from the direction of movement. The inside front and hind leg pass and cross in front of the outside legs.

### SHOULDER FORE AND

**SHOULDER IN:** Shoulder fore is the same as shoulder in, except to a lesser degree. The horse is slightly bent around the rider’s inside leg, away from the direction of movement. The horse’s inside legs pass and cross in front of the outside legs. When ridden correctly, the horse must engage the inside hind leg.



first English riding instructor, who trained warmbloods almost exclusively, said that Blessi was basically untrainable. She could not get him to accept the bit, which is the beginning of the classical dressage training scale, so she could not begin his training.

*Did you accept that opinion of Blessi as being untrainable in dressage?*

*Pamela:* For a few years. I wanted to trail ride and I only rode Blessi at a walk. Any speed faster than a walk scared me, so I took enough lessons to more frequently win the “go left, go right” battle and then let the matter drop. When I moved from the East Coast to the Pacific Northwest, I was lucky enough to board at a stable out of which Svanhildur (Svanny) Stefánsdóttir trained. I told her I wanted to learn how to ride a tolt, and she said I had to learn to ride his trot first—Blessi has a big, bold trot, and

that is his first choice of gait. So I spent four miserable months learning to ride that trot and develop enough confidence to stop, or mostly stop, hyperventilating. Svanny trained Blessi on lateral movements such as shoulder in, turn on the haunches, etc. I am several years behind Blessi in training levels. And the weird thing is, the more “dressage” we did and the more I learned how to use my seat and legs, the more I won arguments on the trail and fewer “discussions” came up.

*And have you and Blessi continued with your dressage training?*

*Pamela:* Well, Svanny moved out of the area, and I broke my ankle, which took almost a year and three surgeries to correct. After a year and half hiatus from lessons, I found Dannelle Haugen, a local dressage instructor who was willing to work with me and Blessi.

*Dannelle, what is your background in dressage?*

*Dannelle:* I have a USDF [United States Dressage Federation] bronze medal and apprenticed with a USDF certified instructor for two years. Although I work with a lot of Arabs, I train horses of all breeds from Irish warmbloods to paints to quarter horses. I compete at fourth level.

*Pamela:* Actually Dannelle is being modest: She and her Arabs went to the Nationals in September and placed in the top three in fourth-level dressage Arabian Sport Horse Show Hack and in the top 10 in third level dressage.

*How much gaited horse experience do you have?*

*Dannelle:* I worked on saddle training a young Paso Fino and learned a little bit about the gaits, but Blessi is the first gaited horse I have ever worked with extensively.

*Britta Schöffmann in her book Dressage Training Customized discusses how to develop schooling programs for a horse based on breed and conformation. She has a whole section on training Haflingers, a breed that shares many of the same, shall we say, conformational challenges as the Icelandics: “powerful neck, stout body, muscular hindquarters, and short, strong legs” (p. 147). Do you have to adapt your training methods to the way the Icelandic is built?*

*Dannelle:* Oh yes, we had to do more lateral work, such as shoulder in and other suppling exercises at the beginning to get Blessi’s inside hind leg to step squarely underneath his body. If he is not carrying weight on his hind end, he can’t be collected and will trot on the forehand—definitely a no-no in classical dressage.

Because of his shorter neck, he needs to work harder to stretch into contact with the bit so that he can use his topline and raise his back. If you aren’t careful, you can engage the muscles under the neck, which will lead to improper muscle development. We do a lot of stretching exercises also.

Training the canter was also a bit of a challenge, since Blessi has a flatter canter. At first, he was a bit out of condition and when we tried for a collected canter, he would canter in the front and do a weird tolt-like movement with his back legs. With additional conditioning, he has developed a cute, collected canter. We can improve that canter even more as Blessi becomes more conditioned.

*Pamela:* I’ve noticed that Blessi’s dressage training has really helped improve his tolt. Dressage develops the rear end of the horse, which helps with self carriage.



Dannelle Haugen and Blessi warm up for the dressage arena. Photo by Pamela Nolf.





What remains of the braid in Blessi's mane after he is ridden in one dressage class. Photo by Pamela Nolf.

Blessi is more likely to volunteer the tolt and maintain it for longer periods of time. That's a really nice bonus.

*Do Icelandics have any conformational strengths in relation to dressage?*

*Dannelle:* I have only worked with one Icelandic, so the readers are going to have judge what is specific to Blessi's conformation and what is specific to the Icelandic breed. Blessi has a nice, short back which helps him to carry himself better, and he can get his hocks underneath himself to help with collection. I also like the way he can move his shoulders. He has nice reach forward and a big stride. He moves a bit like a warmblood when I get him collected. He also has a lot of power from that nice, round butt. Blessi has good conformation in general. It is easier for any horse to learn basic dressage when they are put together correctly. However, most horses can benefit from basic dressage lessons.

*Icelandics tend to have a unique, independent personality. How has this impacted your training methods?*

*Dannelle:* Blessi has a good work ethic. He really seems to like to learn. He is very willing, but easily bored. I can't drill him on the same exercise over and over. For example, we can only practice leg yields down the rail twice and then we need to switch to leg yields in a circle, leg yields in a figure eight. If I keep drilling Blessi on an exercise,

he becomes upset and resistant. I absolutely love working with Blessi. It is a challenge for me as a trainer to come up with something different to keep him thinking and engaged. Personally, I love working with all breeds and types of horses and their unique challenges. Blessi is also the steadiest, most reliable trail horse I have ever ridden—nothing seems to scare him. And he is so darn cute.

*What difference does it make in dressage that the Icelandic tolt?*

*Dannelle:* Blessi is an intelligent horse. He often uses the tolt as an evasion to get

out of movements that are difficult for him, or he tolt when he is confused about what is being asked of him. Since tolt is one of the signature gaits of the Icelandic, we don't want to discourage the tolt or punish the tolt. I have had to learn ways to better communicate "no Blessi, we want to trot now." If we are trotting down the rail and he tolt, I will turn his nose a bit to the wall and push his outside hind underneath his body which encourages the trot. And you never know when he might lose some points for tolt in a dressage class.

*Pamela:* I love the tolt in dressage. When I get upset or out of balance during a trotting exercise, Blessi switches into the tolt until I regain my confidence. Sometimes tolt can be a nice evasion for me also. When the dressage instructor asks me to do a lot of posting, I can usually cue a tolt almost invisibly by tilting my pelvis back by about half an inch. When Blessi starts tolt, I just tell my instructor, "What can I say, Blessi is Icelandic?" Ooops, I shouldn't have confessed that.

*Dannelle:* (Laughs). Yes, we'll discuss that during our next lesson.

*Have you ever competed with an Icelandic in dressage?*

*Dannelle:* We took Blessi to two local dressage shows in August and September. We had no idea what the judges would think of this "pony," with his thick neck, round body, and short legs, competing against the more traditional warmbloods, Arabs, and mixed breeds. Blessi and I rode Introductory Test A and B, which is walk and trot, and Training Level 1 Test, which is walk, trot, and



Blessi shows the quarterhorses how to move cattle in his first attempt at cattle sorting. Photo by Brian Moore.





Dannelle Haugen tacks up Blessi in preparation for his first dressage class. Photo by Pamela Nolf.

canter. Dressage levels go from Introductory, Training, First, Second, Third, Fourth, and Prix St. George. At each level, more difficult movements are added, and the judges become more exacting.

Much to our surprise, Blessi took blue ribbons in all four classes, with scores ranging from 66.0 to 72.0. These are pretty high scores at the local level. Blessi's 72.0 was the third highest score of the day. The highest score that day was 72.8. And Blessi did throw in some tolt in one of the classes. Riding a gaited horse in dressage is like driving a five-speed car, instead of an automatic; there are a lot more gaits to work with.

*Pamela:* What I most loved about Blessi at the dressage shows was his calmness and confidence. Dannelle and Blessi were practicing in the warm-up arena with everyone careening around on some excited horses. Dannelle needed to adjust her hair under her helmet. In all the madness she just dropped Blessi's reins and made the adjustment as he continued to calmly walk around the arena with his head lowered. That's what I love about Blessi—although the blue ribbons are a nice bonus.

For those readers who remember the article "Blessi's Bad Hair Day" in the last *Quarterly*, Dannelle did braid Blessi's mane into a French braid. Even with half a can of hairspray, the braid only lasted for one class.

If people are interested, they can see video of Danelle and Blessi's rides on YouTube under "Blessi's Got the Blues" and

"There's No Tolt in Dressage, Blessi."

*Would you recommend dressage lessons for Icelandic horses and their owners?*

*Pamela:* I have to say absolutely—with the right instructor. Dressage has helped me better communicate with my horse. I use lighter aids to get better results. I have a better seat and more self-confidence. And Blessi tolt better than ever. One of these days, Blessi and I will compete in our first dressage class.

*Dannelle:* I'd love to have some more Icelandics to train. I have seen videos of Icelandic horses that have better gaits than Blessi, so they have even more potential for success in dressage. Plus Blessi is such a fun horse to work with.

*What would you look for in a dressage instructor?*

*Pamela:* I'll answer that one. Based on personal experience, I'd say that you need to be very selective about the dressage instructor. They don't need to be familiar with gaited horses. However, you need to be very clear with them that tolt is the signature gait of the Icelandic horse and is not to be discouraged or punished. They should also be open to adapting their training methods to the needs of the individual horse, rather than trying to fit the horse into their standard training regimen. They should appreciate each and every horse regardless of breed for their individual abilities and personalities. Oh, and if they are working with Icelandics, they really need to have a sense of humor.

*Thanks Dannelle and Pamela. I'd like to conclude the interview by adapting a quote from Brittia Schöffmann, who was originally talking about the ability of the Haflinger horse in dressage. "A rider that chooses a[n Icelandic] as his mount chooses an equine partner rather than a high level dressage or jumping career. He is usually getting a horse with an uncomplicated character, and a versatile pleasure horse that can also compete at low levels successfully." (Schöffmann, p. 149)*

## **DRESSAGE TIPS FROM THE NOVICE RIDER**

A pre-signal is a cue given before an aid that lets your horse know that you are going to ask something specific of him. You aren't asking the horse to do anything but you are giving him an alert or pay attention signal. Let's look at some examples.

*Up/Down Transitions on the Longe Line:*

If you use a longe line to exercise your horse, you can signal a change in speed—either up or down—by gently shaking the longe line before you give the verbal and/or longe whip cue. The motion is more of a shivering—strong enough to send a signal down the longe line to pay attention, but not so strong that the horse has to move his head to respond. To teach this pre-signal, shiver the longe line and then immediately give the verbal command to trot. Do the same when you ask the horse to transition back to a walk. After multiple tries, the horse will learn that the shiver means you will be issuing a command.

An inadvertent result of teaching a pre-signal is that the horse may decide that the pre-signal is the command. When I was first teaching this cue to Blessi, he determined that the "longe line shiver" always meant an immediate down transition; verbal "good boys," the same thing. I had to do a lot of quick and varied up and down transitions to disabuse him of his self-serving interpretation of this pre-signal.

*Trot/Gait to Walk Transition:*

Your breathing can be used as a pre-signal to help with a down transition. Breathing out slowly can be a pre-signal that you are asking for a down transition. As Julie Goodnight, a noted clinician, explains, "When you exhale, you kick back and relax... Often breathing out—or sighing—releases stress and tension. In the same way, it tells your horse it's time to slow down, too" (Anderson 2008, p. 27). The sequence is breathe out slowly, then ask for the down transition. Consistency is key with these pre-signals.

In the arena, Blessi has gotten so sensi-

tive to this pre-signal (or so eager to stop working) that he can stop with no aids other than just letting out a deep breath (sometimes a really, really deep breath). I have never corrected his interpretation because it is rather cute to show how my pony stops with no apparent aids except possibly my blue face when he takes a long time to stop. He will also usually stop when I take my feet out of the stirrups—I think he is anticipating the ultimate reward, the dismount.

*Walk to Trot/Gait Transition:*

As Julie Goodnight points out, changing your breathing can also be a pre-signal for an up transition. A strong, definite inhale fills your lungs with air and moves you slightly forward. “Inhaling is like saying, ‘Okay, get ready to move with me,’” (Anderson 2008, p. 27). You take a deep, strong inhale and then ask for the up transition. Be careful when asking for an up transition on an Icelandic that you do not inhale and lean forward, since leaning forward is usually a request for a trot versus a tolt.

When I was learning to trot, I was really scared at going at any speed over a walk. I usually froze up and stopped breathing when asking for an up transition. In fact, even though I was asking for a trot by squeezing with my legs, I was also pulling back on the reins and using the reins to balance myself. I spent many weeks confusing poor Blessi, who didn’t know how to interpret my conflicting signals. At one point, my instructor Svanny Stefánsdóttir had me hold the

reins loosely, grab mane to balance myself, and then ask for a trot. Thank goodness Icelandics have really long mane.

*Trot to Stop Transition:*

If you want to stop your horse in a four-square and balanced way, try this approach. As you are posting the trot, stop posting and sit the trot for two or three strides and then ask for the stop.

The success of this pre-cue has a lot to do with the timing of all the aids. I am still working on coordination of aids and balance. However, Blessi and I are both getting better at the halt.

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**REQUIREMENTS FOR BETTER TOLT**

BY SVANNY STEFÁNSDÓTTIR, FT, HOLAR GRADUATE

**RIDER REQUIREMENTS FOR TÖLT TRAINING:**

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- RECOGNITION OF TÖLT AND A THOROUGH UNDERSTANDING OF THE GAIT
- KNOWLEDGE, PRECISION, AND SKILL IN DIRECTING THE HORSE AND GIVING AIDS
- CONSISTENCY

**HORSE REQUIREMENTS FOR TÖLT TRAINING:**

- WILLINGNESS / FORWARDNESS WITHOUT TENSION
- CORRECT RESPONSE TO AIDS
- FOCUS AND DISCIPLINE
- FLEXIBILITY
- ABILITY TO TRACK STRAIGHT (TRACK UP)
- STRENGTH AND CONDITIONING
- ENERGY

**TRAINING LEVELS OF TÖLT:**

- 1-2 RHYTHM: CLEAN AND CORRECT
- 1-2 FORM UNDER RIDER: THE RHYTHM OFTEN COMES WITH GOOD FORM
- 3 BIGGER MOVEMENTS: THROUGH GOOD RHYTHM, FORM, AND STRENGTH
- 4 SPEED: STARTING WITH SHORT DISTANCES ON A GOOD SURFACE



Blessi wins the blue ribbon in pleasure tolt at the Evergreen Gaited Horse Classic, proving that there is dressage in tolt. Photo by Carol Townsend.



# DESIGNED TO BE RIDDEN?

BY ED HILGAERTNER

This essay is one in a series I have been writing for the *Quarterly* on the welfare of the horse. As I was working on my earlier essays, on the horse's his feet and his pasturing, I was told quite a few times that the horse is "not designed to ride" in the first place, so why all the concern about his general welfare?

Since I hear this statement often even from owners of Icelandic horses—"Well, in the first place horses are not

designed to be ridden"—I have decided to offer my thoughts on the subject.

I have no idea who did the "designing" or even what people mean when they say the horse is not designed to ride. To me, the physiology is simple. The horse is not too wide or too narrow across the back, but just about the right size for a human to sit astride. The horse has no bone structure to support his front end (no collar bone like humans); instead the horse has a sling of muscles and tendons

supporting his front end that is extremely strong. Humans use slings to carry heavy loads and/or lift heavy objects. The sling does not cause undue pressure to joints or muscles and is quite flexible. The rider sits in front of the horse's propulsion system, not interfering with it in the slightest.

Throughout recorded history, horses have served the needs of humans. Of all the large animals on the planet, the horse is the only one who has the physical



Ed Hilgaertner and his Icelandic show the Arabs how to take a water crossing in a competitive trail ride.

characteristics to pull heavy loads quickly when hitched to wagons or plows, and a temperament capable of cooperating with humans. The horse willingly “joins up” with humans and has the patience to suffer the mismanagement humans have subjected him to during their journey toward common understanding.

Once a human handler understands the natural sensitivity built into a horse, and the willingness the horse exhibits when responding to appropriate signals from his handler/rider, “true unity” (as Tom Dorrance put it) can be achieved between horse and rider. Horses and humans have had this mutually beneficial relationship for thousands of years. It is clearly an unwarranted assumption to suggest a horse is not supposed to be ridden. Even his nature is “designed” to be cooperative with humans.

This experience, the “joining up” that the horse gives us, is generally not recognized at first because the nature of the horse is to acquiesce to pressure, be it physical or psychological.

In a herd environment, each horse is alert to “pressure” from his herd mates. In its most subtle forms that pressure consists of eye movements and ear positions, then body postures, and then physical movements and even body contact. Young horses quickly learn these communication techniques growing up in a herd environment, and it is very important that young horses be provided with this experience. It is the language of the horse.

Each horse knows his relative position within his herd. He does not seem to care where in the hierarchy he is, as long as it is clear where he is in relation to the others. The “low man” does not suffer any psychic damage from his position and, as conditions change within the herd, positions can and do change. All of this takes place with very minimal animosity and once positions are established, peace and tranquility prevail within the herd.

In the horse-human relationship, it often happens that the human does not understand the language of the horse. He (or she, of course) has succeeded by going through the motions he has witnessed from others, and can enjoy limited success in his horse handling by simply continuing to imitate the actions of others. Problems and difficulties of every type imaginable can and do arise as

a result of this procedure. The horse, by his very nature, is willing to try, but if the handler does not ask in a way the horse can understand, the results can be disappointing.

As I mentioned earlier, it is built into a horse to yield to pressure. Once a human understands the subtleties of applying pressure and releasing pressure, his relationship with the horse becomes more rewarding. Making doing the “right” thing pleasant (less pressure) and the “wrong” thing unpleasant (more pressure) is the primary technique of establishing a successful basic relationship with your horse. The horse’s nature forces him to choose the path of least pressure. Once he understands that his human handler offers consistent signals and is fair in releasing pressure (in whatever form), he feels safe to “join up” with you.

His joining up is a major decision for a horse. After all, humans are predators, while horses are prey. By demonstrating that you understand his language, and mean him no harm, he places his trust in you and you become his leader. He will follow you anywhere and try his best to do as you ask. This is the magic humans feel when a horse “joins up” with us.

When we study the horse’s physical structure and combine that with the natural “programming” of his nature, it seems fair to conclude that the horse was, in fact, “designed to be ridden.”

As a personal example of the bonding that occurs between horses and riders, I offer this short story: On November 6-7, 1993, my wife, Vicki, and I participated in our fourth annual competitive trail ride in the national forest just east of the Santa Ynez valley in southern California.

Tuesday before the ride, Ivory, Vicki’s mare, had cut her right front fetlock and it had slightly swollen. Our personal vet had assured us that there was no structural damage. He also felt that the exertion of a competitive trail ride would probably not aggravate her condition, and she would be no worse off. So we went ahead.

Ivory made it about eight miles to the first vet check, where swelling was obvious, and Vicki requested she be pulled from the competition. (She recovered quietly at home, no problem.)

My horse decided that without Ivory along, she would go on—but she acted like a spoiled brat, despite her training.

The problem Vicki and I have is that we train for these rides together, and the horses form a bond, not only with us, but also with each other. The NATRC sponsoring organization believes that horse-rider bonding is important and should override horse-to-horse bonding. My horse did not agree. As a result, we lost a few points along the way and finished fourth in Horsemanship and sixth in Horse (out of 14 heavyweight entries).

Mainly, she began to act like an Arabian endurance horse in a Tevis Cup race. She would not stand still for P & R’s and danced around during my attempts to mount, and she wanted to run up all the switchbacks. The Horsemanship Judge commented that she was heading for home (two points off).

We waded through chest-deep water without hesitation (still looking for Ivory). Where some horses start to swim as soon as water hit their bellies, she just kept walking. We got a great picture of this from the ride photographer.

The point of this story, of course, is willingness and bonding as a result of trust. When did that happen? When we got home. This horse followed me around the pasture for a full week, right at my elbow, in spite of the trail experience. She seemed to be saying, “You are in charge and now I only feel safe right next to you.”



# Application form for volunteers for the World Championship 2011



Dear Volunteers,

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## I'd like to work...

- in the morning     during the day     in the evening     at night

## Possible timeframes...

### Preparation

Starting from now until 25th of July 2011

The concrete schedule of the event will be set up during this phase.

Although there's still time left until the World Championship gets started, the organization has partly begun. We're currently searching for sponsors, signing contracts with fitters and we're working out our official website. Further duties are the creation of volunteer's work schedules and the preparation of the location.

### Mounting and assembly

25th of June - incl. 1st of August 2011

During this stage the venue needs to be further prepared for the World Championship.

This phase will require a lot of physical strength. There will be a lot of organizational work – also in our various offices. The sports office for example will welcome riders and horses from all over Europe and USA.

### Event

1st of August – incl. 7th of August 2011

It's Showtime! Now the event gets started and there's quite a lot of work to do – selling tickets, serving drinks, cleaning toilets, looking after judges and officials and so on. A lot of volunteers and your organizational talent will be needed. In this phase we'll offer a great variety of different duties.

### Dismantling

8th of August – incl. 15th August 2011

At this stage the location will need be cleaned up and temporary buildings (i.e. stands) will be dismantled. Also the final accounting and other duties in financial administration will need to be done.

## Accommodation ...

- Camping site** (own caravan/tent needed)
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[ ] New Application [ ] Renewal

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- [ ] Keep my name and contact information private.
- [ ] When possible, use my email address instead of the US Mail to notify me of official USIHC business.
- [ ] I prefer **not** to receive a copy of the *Quarterly* magazine in the US Mail.

[ ] Enroll me in the Pleasure Rider Program. **Additional fees required.** Regional Club: .....

If you have selected a Family Membership, please complete the following for the second adult and any children to be included in the membership (use the back of the page to add more family members):

Name	Year of Birth (juniors only)	Email (optional)	Enroll in Pleasure Rider Program (optional)

- [ ] Farm Listing.  
 Paid members of the USIHC may opt to include a farm listing on the Congress's web site ([www.icelandics.org](http://www.icelandics.org)). There is a \$110.00 annual fee for the farm listing in addition to your membership fee.

Farm: .....

Owners: .....

Address: .....

City: ..... State/Province : ..... Postal Code: ..... Country: .....

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Membership Fees & Restrictions			
<b>Individual</b>	\$45/year. One adult. One vote.	Membership Fee:	\$.....
<b>Family</b>	\$65/year. Two adults and unlimited children living in the same household. Adults vote.	Farm Listing Fee:	\$.....
<b>Junior</b>	\$35/year. One child (under 18 years). Not eligible to vote.	Pleasure Rider Program (\$15/adult, \$12/junior)	\$.....
<i>Members in the categories above with non-US mailing addresses must be US Citizens</i>		<b>World Championships Donation:</b>	\$.....
<b>Foreign Friend</b>	\$70/year. One adult non-US Resident/non-US Citizen with limited benefits. Not eligible to vote.	Youth Fund Donation: (optional support for youth programs)	\$.....
		<b>Total:</b>	\$.....

**Make checks to "USIHC" and mail to the MAIN OFFICE address.**

**Congress memberships are for the calendar year. If you join after December 1st your membership includes the following year.**

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