

ISSUE FOUR

THE

2011

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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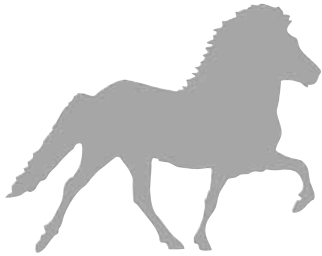
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THE
ICELANDIC
HORSE
QUARTERLY
Issue Four 2011

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On the cover: Prúdur frá Nedra-Ási II (IS1984157014), one of the best tolters and pacers of his time, second at Landsmót, 1995 World Champion Stallions, gæðingur and gentleman, left us in October for that great pasture in the sky. He is leaving a legacy of 172 offspring, many of them great riding and competition horses. He is greatly missed by all who knew him.



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 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.

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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. Contact Ásta Covert: P.O. Box 1724, Santa Ynez, CA 93460; 805-688-1393; registry@icelandics.org

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Visit 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, and learn more about FEIF and the USIHC

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WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS

Asta Dogg Bjarnadottir-Covert, Anne Marie Martin, Rachel Ng, and Chrissy Siepolt represented the U.S. at the 2011 FEIF World Championships, held August 1-7 in St. Radegund, Austria. They joined more than 200 competitors from 19 countries. See our report on the competition in this issue of the Quarterly. Full results are available on the FEIF website at www.feif.org/wc2011

SHOW RESULTS

The 2011 Flugnirkeppni was held at Barb and Dan Riva's Winterhorse Park in Eagle, WI on September 16-18; the judge was Halli Victorsson. The show included some novel classes, including a Canter Race and Countryside Riding. High scores included Gudmar Petursson riding Maistjarna fra Olafsbergi in the F1 five-gait final for a score of 7.14 and in the T4 Tolt final for a score of 7.38; Gudmar also rode Glaeta fra Brekku in the T1 Tolt final for a score of 7.33 and in V1 four-gait final for a score of 7.40. Kathy Love on Pegasus fra Skyggni came second in V1 four gait with a score of 7.20. Full results can be found on the USIHC website, www.icelandics.org, under "Ride."



Mette Mannseth shows Eldur frá Torfunesi in the breeding class for four-year-old stallions at the 2011 Landsmót competition in Iceland. Eldur is partly owned by NEIHC member Karyn McFarland, who reports that Eldur came in second, only .0005 points below the winner. Photo courtesy of Karyn McFarland.

Other shows were held in the early fall in Vermont, Kentucky, and California. The three-day Silver Maple Farm World Ranking Show was held at Susan Peter's farm in Tunbridge, VT Septem-

ber 23-25; the Ninth Annual Kentucky Icelandic Horse Show was held at Jim and Marianne Welch's Locust Hill Farm in Prospect, KY on October 8-9; and the CIA Open Fall World Ranking Show, a three-day competition, was held October 21-23. Results of all USIHC-sanctioned shows are posted on www.icelandics.org under "Ride."

EDUCATION SEMINAR

On November 12-19, the USIHC Education Committee held a week-long trainers' seminar at Katrin Sheehan's Creekside Farm, GA; the clinician was Nicole Kempf of Germany. The seminar was open to anyone qualifying under the USIHC guidelines for trainer courses. It covered the first part of the two-part FEIF Trainer Course, with part two, including the exam, to take place in the spring of 2012. "By dividing the course, we hope to make participation easier with regard to vacation days and cost," explained Alexandra Pregitzer. "Anybody taking the first part of the course now can either take the second part of the course next spring or at a later point in time." Auditing, even for just a single day, was also welcome; U.S. certified trainers auditing received a



Asta Dogg Bjarnadottir-Covert and Dynjandi fra Dalvik at the 2011 Icelandic Horse World Championships in St Radegund, Austria. The pair placed in the top ten in the tolt, four gait, and four-gait combination competitions. Photo by Willy Ma.



credit towards their currency. Contact the Education Committee for more information.

BOARD ELECTIONS

Pamela Nolf was appointed chair of this year's Election Committee. Three directors, Asta Dogg Bjarnadottir-Covert, Kari Pietsch-Wangard, and Sam Castleman's, terms expire this year. The Notice of Election was sent to the membership in September, with the deadline for nominations October 1.

BOARD MEETINGS

The USIHC Board of Directors met on August 23 and September 13. Minutes of the meetings can be found on the USIHC website, www.icelandics.org, under "The Congress."

In August, the Education Committee reported that another of the successful USIHC-sponsored "Conformation and its Correlation with Riding and Training" seminars was hosted by the NEIHC Regional Club. The attendees spoke highly of the content and expressed appreciation toward the Congress for helping launch the series.

In September, the Breeding Committee noted that the planned breeding evaluation in New York had to be cancelled due to damage to the track by hurricane Irene.

At both meetings, secretary Doug Smith reported that work continues on

a PayPal subscription offering to make renewing your membership in the USIHC easier and more flexible. There will be an option to convert any annual membership to a subscription with this year's renewal process. Essentially, by agreeing to the subscription option, a membership will be automatically renewed by PayPal on its anniversary date. The process is completely automatic from the perspective of the member, the Congress Treasurer, and the Secretary. There need to be some changes made to the USIHC Constitution to make this form of payment possible. Anne Elwell and Kari Pietsch-Wangard will review the constitution and draft the necessary changes while the Web Committee continues the technical work, which includes changing all memberships to be on an anniversary basis (meaning that memberships run for 12 months from payment of dues) not on a calendar basis (meaning that memberships run from January 1 to December 31).

Changes to the current Annual Meeting protocol were also discussed at both meetings. As Anne summarized, "The Annual Meeting serves two purposes: Reporting by the Board to the membership and providing an opportunity to have a dialog between the Board and the membership. The first purpose can be fulfilled using technology. The second purpose is limited by the costs of travel. The second purpose might be better served by having

a number of meetings throughout the year (two or three) in different, rotating parts of the country. The entire board would not necessarily attend each. Well-attended events (competition, breeding evaluation, or social) would be selected to replace the single annual meeting at the beginning of each year. A specified minimum number of Board members would attend each meeting to represent the work of the Board and collect feedback from the membership to report back to the entire board. Each meeting would need a membership quorum (15+ Congress members) and a specified number of Board members (at least three). It should be required that each Board member travel to one meeting outside their region each year." Anne will continue the discussion on the Board email list to firm up details. Following the discussion, Anne and Kari will draft the necessary amendments to the Constitution to make this change happen.

NEW SPORT JUDGES

October 7-8 the bi-annual test to become a FEIF International Sport Judge took place in Austria, at Islandpferdehof Piet Hoyos in Semriach. Five candidates (out of 17) were successful. FEIF welcomes Nicole Kempf (DE), Petra Busam (AT), Sonja Mäsgen (DE), and Susanne Jelinski (AT) as new international judges. Jens Füchtenschnieder used the test to renew his license. Four candidates (out of 10) passed the test at a national level: Bas Cornielje (NL), Bram van Steen (NL), Oliver Kubinger (AT), and Thordis Hoyos (AT).

EDUCATION SEMINAR

The Education Seminar 2011 was held in conjunction with an open Equine Seminar in the Netherlands at the end of October. The ISES 2011 conference, "Equitation Science, Principles and Practice," was preceded by an additional FEIF evening seminar by Dr. Hilary Clayton on understanding equine locomotion biomechanics in relation to gaits, with a special focus on tolt and the features that distinguish it from other gaits. The "Popular Equitation Science Day" was held on October 26.

SOFTWARE CONFERENCE

The second FEIF Software conference was scheduled to take place November 12-13, 2011 in Düsseldorf (D). The agenda included an inventory of the software currently used at sport and gaedingakeppni competitions, the services provided by the current standard software (IceTest), new services to be developed, technical developments in the software industry, links to WorldFengur, and how to secure the future of the software used.

FEIF CONFERENCE 2012

The FEIF Conference 2012 will take place from March 2-4 in the vicinity of Stockholm. Further information and invitations including the respective agendas will be available soon.

AWARD FOR JENS OTTO VEJE

During the celebration of the tenth anniversary of WorldFengur during the World Championships 2011, the Board of FEIF

awarded former Director of Breeding Jens Otto Veje with the FEIF Award. Jens Otto played a crucial role in combining the registration of all Icelandic horses around the world into WorldFengur and creating a basic set of breeding rules for worldwide use: FIZO. Apart from the basic registration of horses, WorldFengur is also used to register the assessment at international breeding shows. All members of FEIF member associations have free access to WorldFengur.

FEIF FEATHER PRIZE 2011

The FEIF Feather Prize 2011 for good riding and good horsemanship was awarded to Anne Stine Haugen [NO] at the World Championships 2011 in St Radegund (A). The judges were very clear in their choice: Her riding style is a tribute to featherlight riding. The awarded rider sets an example to the Icelandic horse world.

A CLEAN SPORT

Once more the World Championships for Icelandic horses have proven to be a Clean Sport Event. No prohibited substances were found in the doping tests taken during the World Championships 2011. More than 10 percent of the participating horses were tested this time, drawn by lot in preliminary rounds, during races, and in finals.

LANDSMÓT TICKET SALE

Online ticket sales for Landsmót 2012, to be held in Reykjavík, Iceland, from June 25-July 1, have started. See www.landsmot.is. Tickets are discounted 20 percent until January 1. Each ticket bought before Christmas will be valid as a lottery ticket. You can also purchase tickets online for grandstand seats and caravan spaces with access to electricity. Once Landsmót has started, week passes and youth tickets will continue to be sold online, but weekend passes and day tickets will only be sold at the gates. Tickets for children 13 and younger are free.

YOUTH CAMP 2011

The 2011 FEIF Youth Camp was held in Scotland from July 23-29. Thirty-one young riders and seven leaders from 13 member countries attended. The camp took place about a half-hour drive south of Edinburgh at the outdoor education center at Broomlee in the Pentland Hills. Activities included lessons in riding and groundwork from Fi Pugh, the well known British horse trainer, World Championship rider, and FEIF judge; a treasure hunt; trekking; climbing; a visit to a veterinary center; and learning to play polo with Icelandic horses. The next FEIF youth event is the 2012 Youth Cup, to be held in Verden, Germany, July 7-15.



REGIONAL UPDATES



Alaska Club members met for a clinic on the Kenai Peninsula in September. Here Jessie, on Flikka, takes instruction from clinician Bill Burke.

ALASKA

Nilla Ekstroem-Rypka writes: As termination dust appears on the mountains, we are all hurrying around getting ready for the snow, taking care of gardens, and other things that need to be done before the ground freezes up and the snow falls down here as well. This is also the time to

look back at what we accomplished this past summer and start planning for next summer's activities. Since summers in Alaska are short but days are very long we have lots of hours to enjoy our horses and outdoor activities but not so many months to split them between.

The trails have been great this fall and many of our club members have had a chance to enjoy trail riding in the woods all across Alaska. In August a few of our members met in Tok, at the Millers' residence, for a weekend of trail riding and a pig roast; they all had a great time riding new trails with old and new friends.

We had our last clinics for the season in the middle of September, on the Kenai Peninsula and in the Matanuska Valley; we opened this clinic up to big horses and had a great turn out of both auditors and riders of all different sizes and backgrounds. This gave us an opportunity to show other horse people what the Icelandic horse is all about, I feel that there were knowledge and new experiences gained on both ends. We all learned a lot from our clinician Bill Burke, who taught lessons for five days straight with great enthusiasm and energy.

CASCADE CLUB

Karen Brotzman writes: This has been a great summer, and we have a few more



Lisa Roland and Vakar camped out the whole weekend of the Cascade Club's summer meeting. Here they check the laundry.

club events before the rain begins in earnest and the holidays are upon us. The club's annual summer meeting was held in late August with very high attendance, about triple the number from the last summer meeting. We have several new members, and they are bringing loads of ideas and sparking some lively conversations. The club appreciates their participation and contributions.

This time we combined the Saturday meeting with a weekend campout, a trail ride on Mt Adams, and a playday on Sunday. Many of us camped over the weekend, and others came just for the playday or meeting. Most of the meeting was spent reviewing a proposed new section of our by-laws, which addresses member-to-member expectations. Three of the four proposals were adopted and will be inserted in the bylaws. A copy of the completed by-laws will be sent to the USIHC in January.

After the meeting, we enjoyed a



Alaska Club member Janet Mulder and Raudhetta working at a clinic.



Claudia Rancore and her mare Bylgja at the Cascade Club's summer meeting.

hosted cowboy cookout; the food was awesome and was followed by an after-dinner concert (Duet for Bassoon and Flute) by members Bonny Houghton and Lori Birge.

The fourth playday of the year was held in late September at WildHorse Acres in Vancouver, with member Cheryl Herndon hosting the group.

October will be a busy month for club members: Ann-Christin Kloth will be at Red Feather Icelandics for another of her much anticipated clinics on Oct. 8-9. The Mane Event is happening in Chilliwack, BC the weekend of Oct. 15-16, and our annual beach weekend ride is Oct. 21-23. Then the "season" winds down with the Starlight Parade in The Dalles, OR the Friday after Thanksgiving.

FLUGNIR

Kydee Sheetz writes: From July 22-24, nine Flugnir members were privileged to attend a clinic in Pelican Rapids, MN with the incomparable Barbara Frische. She presented a version of the conformation

lecture and video added more information, which prepared us for the task of evaluating the conformation of every participating horse and considering how that conformation would contribute to its rideability.

After lunch, each horse was then ridden in a private lesson, and it was fascinating to see how the traits that were discussed in the morning were borne out in the riding session. The evening was then spent hanging out with the horses, plying the ever patient Barbara with questions, and riding. Sunday started out with another breakfast lecture followed by private lessons throughout the day. Sunday evening was an incredibly helpful spontaneous session of watching Barbara review many of the young Tolthaven horses while one of the attendees was looking over the herd for a new horse. Monday morning came early and started with a short morning lesson for each rider either in the arena or on the track. The afternoon consisted of a casual competition on the nearly completed Tolthaven track in which riders received scores and oral reviews from the honest but always kind judge. Participants then loaded up, one with a wonderful new horse, and then reluctantly departed promising to get together again next year.

Humans and equines all had an absolutely wonderful time. Neophyte and

and riding clinic that was so popular in Kentucky last year. Our education started Friday evening, after all the participants had arrived and settled in at Jerry Oliver's beautiful Tolthaven Ranch, with a lecture and video. Saturday morning's breakfast



The exciting Canter Race (really gallop) at the 2011 Flugnirkeppni in Wisconsin.

experienced riders learned together and unanimously agreed that it was one of the most incredible learning experiences that they'd ever had. Young horses gained courage by sharing the arena and track with experienced horses. During the day, riders worked on things ranging from helping an older horse to improve tolt by increasing energy, to teaching a young horse to tolt for the first time, to learning to ride flying pace. During the breaks and in the evenings, vigorous games of ping-pong and round-robin ping-pong kept everyone on their toes. The food was great, as each person tried to outdo the other in providing yet another delicious meal and the people appointed to provide beverages made sure that nobody went dry in the warm weather.

The horses had a great time hanging out with new friends in adjacent stalls in the light and airy barn recently built by Jerry and his family, and being more effectively ridden by owners who finally understood some of their idiosyncrasies. We're making tentative plans to have a series of three clinics next year with Barbara at various sites around Minnesota. Let me know if you're interested in being added to the list of possible participants, by sending me an email at: aslanscountryicelandics@yahoo.com.

On September 16-18, the Flugnir group held the Flugnirkeppni competition at Winterhorse Park in Eagle, WI. We had a good turnout with members traveling in from Kentucky, Minnesota, and Wisconsin. This year we enjoyed hosting the Canter Race—a pairing of six riders participated in this timed event. It was definitely an exciting event to watch.

KLETTAFJALLA

Linda McLaughlin writes: Being a Regional Club with members scattered all over the Rocky Mountains, we plan events in summer when the passes are passable and ones that are a maximum of a seven- to eight-hour drive so as many members as possible can make it. We had hoped to have our usual two events this year, but unforeseen circumstances prevented that from happening. But the event put together by Karen Olson-Fields definitely made up for the



Members of the Klettafjalla Club ready to ride out on the trail at Coulter Lake Ranch in the White River National Forest of Colorado.

second one!

She found a slice of heaven by the name of Coulter Lake Ranch in the mountains just north of Rifle, CO. We arrived on a Thursday afternoon full of expectation. The Ranch is completely off the grid, which was wonderful in and of itself. The starry, starry nights were absolutely amazing! The main lodge where we took our gourmet meals and the cabins were rustic, but very comfortable. (Think hunting lodge.)

Best of all, we were able to bring our own horses for three days of beautiful trails. The ranch is nestled in a high valley in the White River National Forest and is complete with swiftly running streams and a lovely lake for swimming, kayaking, and fishing, as it is stocked with trout. Our rides were led by wonderful guides who initially underestimated the speed and stamina of our Icelandics. They were quick to be impressed by our horses' intelligence, calm nature, and surefootedness on all the trails, particularly the steep and muddy trail we tackled on our second full day.

We riders thoroughly enjoyed the splendid scenery and the company of the wonderful staff. It's a good thing that we were only there for three days because even

though we rode a lot, the food was wonderful and could have added a few pounds if we had stayed on longer. Our horses also enjoyed the fresh mountain air and especially the fresh dewy mountain grass they could munch on in the high, flower-filled mountain meadow to which we rode. The horses didn't even notice the small herd of cattle we met along the way. We all agreed that this event was one we should do every year and have already set the date for July 2012. If you happen to be in the West when we do this ride again, please join us.

KRAFTUR

Bert Bates writes: There are two big themes in this quarter's Kraftur update: 1) The ongoing activities of the club's active, core members; and 2) Breed Evangelism.

Spring brought an outbreak of the deadly EHV-1 virus to the western U.S. The California horse community did a great job of quickly responding to news of the outbreak. Quarantines were established, shows were cancelled, and most everyone went into "lock down" mode. Probably the biggest impact to the Kraftur club was that several of our favorite multi-breed, gaited shows were canceled. A

small price to pay, and we thank our lucky stars.

Once it was safe to go out into the world again, Kraftur members resumed frequent trail rides on the beach and at various local state parks and equestrian facilities from Monterey to the south to Point Reyes, north of San Francisco. In August, member Laura Hinson hosted a riding day at the Stonepine Equestrian center in Carmel Valley. Kraftur members rode on wonderful trails and arenas, and a few brave souls (Alex, Morgan, and Kathy) let their horses pull out all the stops on the center's four-furlong warm-up track.

A few, enviable Kraftur members spent some time this summer riding Icelandics in Europe (including Iceland). We're not jealous, but their names are Lucy, Cait, Doug, Annette, Madison, and Laura. Really, we're not jealous.

Once horse shows resumed this summer, Kraftur members attended two multi-breed shows in the Santa Cruz area: Graham Hill, where we fielded close to a dozen riders, and the Nor-Cal Saddlebred-hosted show in Watsonville. Kudos to Lucy Nold for bringing a bunch of new, excited, and talented young riders to Graham Hill, including: Esme on Bangsi, Elizabeth on Minning, and Lauren and Tatum on Katina.

We've said it before, and we'll say it again, we love the various Icelandic shows and clinics that we attend. They're wonderful ways for us to improve our skills. That said, they do little to help us get the word out into the world about our amazing horses. On the other hand, multi-breed shows are tons of fun, and they expose hundreds of people to the Icelandic horse, often for the first time. It's also clear from attending these multi-breed shows that our horses naturally demonstrate their wonderful combination of energy, level-headedness, beauty, and awesome gaits.

Finally, in September Annette Coulon hosted "video track day" at her Mountain Icelandic Farm in Watsonville. Track Day's chief organizer was Laurie Prestine—great job Laurie! Track day was an opportunity to practice on Annette's



NEIHC members Regina Berrish on Hnykill and Anne Owen on Gna at the Warren County Farmers Fair. Photo by David Owen.

regulation, 200-meter competition track and get instructional videos taken to boot. Veteran competitors used the day in preparation for upcoming shows, and new riders had the opportunity to get their first experience "on the track." In total, 22 horse-rider combinations took advantage of the wonderful day, including: Madison on Gjalp, Laurie on Ran, Nick on Sleipnir, Annette on Gaefa and Thokka, Lucy on Minning and Sara, Cait on Kani, Allison on Punktur, Julia on Skuggsja, Kelly on Dama, Jessie on Hugljuf, Jamie on Dama, Morgan on Fjalar and Birta, Alexandra on Aegir, Laurie on Tigull, Abby on Mushka, Katherine on Holmi, Elizabeth on Holmi, Kathy on Draumur, and Bert on Eyrarros. Special thanks to Annette and to Laura Benson for helping bring so many happy, promising young riders into the world of Icelandics.

NEIHC

Amy Goddard writes: As we ease into autumn, we count ourselves fortunate having endured two devastating storms here in the northeast: hurricane Irene in late August, and tropical storm Lee in early September. Some of our friends and neighbors were not so lucky—many lost their homes, farms and livelihoods. Our thoughts are with them.

Despite much rainy weather, we still managed to have many events all summer and into early fall. Clinics were held throughout July, August, and September, and one of particular note was the USIHC educational conformation clinic with Barbara Frische and Kristjan Kristjansson, hosted by Thor Icelandics in August. If you have not attended one of these clinics yet, make it a point to do so in the future—it is not to be missed! This clinic is essential to every Icelandic horse



NEIHC members at the Bedford Pace. Riders, from left to right, are: Charlotte Kooyman on Hreyfing, Christina Mai on Haukur Freyr, and Nicki Esdorn on Fengur. Photo by Kathy Mathew.

enthusiast, and hugely valuable whether you participate as a rider or auditor.

The clinic focused on how to judge an Icelandic horse's conformation against FEIF breeding goals and why they are important. We learned how to identify them, and how they effect a horse's movement and abilities. The conformation points and merits of each horse were discussed and the clinic attendees got several opportunities to judge some of the horses themselves.

On day two, each horse was "presented" by its rider (showing its gaits and how they normally ride them), and then were ridden by Kristjan, who then explained what he was doing, and suggested how to help the horse compensate for any conformation faults it may have. In the afternoon, riders were given private lessons. The final day consisted of participants riding again, while Kristjan and Barbara coached them to help the riders completely understand what they can do to improve their horses, whether it be cleaning up the tolt, getting their "non-trotting" horse to trot, or learning the cues for flying pace. After lunch, Barbara conducted a final wrap-up of each horse,

spending several minutes reviewing the conformation of each horse and what the rider's plan is for the future to help them reach their goals.

Almost every horse and rider team had a major breakthrough in some way, whether it be a new revelation about their horse's talent, some nuggets of information that changed the way they ride their horse, or critical advice regarding breeding or not breeding their horse. If you have a chance to attend one of these clinics in the future—don't hesitate: Go for it!

We were very disappointed to have to cancel our September breeding evaluations, but we look forward to tentatively scheduled evaluations in September 2012.

Regina Berrish and Anne Owen were asked by the Tri-State Equine Riding Team for Gaited Horses to do a breed demonstration with the Icelandics at the Warren County Farmers Fair. Anne writes, "The show was filmed by Comcast and is expected to be televised in the near future on PBS. Music for the show was provided by a local band called Plainfield Slim and The Groundhogs. We chose to ride to the song, 'Dirty Girl,' which was

fast and had the right beat for the tolt. Seven different breeds of gaited horses participated in the show, but it was our Icelandics who were the big hit of the evening!"

Karyn McFarland, proud part-owner of four-year-old stallion Eldur frá Torfunesi, reports that Eldur came in second place at Landsmót with only a .0005 point difference from the winner in the breeding class!

Another recent exceptional event was Susan Peters' "Triple Header" World Ranking Show. Susan writes: "On a beautiful fall weekend in September, Silver Maple Icelandic Horse Farm held the first triple header series of world ranking shows in the United States. The idea came to us from Thorgeir Gudlaugsson when he judged the World Championship tryouts in the spring. He reported that the concept first started in the Faroe Islands when four judges qualified to become international judges.

"Why do it? We have many talented horses and riders in this country, but few opportunities to ride in World Ranking events. The way the ranking system works is that riders who score above a 5.5 in an

event for which world ranking records are kept are placed on the World Ranking register. But in order to attain an actual ranking, a rider must achieve at least 5.5 in two world ranking events to achieve an annual ranking. Riders who achieve a score of at least 5.5 in three world ranking events will maintain a position in the world ranking register for two years.

“Silver Maple Farm held the first world ranking event in the United States in 2009. It was held over a two-day period. Even though many riders achieved scores in excess of 5.5, without the opportunity to participate in at least another world ranking show, they would not be able to actually achieve a ranking.

“How’d we do it? First of all, we had to change some rules. Our competition rules required that shows take place over two days and that finals take place on the second day. The Sport Committee and the USIHC Board approved permitting the holding of World Ranking competitions in a single day as well as eliminating finals. By holding three different shows on three consecutive days, our riders had a chance to achieve world ranking without having to travel to a completely different part of the country.

“Several riders achieved world ranking status as a result of this show: Shannon Hughes achieved this status on the first day riding three different horses, each with scores well above the 5.5 threshold; Sigrun Brynjarsdottir, Dan Slott, Caeli Cavanagh, Susan Peters, Lori Leo, and Jessica Haynsworth also achieved world ranking status in the tests that they rode in four gait, T-1 and T-2.

“The judges were Petur Jokull Hakonarson, Hulda Geirsdottir, Ann Winter, Halli Victorsson, and Thorgeir Gudlaugsson. The riders were very pleased with the judges—they were tough but fair, and most of all, they made the riders feel comfortable and relaxed in what could otherwise have been a scary event.

“The show was not just about the top-scoring riders. Horses and riders came from New Jersey, New York, Massachusetts, Vermont and New Hampshire to participate in the novice and intermediate classes as well as the trail classes. Many

of those riders will be entering world ranking very soon, no doubt.”

Other Silver Maple news: Caeli Cavanagh was one of 30 riders who qualified for the upcoming Versatile Horse and Rider Competition at Equine Affaire in Springfield, MA in November. The competitors were chosen from over 100 who applied. She will be riding Thokki. The Silver Maple demo team will be riding in the daytime breed demos at Equine Affaire. Jana Meyer earned her Centered Riding instructor’s certificate after rigorous training with Lucille Bump.

Nicki Esdorn writes: “Three Icelandic teams were among the first five in the pleasure division in the Fall 2011 Bedford Hunter Pace on September 11. One Icelandic horse team won the division; our team came in third, with new NEIHC member Charlotte Kooyman on Hreyfing, visiting trainer Christina Mai from Iceland on Haukur Freyr, and yours truly on Fengur. It was the first hunter pace on an Icelandic for both Charlotte and Christina. Another Icelandic team came in fifth.”

We look forward to our annual Turkey Tolt ride on November 26, and our annual meeting and Thorrablot on March

3. NEIHC members are encouraged to join the NEIHC Yahoo mail group, check our website, neihc.com and our Facebook page for news and upcoming events.

ST SKUTLA CLUB

Cordy Sullivan writes: Several of us took a nice fall ride on the Keuka Outlet Trail in Penn Yan, NY in September.

I attended another clinic by Steinar Sigurbjornsson that month in Delhi, NY. As usual it was excellent instruction and a great time. It was a bit dicey getting there because of the flooding around Binghamton and on Route 88 East, so I had to take a longer route on the New York Thruway. The roads were open for the return trip, but there was still a lot of high water and flooding of buildings along the route.

The subject of not shoeing horses came up, and I was surprised to find that a majority of people at the clinic had barefoot horses and did not usually use boots. Some used barefoot shoers and others their regular farriers. It would be interesting to see just how many Icelandic owners do not use shoes. Susan Verberg of Ithaca took many wonderful pictures of the clinic.



St Skutla Club members Cordy Sullivan, Deb Calloway, and Stephanie Sher ride down the Keuka Outlet Trail in Dresden, NY. Photo by Susan Verberg.

THE 2011 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS

BY DOUG SMITH

The United States sent a team of four riders to the World Championships in St. Radegund, Austria, in August. This year's team consisted of World Champion veterans Asta Bjarnadottir-Covert, Anne Marie Martin, and Chrissy Seipolt joined by a first-timer, young rider Rachel Ng. The team was supported by Florian Geier (Groom), Will Covert (Team Trainer), and Doug Smith (Team Leader). The horses were evenly split between veterans and newcomers. Asta competed with Dynjandi fra Dalvik attempting to repeat their success in Switzerland in 2009 in the tolt and four-gait tests. Anne Marie and Huni fra Torfunesi returned for their fourth World Championships, competing in the loose rein tolt test. Chrissy brought a successful five-gaiter, Dreki vom Wotanshof, to the five-gait test on the oval track. Our young rider, Rachel, joined Asta in the tolt and four gait, competing with Kaliber fra Laekjarbotnum.

This year's competition was extremely difficult. All fourteen FEIF member associations brought extremely talented horses. Many of the horses had never been to World Championships before, but came on very strongly. In addition to top-quality horses and riders, the weather was a huge factor this year. Some days the humidity was quite high, and it was hot so the riders had to contend with an extreme heat index. Other days the humidity was still quite high but it was cold, so there was torrential rain. Unfortunately for the United States, it seemed that we had one or the other nearly every time we had a rider on the track. Between the heat and the heaviness of the wet track it was quite difficult for Team USA to show at full potential.

That isn't to say we didn't have a good showing—just, perhaps, not all we had hoped for. In the final accounting, Asta placed in the top ten in the tolt, four gait, and four-gait combination. Rachel

Ng also turned in a strong performance. Rachel's 6.17 score in the four gait makes her the highest scoring native young rider in the U.S.'s history at the World Championships. This score in four gait is also one of the best turned in by any U.S. rider at a World Championships.

The team was supported by a small but enthusiastic group in Austria. Unlike most nations, we can recognize all of our national supporters by name. Thank you to Christina Granados, Helga R. Juliusdottir, Guenter Seipolt, Isolde Seipolt, Eileen Ma, Willy Ma, Dominic Ng, Ryan Ng, Sara Sessa, Bjarni Sigurdsson, and Ellen Wong for traveling to Austria to cheer for the team.

We also had amazing support from Chrissy, Isolde, and Guenter Seipolt and Florian Geier with the Nation Night party. As luck would have it, Florian is a trained bartender. His Whiskey Sours made the U.S. table a very popular destination. Finally, we had outstanding support from a number of donors in the U.S. who either wrote a check or added a few dollars to their Congress membership payment to support the team. This year, the Congress and our financial backers were able to cover all of the on-site costs of the Championships for the first time ever. The team really appreciated not having to pay for the Nation Night party supplies, their lunches, and some of the incidental expenses from their own pockets. Thank you to all who donated to support the team.

Preparations are already underway for the 2013 World Championships. The next championships will take place in Berlin from August 4-11, 2013. The venue is a mere nine minutes by train from the Berlin airport. There are hotels that are nearly as close as well. This championships will be very different in feeling from many in the past, being so close to a major city. For more information visit <http://www.berlin2013.de>. Tickets are available at a discount through the end of 2011 if you care to plan early.



Anne Marie Martin and Huni fra Torfunesi competed in the loose-rein tolt. Photo by Kathi Aschauer.



Chrissy Seipolt showed a successful five-gaiter, Dreki vom Wotanshof, in the five-gait test. Photo by Willy Ma.

U.S. TEAM SCORES & PLACEMENTS

TOLT T1

Asta D. Bjarnadottir-Covert / Dynjandi fra Dalvik	7.61	(9 th Place)
Rachel Ng / Kaliber fra Laekjarbotnum	5.73	(43 rd Place)

TOLT T2

Anne Marie Martin / Huni fra Torfunesi	6.23	(27 th Place)
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FOUR GAIT V1

Asta D. Bjarnadottir-Covert / Dynjandi fra Dalvik	7.57	(8 th Place)
Rachel Ng / Kaliber fra Laekjarbotnum	6.17	(38 th Place)

FIVE GAIT F1

Chrissy Seipolt / Dreki vom Wotanshof	6.20	(18 th Place)
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FOUR GAIT COMBINATION

Asta D. Bjarnadottir-Covert / Dynjandi fra Dalvik	7.60	(10 th Place)
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2011 WORLD CHAMPIONS

Tolt T1	Johann R. Skulason [IS] - Hnokki fra Fellskoti [IS2003188470]
Tolt T2	Tina Kalmo Pedersen [NO] - Kolgrimur fran Slatterne [SE1997107496]
Four Gait V1	Anne Stine Haugen [NO] - Muni fra Kvistum [IS2003181964]
Five Gait F1	Magnus Skulason [SE] - Hraunar fra Efri-Raudalaek [IS1999165491]
Pace Test PP1	Sigurdur Marinusson [NL] - Eilimi vom Lindenhof [DE1994100876]
Pace Race 250m P1	Bergthor Eggertsson [IS] - Lotus fra Aldenghoor [NL1994100312]
Speed Pass 100m P2	Tania H. Olsen [DK] - Solon fra Stro [DK1995104892]
Four Gait Combination	Eyjolfur Thorsteinsson [IS] - Osk fra Thingnesi [IS2003235501]
Five Gait Combination	Magnus Skulason [SE] - Hraunar fra Efri-Raudalaek [IS1999165491]



Young rider Rachel Ng competed in the tolt and four gait tests on Kaliber fra Laekjarbotnum. Her 6.17 score in the four gait is the highest of any young U.S. rider at the World Championships. Photo by Willy Ma.



Asta Dogg Bjarnadottir-Covert and Dynjandi fra Dalvik competed in the tolt and four gait competitions, placing in the top ten in both. Photo by Willy Ma.



The U.S. was represented by about a dozen fans in the stands. The team was also supported by a groom, team trainer, and team leader. Photo by Willy Ma.

ON THE ROAD TO AUSTRIA

Some of the most common questions asked about the U.S. team's travels to the World Championships center on the horses' travel—in terms of logistics and how the horses handled the trip.

This year three horses traveled from California to St. Radegund, Austria. The first leg of the trip was a short trailer ride from Santa Ynez to the quarantine facility at Los Angeles airport to await their cargo flight to Europe. Unfortunately, the cargo flight was delayed by nine hours. This gave the horses a chance to rest in Los Angeles but robbed them of their rest between the transatlantic flight and the drive to Austria.

The long travel day started at 6:00 a.m. when the horses were loaded into the cargo container and trucked a short distance to the side of the CargoLux 747. This short drive doesn't sound like much, but it was one of the most difficult parts of the trip for the horses. The cargo containers are relatively comfortable in the plane, but are a bit awkward when handled on the ground. Once on the plane, the horses were placed on the

main cargo deck just at the bottom of the stairs to the flight or crew deck. This is the typical placement for horses in flight. This location gives the groom easy access during the flight. The cargo containers have small doors which the groom can use to make sure the horses have plenty of food and water during the flight.

The flight to Europe took slightly over 12 hours, including a short stop in Chicago to exchange some cargo and wait for the nightly runway curfew in Luxembourg to be lifted. The plane landed at 6:30 a.m. local time, which gave the horses about two and a half hours to rest in proper quarantine stalls while the European Union veterinarian processed their import papers. By 9:00 a.m. the horses were loaded into a transport van and on the road from Luxembourg to Austria. The drive from Luxembourg to St. Radegund was a very uneventful, but long, 11-hour drive.

All told, the trip from Los Angeles to St. Radegund took about 29 hours. Fortunately, the horses seemed to find the entire process much less exhausting than their groom did. Aside from a little stress from the ground handling while in the container, the horses didn't seem to find any of the travel very disturbing. They were, of course, a bit stiff and tired on arrival, but they recovered very quickly and were ready to begin training on the second or third day after the trip.

The experience of the team's fourth horse was quite different. He had a very short trailer ride of just over one hour from his stable in Germany to the World Championship stables in St. Radegund.



Huni fra Torfunesi in the container.



How did the U.S. horses get to the World Championships? In the container shown here in the back. Their tack is in front of the containers, wrapped in orange plastic.

Trivia Question: Which team horses of the 14 nations competing at the World Championships in Austria had the longest trip measured in actual hours traveled, not distance?

Answer: Norway. The Norwegian horses traveled for nearly 36 hours, including 20 hours on a ferry to reach the World Championships.



Kaliber fra Laekjarbotnum peering through the groom's door in the container.



Dynjandi fra Dalvik in the air-freight container.

INTRODUCTION TO CONFORMATION

BY PAMELA S. NOLF

From Viking times until today, the Icelandic people have written poetry about horses whose appearance and performance inspired them. A poem from the 17th century, believed to be by Stefán Ólafsson, describes an Icelandic horse named Penni, “standing at its stall, has lively moving ears, crystal clear eyes and a strong croup. Penni is wonderfully raised, has a broad chest and covers a lot of ground in pace” (Bjornsson and Sveinsson, 2006, p. 347). What a wonderful description of an Icelandic horse!

These days there is no need to rely on literary creations to evaluate Icelandic horse conformation. For over 20 years, international Icelandic horse standards for judging ridden ability and conformation have been established and revised by FEIF, the International Federation of Icelandic Horse Associations. Any registered Icelandic horse can be assessed at a national or international breeding show using internationally established standards. The results are maintained in WorldFengur, the international breeding registry of the Icelandic horse, which can be accessed online at www.worldfengur.com. (Note: One of your benefits of USIHC membership is free access to this site.)

The goal of this article is to discuss the history of Icelandic horse breeding standards, outline the goal of these standards, define the basic traits of Icelandic horse conformation and how they are weighted, look at the genetic reliability of breeding standards, and describe the requirements for breeding judges. Assessment of ridden abilities is not covered in this article.

A BRIEF HISTORY

Icelanders have long discussed what makes a good horse—color, spirit, gaits, endurance, or other traits—and how to breed for these characteristics. As early as 1879, the County Council of Skagafjörður, Iceland, suggested standards for farm animals, including the horse. In 1899, the Agricultural Society was formed



Pegasus frá Skyggni scored a 8.5 for quality of head. However as his owner Kathryn Love notes, “He also has a wonderful back which is so important to his longevity as a fit athlete.” Photo by Kathryn Love.

in Iceland, followed a few years later by the Horse Breeding Society. In the early 1900s, a series of Breeding Advisors began collecting and codifying breeding data and the results of horse shows and competitions into studbooks.

In 1950, Gunnar Bjarnason developed a simple scale of scores for conformational traits and rideability, which was used in a show at Thingvellir, the first Landsmót. This type of rating by individual trait with a calculated overall total was the first use of its kind in the horse world (Bjornsson & Sveinsson, 2006, pp. 204-213).

Over the years in Iceland, the weightings of various traits have changed to encourage desired breeding results. In 1952, the Agricultural Society decided that only riding horses should be bred, as opposed to work or plow horses. As Breeding Advisor from 1961-1996, Thorkell Bjarnason emphasized the importance of pace in retaining the tolt as a distinct gait in the breeding of the Icelandic horse. He also focused on refining the breeding standards to develop a lighter neck, good legs, and an outstanding character. (Bjornsson & Sveinsson, 2006, pp. 204-213).

In 1969, a group of Icelandic horse

enthusiasts founded FEIF or Föderation Europäischer Islandpferde Freunde (meaning “European Federation of Friends of the Icelandic Horse”) which is now known by its English translation as the International Federation of Icelandic Horse Associations. Founding member countries were Austria, Denmark, Germany, Iceland, Netherlands, and Switzerland. Currently 18 countries, including the U.S., are members of FEIF. Over the past 40 years, FEIF has established a series of committees to work with its member national organizations to set up international standards for breeding, rules for sanctioned sports competitions, world championships, youth events, education, etc. (Note: Merging the various national breeding standards into one international system involved much heated discussion over the years.) One of its most important accomplishments was the establishment of WorldFengur. (Kolnes, n.d.) After considerable discussion, debate, and research, BLUP (Best Linear Unbiased Prediction), a computer model for predicting breeding potential, was added to the Icelandic breeding standards in 1992 (Bjornsson & Sveinsson, 2006).

The development of breeding stan-

dards and information about the Icelandic horse continues to evolve. Recent developments include tracking additional information, such as incidence of spavin and blood types. Current breeding standards are based on over 100 years of accumulated data and history on breeding horses with outstanding gaits, good conformation, and willing personalities.

PURPOSE

What is the goal of breeding standards? Although published in 1988 and somewhat outdated, the book *Judging Icelandic Breeding Horses* by Marit Jonsson provides a clear articulation of the goal of Icelandic horse breeding standards:

“The Icelandic horse must be a true riding horse, courageous, cheerful, trustworthy, spirited and cooperative. It must command at least four gaits, of which one must be tolt, and should preferably also have flying pace. It must be strong, enduring, and have a long useful life. It must be frugal, robust, and inexpensive to keep. (Jonsson, 1988, p. 8).”

Jonsson goes on to explain that the tolt is the primary defining characteristic of the Icelandic horse. As you review the description of breeding standards around conformation traits below, you will want to keep that in mind, since weighting of conformation traits in the overall score is based on their perceived relationship to tolt and, to a lesser degree, pace.

CONFORMATION TRAITS

Conformation may vary considerably since Icelandic horses are bred for purposes from pace racing to general riding to international competitions. However, a typical Icelandic horse is rectangular and compact in shape. Typical of the breed is a sloping croup, a long, thick mane and tail, and a thick, protective coat in winter (Antonsson, Siiger Hansen, and Grimm, 2011, p. E-2).

The following section briefly describes each conformation trait and lists common flaws. The judges use an assessment form to rate conformation traits and rideability. You can find a more detailed description, including details on the judging scale, for each trait by consulting the FEIF Rules for Icelandic Horse Breeding located at www.feif.org. The judges assign a number from 5 to 10 for each trait depending on how the horse conforms to international breed-

ing standards.

Please note that any discussion of Icelandic horse breeding standards requires an in-depth knowledge of basic horse conformation. Icelandic horse judging manuals such as *Studhorse Judging and Studshows and Judging Icelandic Breeding Horses* assume that judges understand such terms as cow-hocked, over at the knee, good proportions, well-set neck, etc.

MEASUREMENTS

Judges measure the horse at several points, such as the highest point of the withers and croup, the lowest point of the back, the depth of the breast, the length of the body, the width of the chest, the circumference of the knee, from the top of the hoof to the toe, etc.

HEAD

(WEIGHTED FACTOR 3%)

Judges are looking for a proud, pretty, fine head with thin, fine ears and large eyes. There is a good space between the jaws and the noseline is straight with wide-open nostrils. Common flaws are extreme dish face, coarse head, and badly positioned ears.

NECK/WITHERS/SHOULDERS

(WEIGHTED FACTOR 10%)

Ideally, the neck should be long, raised, and fine and clearly separated from the body. Withers are prominent and well-

defined. Shoulders are long and sloping. Common flaws are the neck is too thick, ewe neck, hollow neck, and too short or too long neck, upright shoulders, or the neck is set too deep.

BACK AND CROUP OR TOPLINE

(WEIGHTED FACTOR 3%)

The judges are looking for a great topline with a soft, supple back—of average length, broad, and well muscled. The hindquarters are long, adequately sloped, and equally developed. The thighs are long and muscled and the tail is well set. Common flaws are humped or sway back, too long or too short back, a forward sloping back, or lack of muscling in thighs or croup.

PROPORTIONS

(WEIGHTED FACTOR 7.5%)

As the FEIF standards state, “The horse should be full of splendor and presence” (Antonsson, et al, 2011, p. E-10). The body should be light and cylindrical in shape. The front, middle, and hind portions of the horse should be approximately equal. The legs should be long. “The highest point at the withers should be higher than the highest point of the croup” (Antonsson, et al, 2011, p. E-10). Common flaws are legs that are too short; body is too round; horse is lower in the front; or front, mid, and hind sections are not proportional.



Erró frá Sléttubóli achieved a 9.5 for mane and tail, but that is just beauty on top of performance for a stallion who scored 8.0 for tolt, 8.0 for trot, 8.5 for pace, and 8.5 for spirit. Photo by Willy Ma.



Frami frá Ragnheidarstöðum scored a perfect 10 for leg quality. As owner Morgan Venable notes, “Correct strong legs are needed for a sound horse and correct gaits. The legs must be positioned correctly under the horse, straight as described in this article, in correct proportion and of substantial bone. The legs should feel ‘dry.’ Running your hand down the leg you should feel firm muscle, skin, and bone with excellent separation. Abundant feathers a bonus!” Photo by Eiríkur Jónsson.

LEG QUALITY (WEIGHTED FACTOR 6%)

The horse should have strong joints and exceptional pasterns. There should be good separation between tendons and bones. Common flaws are straight or weak pasterns, swelling in the tendons, over at the knee, cow-hocked, knock-kneed, and little separation between tendons and bones.

LEG STRUCTURE (WEIGHTED FACTOR 3%)

The front legs should be straight with sufficient space between the legs. The hind legs may be slightly splayed. Common flaws are front or back legs turned too far in or out or cow-hocked. The judges typically assess leg structure at both the walk and the trot. They look for overreaching or signs of unusual stress.

HOOVES (WEIGHTED FACTOR 6%)

The hoof should be deep, round, and concave with a thick horn and large frog. Hooves should be one color—preferably dark. Common flaws are thin horn, little frog or heel, shallow or boxy hoof.

MANE AND TAIL (WEIGHTED FACTOR 1.5%)

The mane, forelock, and tail should be exceeding thick and long. Mares usually have a finer mane and tail than stallions. The flaw, of course, is a mane and tail that is thin and/or short.

RELATION TO RIDDEN ABILITIES

It is beyond the scope of this article to discuss in detail how rideability is judged per FEIF standards. However, it is important to know that in the calculation of the overall score for the horse, conformation is worth 40% and ridden ability is worth 60%. Tolt and pace are weighted higher than canter, trot, and walk. The weighting illustrates the strong emphasis given to performance by FEIF. However, any potential breeder or buyer should take into account this weighting to determine if an outstanding score for ridden abilities outweighs a conformational trait that is average or flawed. For example, a strong back may be very important for a buyer’s future plans for a horse but “back and croup” is only given a 3% weighting for conformation traits.

RELATION TO COMPETITION

The results of FEIF-sanctioned sports competitions are not considered in FEIF breeding evaluations. E. Albertsdóttir (2007) conducted a study to analyze if there was any correlation among Icelandic horse breeding assessment traits and performance in Icelandic horse sports competitions. She found that “Moderately strong genetic correlations were generally estimated between the competition traits and the following conformation traits recorded in breeding field-tests: neck, withers and shoulders; back and hindquarters; proportions; and hooves” (Albertsdóttir, 2007, p. 17). Moderate to high genetic correlation was found between most of the riding ability traits such as tolt and pace and their associated sports tests. Albertsdóttir’s results confirm that “competition traits and riding ability traits from breeding field-tests are closely genetically correlated” (Albertsdóttir, 2007, p. 20).

BREEDING JUDGES

The scheduling of a sanctioned breeding show or evaluation requires the submission of a FEIF application form (details provided on the USIHC website). Assessments of gaits and riding ability of adult horses are conducted by three judges. Judges can be certified at the national level or the international level. Currently, the U.S. has no resident breeding judges certified at the international level. Up to this point in time, Icelandic breeding shows in the U.S. have been conducted by International Breeding Judges from other FEIF member countries.

There are two types of judges: International Breeding Judge and International Breeding and Riding Judge. Both types of judges require years of experience, approval by the national member association of FEIF, passing of a one- to two-day test conducted per FEIF standards, and continual licensing by FEIF.

CONCLUSION

One of the strengths of the Icelandic breed and the hope for the continued quality of the Icelandic horse in the future is the international Icelandic horse breeding standards. To the author’s knowledge, no other gaited breed has such detailed, international standards based on numerical assessment of indi-

vidual conformation traits and rating of all gaits. As the FEIF Rules for Icelandic Horse Breeding state, “Everybody [has] the silent hope that the present FIZO [international Icelandic horse breeding rules] shall achieve the aim of all FEIF member nation states—one breeding assessment system for all individual Icelandic horses—the best in the world. Nothing less will do for the Icelandic horse” (Antonsson, et al, 2011, p. E-1)

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LEARN MORE ABOUT CONFORMATION

BY PAMELA S. NOLF

So you have read the article, “Introduction to Conformation,” and you still have questions. Even if you are not new to the breed, or unfamiliar with horse conformation in general, you may be having a difficult time picturing how these standards apply to actual horses. What does a good topline really look like? And how sloping should the shoulder be?

To answer this sort of question, the USIHC has worked with an International Breeding Judge to develop a new clinic, “Conformation and Correlation in Training and Riding.” In 2011, this clinic was delivered several times in the U.S. by Barbara Frische, International Breeding Judge, partnered with experienced Icelandic horse trainers such as Gudmar Pétursson, Kristján Kristjánsson, and Svanhildur Stefánsdóttir.

Barbara Frische is an International Icelandic Breeding Judge, which means she has judged thousands of Icelandic horses. She frequently judges at the World Championships. What is so enjoyable about Barbara is how open she is to sharing her passion and deep knowledge about the Icelandic breed to help both horse and rider reach their full potential. And she appreciates each and every Icelandic horse—

from beloved family trail horse to potential breeding stallion candidate.

At the seminar I attended in Washington, Barbara started the day by introducing the FEIF international standards for conformation. The importance of these standards is that they have been developed over the years so that the ideal Icelandic horse conformation supports easy, supple, fluid gaits—function follows form. Barbara drew different topline outlines showing which would enhance gait and which might hinder gait; hind quarter shapes showing which is related to the ability to pace and which is more typical of a four-gaited horse; leg shapes showing good, strong legs and common flaws; and much, much more.

In the afternoon, Barbara examined the horses and discussed how they compared to the Icelandic ideal. The intent here was not to “judge” the horse, but to point out where its conformation supported the rider’s activities and where conformation might require some extra training to enhance abilities or the rider’s understanding as to the horse’s limitations. Later in the session, participants were broken into two teams to evaluate the last two horses. It was challenging and a lot of



Barbara Frische, International Icelandic Breeding Judge, discusses how shape and slope of the croup and structure of the hindquarters can impact gaits. Photo by Chris Jones.

fun to apply what we had just learned. Barbara then reviewed each team's evaluation.

An experienced Icelandic trainer, Svanhildur Stefánsdóttir, then rode the horse to demonstrate its current capabilities. Her experience in training and riding hundreds of horses at different levels really enabled her to show the horse to its best advantage. The horse's owner then rode his or her own horse to see how riding style worked with or against the horse's conformation and what adjustments could be made. The next day, all the riders had individual lessons with their Icelandic, with some commentary by Barbara. Typical results included learning to clean up the tolt, getting their tolters to trot, or learning the cues for flying pace.

Amy Goddard attended one of these clinics in New York in August. She exclaimed, "I would have to say that almost every horse and rider team had a major breakthrough in some way, whether it be a new revelation about their horse's talent, some nuggets of information that changed the way they ride their horse, or critical advice regarding breeding or not breeding their horse."

Who should go to this clinic? Just about everyone associated with Icelandic horses. If you are a pleasure rider and want to learn how you can help your horse achieve its full potential, if you are thinking about buying an Icelandic horse and want to better your chances of getting a horse that meets your riding needs from trail to competition to dressage, if you are a competition rider and may be interested in pace races or loose-rein tolt, and definitely if you are thinking about breeding or conducting a breeding program, go to this clinic. Check the USIHC website at <http://www.icelandics.org/> for scheduling of this seminar in 2012.

While not a traditional Icelandic horse activity, Barbara Frische and attendees from the clinic are discussing how throatlatch and neck are related to how easy or difficult a horse finds it to achieve collection in dressage.



Members of the Cascade and the West Coast Can Am Icelandic Horse Club assess leg structure at both the walk and the trot. They are looking for overreaching or signs of unusual stress. Photo by Chris Jones.



During the conformation clinic held in Battleground, WA, attendees assess the proportions of a young stallion and discuss how that is related to the ability to tolt. Photo by Chris Jones.



WOULD YOU BREED TO SPUNI? A ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION



Spuni's high-stepping trot. Photo by Martina Gates.

INTRODUCTION

BY JESSICA HAYNSWORTH

As last month's *Quarterly* was being assembled, a debate about breeding began among the members of the editorial committee. The discussion was sparked by the news from this year's Landsmot breeding horse competition in Iceland that the stallion Spuni fra Vesturkotu had become the highest-judged stallion in the history of the Icelandic horse. Some of us were wowed by Spuni's high scores for ridden talents, or rideability. Others were concerned by the fact that his conformation scores were noticeably lower than his scores for rideability. What started out as a question of "Would I breed my mare to Spuni?" ultimately became a spirited debate about what breeding show scores mean to each of us and how they affect our choices when deciding which horses to breed. Below, you can read what several of us thought about Spuni, scores, and choosing the perfect stallion.

But first, for you to better understand

how Spuni received his high scores, look at an example of a breeding assessment form (found on the FEIF website at www.feiffengur.com/documents/Enskt%20dómbla_.pdf). The "weight factor" explains how heavily each score is weighted in the overall averaged scores for conformation and rideability. The conformation and rideability scores are then averaged together to produce the horse's overall score.

Here you can also see Spuni's scores, and draw your own conclusions as to what they mean to you:

IS2006187114 SPUNI FRÁ VESTURKOTI

COLOR:	3600 BAY
CONFORMATION:	8,5 - 8,5 - 8,5 - 9,0 - 8,5 - 7,5 - 8,0 - 8,0 = 8,43
TALENT:	9,0 - 9,0 - 10,0 - 8,5 - 9,5 - 9,0 - 8,5 = 9,17
TOTAL SCORE:	8,87
SLOW TÖLT:	8,0
SLOW CANTER:	8,0

WHO CARES? YOU SHOULD

BY BERNIE WILLIS

Who cares about evaluation scores? I like my horse, he's unevaluated and that's fine with me. Evaluations are just for professionals—that's not me. Evaluations are expensive, they just raise the price of the horse—I don't need that.

Can you identify with any of these sentiments? If so please read on, you might find something valuable for only a few minutes of your time.

In the last issue of the *Quarterly*, Cindy Wescott described her experience at this summer's Landsmot competition in Iceland. She noted the scores of Spuni fra Vesturkotu, IS2006187114, a record high-scoring stallion. I checked out the complete evaluation on WorldFengur and discovered that his score for leg quality was average, 7.5, with the comment "narrow." As Cindy was developing her article, I raised the question, "What would I do if I owned Spuni?" This developed into a discussion of why or why not breed your mare to Spuni. Several conflicting opinions were expressed by members of the Quarterly Committee. Our editor invited us to share these views with all of you in an exercise that I am sure will anger some, satisfy others, and get all of us thinking and understanding more about how evaluation scores really do affect us.

BACKGROUND

Many years ago in Iceland, the grandfather of the owner of Thoroddur fra Thoroddsstothum, Bjarni Thorkelsson, proposed a system whereby horses could be evaluated according to their conformation and performance. Over the years the system has been developed, computerized, and combined with the Best Linear Unbiased Prediction (BLUP) program originally from Cornell University in New York. Now it is part of WorldFengur and used by Icelandic horse enthusiasts around the world. For some it is the Holy Grail of breeding information, for others



Spuni fra Vesturkoti wowed the audience with his fast tolt at the 2011 Landsmót in Iceland. Photo by Martina Gates.

it is good science gone bad. In Iceland the government-supported university system teaches it, but many farmers would rather use their gut feelings and personal experience when it comes to choosing mates for their mares. In the next section you may find some insight that explains the reasons for both positions.

BIOLOGY LESSON

This is not a scientific paper, but a few basic technical terms need explaining. When we look at a horse we see the *phenotype*. The phenotype is what any breeding judge or rider or breeder sees. We describe only the phenotype in terms such as “high-set neck.” The *genotype* is the set of hidden characteristics that produced that phenotype. The horse’s genes control these hidden characteristics—hidden because none of us can see them from the outside of a horse. We can get an idea of them through what we see on the outside of the offspring

or descendants of a particular breeding pair. In human terms, look at yourself, your parents, and grandparents. Now check out your own children. Do you see some characteristics being passed down the line? It may be hair, eye, or skin color. It may be temperament or size. Some things come out in every generation, while other features seem to skip generations. *Prepotency* is another important term in breeding. It is the ability to reproduce a certain characteristic with regularity. It is developed by the breeding of pairs that have the same characteristics, hence strengthening the probability that this characteristic will be dominant in the next generation. Ben Greene, Ph.D., from the Alaska Department of Fish and Game describes genetic prepotency like this: “Remember those old desks that had all the cubbyholes for things you wanted to keep separate. Pretend that each cubbyhole is a genetic characteristic. Each parent adds

material to each cubbyhole. The more similar material that is added to a cubbyhole, the more likely that material will show up in the offspring. Horse hooves are easy to see and critique. If both parents have good hooves, and their parents had good hooves, and their grandparents had good hooves, then the chance of the next generation having good hooves is excellent. If the opposite is true, bad hooves in several generations, your chances of good hooves is very low. If a horse has a family history of bad hooves and is bred to a horse with good hooves, the chances of good hooves is not great. Let’s say you have a horse that is nearly perfect in your mind except for one flaw. You want to breed it to its close relative to increase the material in the cubbyholes so you will have prepotency in the future. This can be done, but the risk is that the flaw will become prepotent also. You must ask yourself, will the flaw coming out in every generation affect the useful-

ness or survival of the animal? The genetic material that affects characteristics do not blend, one substance is always reproduced. Material in a cubbyhole does not blend. Some may have dominance over others depending upon many factors, but you will never get a gray horse by breeding a white one to a black one, you will reproduce one or the other.”

The term for breeding relatives is called *inbreeding* and is expressed in the BLUP evaluation as the last listed number, always a percentage. If you experiment with the virtual breeding feature of WorldFengur you'll notice that if the inbreeding coefficient is 5 percent or less it will be in black, if higher than 5 percent it will be in red, suggesting a potential problem. Breeding brother and sister is the closest possible genetic combination and will be a 25 percent inbreeding coefficient.

Another concept in selective breeding is called *line-breeding*. In line-breeding, mates are selected that share desired characteristics but are separated by one or more generations. The hope is to fill the cubbyholes with the good stuff while limiting the bad.

The term *out-crossing* is the next step in line-breeding. A descendant from a family or line of horses that fits your ideal can be bred to a descendant from an unrelated family that also meets your requirements. The hoped-for benefits of such a combination is that the good of both families will be emphasized while the flaws will be minimized. This is true only if the desired characteristics are the same and the undesired ones are different.

One important benefit of out-crossing is *hybrid vigor*. Many matings that combine desired genetic material and underemphasize the undesirable will result in animals that have excellent resistance to disease and greater levels of strength and endurance than either parent.

In the wild, the environment eliminates the individuals that don't have the characteristics suitable for survival. They simply become food for other species. This *culling* is the responsibility of the domestic breeder. Icelandic culture solves this problem with an active horsemeat market. One old book on breeding says, “If you can't drown, don't breed.” The ethics of this are the subject of another article, my point is that breeding is serious business. It should not be done in a haphazard way. Just

because having a baby is fun is not enough reason to breed indiscriminately.

GOALS, NOT DREAMS

The difference between a dream and a goal is a plan. Review the possibilities for the Icelandic horse at www.icelandics.org/breed/breeding-standard. This is the real dream horse for many, but not the reality for most of us. Conscientious breeders will analyze the horses available to them and decide what to use to meet their goals. Now things get complicated. Check out www.feif.org/breeding/FIZO rules for breeding Icelandic horses, for a full description and judging guidelines for all evaluated aspects of this breed.

If the prospective breeder has a mare that is gentle but small, narrow, has a forward sloping back, flat feet, trots, canters, but can hardly tolt, and breeds her to a stallion that approaches the standard, the result will combine their characteristics. Which may be tall, narrow, slightly dipped back, flat feet, little trot, great tolt, no canter, and very reactive. Combining characteristics is not the same as averaging them. The descendant of the mating will

show some of the genotype of each parent, some of the biological choices made from the individual cubbyholes, based upon the prepotency of each individual.

As a breeder selects individual horses to approach the goal it may appear that the process will take a long time. First a mating is prepared that will strengthen some characteristic and not weaken others, then that horse is bred to another that will combine and make prepotent some characteristics, and finally after several generations, the goal may be reached. Understanding that sexual maturity takes about three years and a full evaluation is normally done at five years, and gestation is about 11 months, a three-generation approach to your perfect horse will take 10 to 15 years. Bjarni Thorkelsson completed the plan of his father with the production of Thoroddur fra Thoroddsstothum.

SCORES

An alternative to this well-thought-out and deliberate approach is to simply breed the best to the best of unrelated horses. You can determine what is “best” by letting the breeding judges determine it for you. Look



Spuni showing an elegant walk at the 2011 Landsmot in Iceland. Photo by Martina Gates.



The five-year-old stallion Spuni fra Vesturkoti is the highest judged Icelandic horse in history, with an overall score of 8.87. Photo by Martina Gates.

at the evaluation scores for prospective mates and decide which ones you would like to combine. Purchasing or leasing high-scoring or first-prize horses may get expensive, but the results could be gracing your pasture in less than a year instead of 15. But, can you really depend upon official scores to determine the parents of your dream horse?

The scoring method used for Icelandic horses is the envy of many other breeds. It is more in-depth and covers more details. But is it all there is to know? Certainly not! Scores, while valuable, are determined on the basis of what is observed in a moment. They won't show how the horse reacts to deep or swift flowing water or other trail obstacles. You might object to the illustration, saying this is a training issue. Fair enough. But some horses take new and fearful things in stride, while others take

many experiences to be desensitized, and some never get over their anxiety.

A high total score will catch your attention, but it must be analyzed. Conformation scores don't change much over time, but rideability scores sometimes do. You have to ask yourself as the scores for tolt, for instance, keep getting better, Is this improvement the result of more and more training or a better rider? What is the natural talent of this horse? A five-year-old with great scores is more impressive than an eight-year-old with the same scores.

Another step in your analysis should be to determine which scores are most important for your application, your goal. Function follows form. Sometimes we see high scores for riding but significantly lower scores for conformation. It is fair to ask, Is this horse doing so well because conforma-

tion really doesn't matter, or is it because it has a lot of drive for the rider to work with? While a lot of drive or willingness is great when easy to control, it can mask physical problems. Bad angles in the legs or less desirable proportions will degrade the horse's performance over years of use.

Normally an average score, 7.5, does not get any remarks or comments. Look over a breeding evaluation score sheet. On the left are items denoted with a letter, they are negative. On the right are items denoted with a number, they are positive. The judges put a check mark in the box and the computer adds the actual comment to the WorldFengur report. Sometimes the judge will hand write a comment that is not among the suggested options. The comment section is a window on the score. Back and croup are combined in one score. It might be possible to get a score of 8, which is first prize, because of a wonderfully shaped and deep croup, while the back gets a comment of "forward sloping." A forward sloping back will cause saddle-fit problems. Do you really want to breed a horse whose saddle is likely to keep sliding forward, even if it has a high score?

In my opinion the linear system that has been developed for the young horse evaluation system is much better than the current breeding form used by FEIF for adult horses. On it you can compare the observed characteristic with the ideal and the extremes. You might apply the young horse evaluation sheet to your dream horse, based upon the scores and comments, and see if your ambitions change for its use.

WOULD I BREED TO SPUNI?

Would I breed my best mare to Spuni fra Vesturkoti based upon the scores alone? Certainly not. I love the 9 for tolt, but the scores for spirit concern me. I need to know more about those comments, "fiery" and "controllable." Is this stallion the Icelandic version of a crotch rocket that may be too reactive meeting a bear or moose? Will that narrow stance in the hind legs create problems keeping shoes on? Before I take responsibility for a breeding I will ask more questions such as, Who has been training this horse? Then I will ask the trainer, Has this horse ever pulled off his own hind shoes? How does this horse react to loose dogs and honking auto horns? What training issues did you have developing this horse? Can he be ridden in a halter only?

Would you let your children ride him? How far or how long has he been ridden in a single day? What part of this horse is the first to show signs of discomfort after long work? Then I will try and determine where the various characteristics came from. His phenotype comes from his ancestors' genotypes. What are their phenotypes? Where in his heritage did his good and bad points surface? If he were older than 10 or so, I would look the other way, at his descendants and see where his genotype became another horse's phenotype.

For the good of the breed these questions need to be answered. High scores draw our attention to look through the window of comments. Then we need to focus on the things scores don't show. The answers will tell us if we really want to preserve this horse for future generations or not.

SEEING PATTERNS

BY JULI COLE

I've been giving a lot of thought to the current discussion topic of the value of breeding evaluation scores in making breeding choices and how much weight should be given to the scores and the accompanying comments.

I utilize scores when making breeding choices, not only the scores of the horses that are "in front" of me, i.e. the potential sire and dam, but also the scores of the horses that are "behind" those two horses and as many horses that "radiate" from them as possible. It isn't easy for me to put into words how I go about making breeding selections. I will try to do so, but I would like to add the disclaimer that I am only scratching the surface of what is a very detailed and involved process. Scores are only one part of the equation.

This process involves many different steps, often taking several months of research, comparing different pairings. This research involves looking at the ancestors, siblings, and offspring (if applicable) of my potential breeding pair. I look for consistency in traits and characteristics, both good and bad, to determine the level of prepotency. In essence, I am looking for "patterns" that have developed in the different bloodlines, then I look at how the bloodlines mesh with others and what "patterns" have developed from those combinations.

I can only use scores so much, though,

as often the horses that are behind or that radiate from my potential breeding pair have not been evaluated. I do not dismiss a horse from breeding consideration because it hasn't been evaluated, especially if that horse has horses behind or radiating from it that have been evaluated, thus providing me with information to help determine patterns.

MANY OTHER FACTORS

I believe it is also important to note that there are many factors outside of genetics that can affect a horse for better or for worse, such as handling or training, illness, injury, etc. These factors can possibly create a "break" in an established pattern. These factors are not always easy, or even possible, to identify. However, if it has been determined through research that the horse has truly broken away from the patterns established by the horses behind and radiating from it, and has done so in a negative fashion, then I would give the horse in front of me the benefit of the doubt and allow for some external influence to be the cause of the break in the pattern. Likewise, if I note that the horse has broken from the pattern in a positive fashion, especially in a trait that can be influenced by external sources, I would have to consider that this horse is not the norm and is likely to pass on the (poorer) pattern that has been established.

So, to address the question, "Would I breed to Spuni?," when I look at Spuni and see his score of 7.5 for legs (joints), I am going to first look to the horses behind him to see what their scores in this category are, if they have been evaluated. From there, I will look for any patterns and how those patterns might be reflected in the scores. Then, I would look to their offspring and repeat the process. I will pay particular attention to those horses with bloodlines that would be very similar to my pending foal to see what patterns emerge.

If I note that the horses that would have similar bloodlines to my pending foal have scores in this category—average to above average—then I would not be concerned about the potential breeding. However, if I noted the scores were consistently below average, with more negative comments, then I would hesitate to do this particular pairing.

I will repeat the process for the scores and comments for spirit. For me, personally, the higher the score for spirit, the better.

In my opinion, I do not believe that a horse that achieves a high score in this category will have negative comments, as all of the negative comments provided on the score sheet are contrary to the definitions given for the higher scores, and to the definition given in FIZO for the ideal standard of spirit. This is strictly my opinion, as I have not done any research to see if there are horses with scores of 9 or higher for spirit that have also received negative comments.

To achieve these high spirit scores, a horse has to demonstrate sensibility, ease in handling, and cooperation with the rider. These are also the traits that are found in the best everyday riding horses. So when I see a horse with a high score for spirit, I see a horse that holds the potential to be worked "up" to peak performance for competition or evaluation and to also be worked "down" to where it could be handled and ridden by a less skilled rider than the professional. When these types of horses also have exceptional scores for the conformational traits and in the rest of the ridden abilities traits, then they are horses that I would look to for breeding, as they embody the ideal standard of the Icelandic horse.

PRECISE RECORDS

BY JESSICA HAYNSWORTH

One of the wonderful things about the Icelandic horse is that it is such a small, contained breed. We all know our horses' entire pedigrees, traced back through many generations, because Iceland has been so precise about recording everything to do with breeding. This has allowed us, over the years, to see which bloodlines pass on which traits, and to determine which horses are superstars on their own and which are truly valuable breeding horses who nearly always seem to pass on only their very best traits.

We are also lucky, because we have a very clear, well-defined breed standard, both for conformation and rideability. This is what the scores from breeding shows, or evaluations, are judged upon. A horse that scores high is closer to the perfection identified in the breed standard than a horse with a low score. These scores tell us which horses might be worth breeding to, and which would not be. The rest is up to the breeder. Every first-prize stallion would not be a good match for every first-



Cartoonist Chris Romano's contribution to the debate.

prize mare. Individual conformation and bloodlines must be taken into account, but it is more or less universally agreed upon that we should not be breeding horses that have not scored well in this system.

Would Spuni fra Vesturkoti, the highest judged stallion in the history of our breed, be worth using? To me this seemed like a no-brainer—if the bloodlines and conformation strengths and weaknesses matched up with my mare, of course I would use him. Spuni's overall score is 8.87, with 8.43 for conformation and an unheard-of 9.17 for ridden abilities. There can be absolutely no question of this horse's brilliance. A 7.5 score for leg quality is by no means a bad score, but because it is lower than his other scores, I suppose it stands out more. All this indicates to me is that if I have a mare that has also scored low for legs, Spuni might not be the right choice of stallion for her. However, her legs would have to be pretty bad for me to ignore all of Spuni's ridden ability scores—10 for pace, 9.5 for spirit, 9 for tolt, 9 for trot, 9 for form under rider ... wow! Of course, his bloodlines would have to complement those of my mare, and I would be certain to make sure their strengths and weaknesses would complement one another.

For example, I have a half share in a young mare with absolutely spectacular pace and trot. She is breathtaking to watch in these gaits, but, while all of her gaits are good and solid, she is less talented in slow tolt and slow canter. I would like to

take her to a stallion with a score of 9 or higher for slow tolt and canter, and if that stallion has lower scores for trot and pace, I feel that she will balance this out with her own talents. Spuni would not be my choice of stallion for her, because he scored 8's for slow tolt and slow canter. There are, however, thousands of mares that Spuni would complement, and so I think that most breeders who can afford Spuni's stud fee will try to take a mare or two to him.

WAIT A WHILE

There is one more thing to take into account, however. Sometimes, a stallion simply isn't a good breeding horse. No one knows why this happens, but it certainly does: A stallion is judged with very good scores, he is winning everything, he has a wonderful character, he is beautiful, but for whatever reason, he only seems to pass along his very worst traits to his offspring. The very famous, World Championship-winning Kraftur fra Bringu was certainly a horse that people had high hopes for as a breeding stallion, but when it came down to it, his offspring simply aren't very good—and are certainly nothing compared to their father. Only time can tell whether a mare or stallion will pass on their best or worst traits, and sometimes in the case of a young stallion, it may be prudent to wait a while to breed to him in order to see what his offspring are like. Of course, by the time he has proven himself with brilliant offspring, his stud fee will have sky-rocketed and there may be limited spaces for mares going to him, so it is always a gamble. It is up to the breeder to decide whether a high-scored but somewhat unproven stallion is worth taking a chance on.

NO PERFECT HORSE

BY ANDREA BRODIE

There is no perfect horse, however this one, Spuni fra Vesturkoti, is pretty damn near perfect. A score of 7.5 is average for joints (leg quality). According to FIZO, the joints may be a little crooked provided the horse does not overreach and there are no signs of abnormal stress on the legs. So it is unlikely Spuni will knock off his shoes or injure himself without corrective shoeing. Of course good riding can even out some of the problems associated with narrow hindlegs, too. Most Icelandics get wider with speed.

One has to look not only at the faults but also at the good scores. Looking at faults alone is a big mistake. You select your stallion or mare not by just one trait. Both mare and stallion have to complement each other. If I want to use a fantastic stallion whose legs are not fantastic, but everything else is great, then I have to make sure that my mare has good legs to pass on. Breeding good horses is something that happens over many generations. Everything can be improved upon. It takes knowledge and time and the right breeding "material."

Yes, I would use Spuni. I actually will next year for a half sister of his, a back-breeding onto Alfasteinn. But I have a good idea what I want as a result and what my chances are of getting that result. I also know my mare very, very well.

BREEDING AT ITS BEST

But breeders shouldn't use Spuni indiscriminately. Who wants another Orri fra Thufu? While he is a great stallion and made many first-prize horses, many of his offspring are not useful for trail riding, or work such as sheep gathering. They also do not have a very nice flying pace, rather a racing tolt that is very near pace and often gets labeled pace. Many Orri offspring look like little cows (that's the general consensus among the Icelandic breeders I know) and his legs are not great either. Yet he was used extensively and made many good horses. A big problem now is the limitation of the gene pool. Since he made so many first-prize horses (and often the only one a farmer ever bred with his best mare, who was not necessarily even a second-prize mare), these offspring became breeding horses as well. Thus Orri is in many bloodlines now.

I believe it is better to have many good horses and not indiscriminately use just the one who is the highest-evaluated stallion at the time. You need to carefully plan each breeding. If it means that that highest-evaluated stallion fits well and should be part of it, then so be it. If not, then there are many not-so-highly-evaluated horses out there who can vastly improve the breed. A general rule is to take a good mare and a good stallion, make sure they fit in their attributes and complement each other, and the resulting foal should be better than either parent. If that happens then it was breeding at its best.

TAKING A WALK

BY ALEXANDRA PREGITZER

While my husband and I were taking my 20-year-old gelding Kraftur fra Grafarkoti out on a hike through the woods the other day, I got to thinking how much fun we were having. I began to recall the many times that hand-walking a horse had proved to be extremely helpful. I wondered, Do other people hike with their horses?

When we got home, I Googled the topic in English and German to learn what others do and why. The results did not provide the further input I had hoped for. They were actually rather de-motivating. I read about runaway horses in traffic, the ups and downs of using chains on horses, people on the ground being run over, and other unhappy stories.

One site mentioned that hand-walking or leading horses was one of the most dangerous horse-related activities there is. Well, I thought, no activity with horses is guaranteed to be safe in the first place. Keeping that in mind, I decided to share my positive experiences as a certified Icelandic horse trainer hand-walking horses. Let common sense guide you.

THE PONY FARM

My hand-walking career with horses started when I was eight years old and a little blond skinny kid in an ancient, small German village located in a nature reserve. My father's friend had a pony rental place there where tourists could either rent a pony for their kid or rent the pony plus a person to guide them and hand-walk the pony. I was one of several young hand-walkers. Each of us had a pony we were in charge of. We had to hand-walk the tourists, but we also got to go on crazy adventures in the evenings and off-season. Those adventures are a whole different article—but just imagine a bunch of seven to 14-year-olds without any adults overseeing them, no knowledge of riding lessons, no helmets, taking out bucking Shetland ponies to go picnicking, carriage driving, racing, or swimming in local rivers. We had a blast.

Hand-walking the horses back then fulfilled four main purposes:

1. Keeping the tourist kid on the horse without the horse stopping to eat grass.



Alex Pregitzer on a Sunday walk (or jog) with a good friend. Hand-walking can be a good way to exercise your horse when you can't ride.

2. Making some money that could be invested to support the local bakery.
3. Walking off extra calories from way too many pony treats.
4. More than anything else, learning to keep a close eye on my pony, which basically seemed the most important thing in my life, even though it was not really my pony.

It is unlikely any of the above will apply to your situation with your Icelandic horse (except for maybe the treats) so let's look at some good reasons for us to hand-walk horses.

WARM UP

If I have a trained riding horse that doesn't exhibit any problems, why would I want to hand-walk my horse instead of ride it? First, for warm up. While most of us do their warm up riding the horse at the walk, it can be even more beneficial for horse and rider to warm up the horse in hand. Either hand-walking the horse in the indoor arena before you mount,

doing some ground work as you go, or walking the horse the first mile or so on your trail ride. It is a good idea especially if your horse is younger or older or not in full training.

COOL DOWN

Why not get off the horse and walk him after a great workout in the ring or a fantastic trail ride? Maybe your bones are aching from being in the saddle for a long time. Maybe your horse is tired and thankful to get cooled off without the extra weight on his back? It's a nice way of saying thank you for a great ride.

ENTERTAINMENT

We get bored doing the same things again and again. So do horses. Offer diversity in your training schedule. Longeing, long-lining, ground-driving, jumping, free jumping, dressage, gait training, ground exercises, obstacle parcours, trail riding, mounted games... Why not take your horses out for a walk? A short walk on the farm to enjoy the sunset or a long hike through the woods. My husband and I



Sally introduces the young Lagsi to piles of garbage on the side of the road. Passing the pile a second time, Lagsi was no longer worried about it.

own one horse. Sometimes we are able to borrow a horse for him to ride, other times we go hiking and take our horse with us. It's fun!

RECOVERY

Horses recovering from illness or injury often need to start slowly back to work. Most of us don't own a horse-treadmill or other fancy device to take care of that job, so hand-walking is a great tool. Compared with turnout, the control over the horse's movements is much better, and the horse may enjoy the company, especially if he or she was on stall rest. In any case, hand-walking a horse recovering from illness or injury should be discussed with your veterinarian.

OLDER HORSES

There will come a time when our beloved horses reach an age when they may not want to be ridden any more. For most older horses, regular light exercise is better than no exercise. Hand-walking can provide light exercise but also an opportunity to spend some special one-on-one time with a horse that has provided us with many fun rides. And sometimes there is a meadow with yummy grass to be found on the way.

RIDER FITNESS

Unless you are one of those few people

who own horses but still find time to work out at the gym or pursue any other sports, you can probably use a good walk—no offense intended! Personally, I am huffing and puffing up any hill we encounter and find walking my horse a good workout for myself.

GROUND-DRIVING

After practicing ground-driving in the indoor and outdoor arena with my horse, I knew he was completely comfortable with the surcingle and the long lines and me walking behind him. We are lucky to have lots of gravel roads where we live, and at times I take my horse out ground-driving down the roads for a short excursion. The prerequisite is a horse that is extremely traffic safe, confident, and focused, as it is much more difficult to control every step compared to simple hand-walking. The horse needs to be very familiar with the concept of ground-driving before you venture out. This exercise is also great for walks within a bigger, fenced pasture or on your property.

TRAFFIC SAFETY

Now we'll talk about some applications of hand-walking for young horses or riding horses with "issues." If your horse is not safe to ride on the roads, you may want to start out working with your horse in hand, getting him used to traffic. Having you

close to him and seeing you acting calm often provides a much higher level of security to the horse and helps him to stay calm in a scary situation.

I would not recommend taking a horse that is afraid of cars out into the road right away. Stay on your own property, if possible in a fenced-in area, and expose the horse to cars, tractors, bicycles, lawn-mowers, and other scary things one at a time. Keep the distances relatively large at first, slowly decreasing the distance between the horse and the vehicles. Once the horse is fine with that, you can eventually venture out onto the roads. Pick a road that does not have much traffic, and try to slow down approaching cars. It is easier for most horses to face an approaching object rather than to hear it come up from behind. I turn inexperienced horses towards the oncoming traffic so they can see it. Having a second person with an older, calm horse with you is extremely helpful.

A NEW PLACE

If you are traveling to a show or other event in a location that is new to your horse, it is a very good idea to take your horse for a walk around the grounds before you ride. If you move your horse to a new barn (or move yourselves), or if you have barn-sour horses or horses that are insecure being by themselves, hand-walking can be a good exercise. If you simply don't feel safe riding your horse out by yourself on the trails, there can be a variety of reasons for that. Hand-walking a horse will not provide a cure for all of them, but it may help.

If you usually ride by yourself and you trust your horse, but think that your horse needs a tune-up or has just not been his usual confident self, then you may find it very helpful to start hand-walking your horse. Keep the distances very short at first. In extreme cases of barn sourness or insecurity, your horse may not be comfortable leaving the property alone with you or even walking around a pasture on the property. Always start within the horse's comfort zone. If that comfort zone means taking him once around the indoor arena or down the driveway and back, that's fine. An overwhelmed horse won't be a safe horse, and patience will pay out. You will feel when it is okay to venture out a bit farther, if you listen care-

fully to your horse and watch him well.

YOUNG HORSES

Young horses are basically inexperienced, not used to traffic, and not used to being out by themselves taking a walk with their person. The difference between walking a young horse and the situations described above is that the young horse might still need to learn to lead and listen to voice cues. It might need to be extremely well-prepared before you attempt to hand-walk it anywhere outside of a fenced arena. However, given the right preparation and the right circumstances, hand-walking a young horse can be a fantastic experience for both horse and owner. It is a great opportunity to expose the horse and stimulate it beyond its pasture and barn life. Having a second, older horse along that the young horse knows and trusts can be extremely helpful. Anybody handling young horses should be either trained to do so or extremely experienced and confident.

PONYING OR WALKING

Ponying horses, riding one horse and ponying a second horse off the riding horse, is one of my favorite pasttimes. It is a great way to exercise more than one horse at a time, it is fun for most horses to

be taken out in groups, it is the best way of getting a young horse used to going out trail riding before it starts getting ridden, and it is fun *if* both horses and riders are trained to pony.

Most of the benefits I described would also be true for ponying horses. With one big exception—a horse that does not like to be alone out on the trails won't get used to being alone while being ponied. But ponying may be a good first step before hand-walking that horse.

Some of you may also be alone and not have another horse available, not have another horse suitable for training to pony, or not have a helper to work with. You can teach a horse to pony without a helper but it is more difficult. You definitely need a second horse, and that second horse needs to be well trained and reliable. For those of us, not having access to all that, hand-walking is a good alternative.

HOW-TO

Set yourself up for success with the right tools. If you have a trained riding horse that is well behaved and has never given you any trouble being led, chances are you can put on a pair of gloves, grab your horse, put a halter and a lead rope on him, and take him out for a hike any time and be

relatively safe.

Any other situation needs to be prepared for. If you plan to hand-walk a young horse or any other insecure horse anywhere outside of a fenced area, you should properly prepare yourself as well as the horse by first practicing proper leading inside a fenced area. Make sure your horse understands your voice commands and body language and is responsive to all cues before you venture outside the fenced area. Again, time and patience are important. One practice will not likely do the trick. The horse has to be well trained to lead in its usual environment before attempting to go places that will expose him to much higher levels of stimulation with potentially scary situations.

In any case, the handler of the horse should wear gloves and make sure not to have a loop in the lead rope at any time. Depending on the horse or the situation, it can be a good idea to lead your horse with a rope halter, a chain, or a bridle, instead of a regular halter.

With young horses or insecure horses, it is an excellent idea to take along a second person with a second horse that is older, more experienced, and very confident. The horses look to one another for reassurance, and an older horse can be worth his weight in gold when teaching younger horses.



Alex and the young gelding Vic maneuvering the mud along a stream. Vic decided to jump the worst part. On the way home he took more time and walked through the stream.

AN UNUSUAL CLINIC

BY LANNY L. CARROLL

On August 6-7, 2011, Northstar Farm in southwestern Ohio sponsored a technical gaited schooling show. The clinic went very well, considering the farm lacks either an indoor, covered arena or a hard-packed track to work the horses. Northstar's primary focus is on breeding, but we made do with the front pasture, and there was ample parking for all the rigs and local accommodations for the participants. The event was advertised statewide in the Horsemen's Corral, which is an Ohio-based all-breeds magazine, as well as via email and Facebook. The many types of marketing produced a well-rounded group of attendees.

THE CROWD

Our two certified Icelandic instructors were Alex Pregitzer of 4-Beat LLC in Michigan, and Knutur Berndsen of Pangaea Equestrian Services in New York. The clinic drew eleven riders, including participants from other breeds and disciplines, such as gaited trainers and a 4-H judge, along with newcomers wanting to learn more about their gaited mounts. Participants came from as far away as Pittsburgh.

Veterinarian Mark Ulrich, who has been caring for the Northstar herd since 1995, passed out free samples of his mineral-vitamin mix and answered a variety of equine medical questions posed by the attendees.

We had two 4-H riders, Sydney, who had just won at the Preble County Fair the day before, and Chrissie, who recently ranked 16th out of 113 riders in northeastern Ohio, Mahoning County.

There was the Paso trainer, Loen and his sister Valerie. They had recently returned to Morrow County, Ohio from Florida, after missing high points by one point at the Tampa all-gaited show this past spring with the mare Glaesa US03202554.

We had Larry, a gaited farrier, with his daughter Sydney who brought their Icelandic, Fakur US06103517. Larry's goal was to ensure both his daughter and he



Happy Ashlin and her Spotted Saddle Horse Comanche waiting for their lesson. Ashlin also took a lesson on an Icelandic stallion.

knew how to properly ride and cue for the various speeds of working, pleasure, and loose-rein tolt. Fakur is also being trained for certification with the Ohio Miami Valley Mounted Search & Rescue Operations. The Icelandic horse has a great advantage in this discipline, having leg strength and being sure-footed when climbing or maneuvering in tight areas on undesirable surfaces. Short height plus a good disposition are also an advantage, since it is not uncommon to dismount and mount seven to ten times per hour during a search. That can grow old fast on a tall horse.

For another participant, Brandy, it was like two old comrades coming together after years of separation. Brandy used to show the stallion Funi IS90155595 years earlier at the Columbus, Ohio Equine Affaire and the all-breeds gaited show then held in Dillsburg, Pennsylva-

nia. It was her first exposure to Icelandics as a young person; she is now grown up, a married parent of three and owner of her own training/boarding facility.

Unfortunately, it was very hot. The heat affected all horses and riders. It was especially hard on Karen from Dark County. She brought her mare Lilja US06203460 to learn how to properly finish her training but had to leave the group after her lesson because of the heat. Karen returned the next day ready to finish the clinic! She even persuaded Ashlin's mom, Jennifer to try a lesson, versus just standing on the sidelines watching her daughter ride. It only took a few laps in the round pen to put a smile on Jennifer's face and have her thinking about a horse of her own in the near future.

In addition to the riders, there were two auditors. Valerie and Lisa on occasion acted as stewards, helping groom, tack,

and aid the riders, as instructed by the trainers.

As advertised, walk-ons to the clinic were welcomed and on-lookers, mostly families, set up picnic areas on the front lawn and made a day of it, enjoying the horses with their children. It was good that we had a mini-playground and several bikes and big wheels to keep the children busy. One of the visiting groups provided a little humor, as the family sent text messages via cell phones to their daughter/sister Amy in Texas about where they were and what was happening. At one time Amy was a Montgomery County 4-H competitor; their texts drew pleas for more pictures.

As host, my duties seemed to have me everywhere at once. Standing at the office door looking out to my left, all seemed organized and coordinated as the clinic took place, but to my right looked like total chaos as the kids took to the swing set, slide and bikes and, in one case, the children's pool. A lot of credit goes to a young eight-year-old named Nataley, who was tasked by her mother to keep the children off the parking lot where the rigs and horses were.

THE CLINIC

The clinic started Friday afternoon after the trainers arrived from Michigan and New York. While Alex and Knutur checked out the riding mounts, I was busy sorting and stabling the newcomers. I had already placed the round pen inside the front pasture, which worked out nicely, consolidating all of the training into one location. Prior to Friday, it was non-stop preparing for the clinic, trying to groom three pastures covering 30 acres to prepare for trail riding and making a round-trip visit to Pangaea Equestrian Services in New York to pick up Skuggi US00101607 and Odlingur "Oddi" US06104177. Bringing these two home proved to be a very smart move, as they were in excellent condition and school-trained to handle the various levels of riders we had. By Friday's end it was decided who would ride which horse and a time schedule was established for Saturday morning, made up of a combination of riding or having one's horse(s) professionally assessed by the trainers.

I was in the latter group and had targeted two young stallions, Men-

tor US07104066 and Brellir "Striker" US09104231 and the prize mare Isafold US95200727, to aid in deciding their futures. When presenting these horses we talked openly and invited all to join in deciding whether to continue training and prep for evaluations and competitions or, in the case of the boys, whether to geld each or not. This discussion included a wide array of topics: the make-up of the horses' bloodlines in regards to positive/negative attributes focusing on conformation, gaits, and disposition; funding and time; the current economy and marketing for young offspring, which included the impact of surplus prize stallions recently imported into the U.S. Even my current health status in regards to sponsoring these horses in the future was considered. This was a very informative session for the group, which opened a lot of eyes as to the responsibility of establishing a stallion that meets the standards for improving the breed.

We had Barbara and Jack, owners of three Icelandic horses who had just returned from Iceland and were very enthusiastic about taking part in the clinic. Barbara is small in stature and recovering from a previous injury, not horse-related. It was decided to let her use the stallion Blue Eyes, which at first shook her confidence. Alex explained the process of prepping a stud for evaluations as well as identifying the disposition that needs to be passed on in breeding versus the time put into a trail horse. Barbara could then understand Blue Eyes, and the pair worked together as a team that afternoon. However, it did point out a shortfall on my part. I didn't expect to be using my horses as much as was required, and my stallions were out of shape. I should have worked them no less than a month before in preparation for this event. Alex saw this with Blue Eyes, and on Sunday adjusted Barbara's private lesson to one that he was physically capable of doing, so both horse and rider ended on a positive note.

During the clinic, I was surprised that once one student finished with their lesson they stayed on to watch the next rider or horse being evaluated. This went on all day, both Saturday and Sunday. As a result, there was a lot of information disseminated. In one case the instructors confided to a participant, the Paso trainer, that they felt because of his

knowledge and experience that he wasn't getting anything from the clinic. Loen explained that to receive confirmation that he was doing it right justified the cost of the clinic.

On the spot corrections were made as well, the first being directed at the owner of a beautiful four-year-old gelding spotted racking horse named Comanche. His young rider was expecting too much and pushing a little too hard. Alex pointed out to Ashlin that she was already a good competitor, but if she wanted to train she had to acknowledge Comanche's youth and recognize the power of positive reinforcement.

In another case Knutur basically sent the stallion Funi to the showers, noting to the group that the "Old Man" had served his time, he doesn't have to showboat anymore—though his appearance was welcomed, considering many in attendance owned Funi offspring.

Running back and forth I didn't see all that was happening, and at one point thought there must have been an accident, seeing Knutur with Jack working with Oddi from the ground. As it turns out, Jack wanted to be taught how to train his untrained young horse back home. Jack also gets credit for asking the most



Alex introduced gaited horse rider Ashlin to Icelandic horses, with the help of the Northstar stallion known as "Blue Eyes."



Clinic participants Loen and Valerie were exclusively Paso riders and trainers until they discovered Icelandics. Here they pose with their Icelandic horses and the many ribbons they won at the All Gaited Breed Show at the Florida State Fair just before the clinic.

creative question, which also pointed out to the instructors to clarify that the questions and answers applied to equines only! Jack's query brought smiles on local faces and surprised both Alex and Knutur with: "Why do we cut the tassels off corn?"

By the end of the weekend I believe everyone came away with the satisfaction of attending a very educational hands-on clinic geared for the Midwest. In addition to the different levels of riding, approximately 15 young horses were looked at by Alex and Knutur, either in the round pen or walking with the herd. We all worked together in advising how to start the training process with the young horses. Even Mother Nature helped by waiting approximately 15 minutes after the last two riders finished before letting go with a down-pour. In addition to training, two horses were signed over to new customers with another two pending sale. Even the broodmares came through, with six of seven foals being born right before the clinic.

LESSONS LEARNED

If I were to do this clinic over again, I would most certainly have acquired a staff so I could participate in the clinic myself. Of key importance to me is how to keep my individual riding mounts tuned up. I personally would like to make this an annual event to promote the gaited horse, with the goal of possibly having a sanctioned show in the future. Of course making my young stock available for sale to experienced gaited owners would be a

great plus. It was also a nice gesture from Alex to offer discounts on training Northstar horses to their new owners.

As a result of the clinic and prior meeting with my financial planner, I was able to come up with goals for the future, with the objective of breeding four and five-gaited Icelandic horses for the family market by striving to:

- Continue to breed focusing on the economy and demand.
- Retire horses before they reach the age of 25, allowing them the opportunity to be someone else's companion.
- Continue to participate at the Columbus Equine Affaire to support and promote the breed, farm, and now gaited schooling clinics.
- Support other gaited schooling shows in Ohio by providing riding mounts.

It is my hope that after hearing about this clinic others will come together and organize additional clinics in or near Ohio where many Icelandic horse owners reside. The availability of more clinics would offer owners of Icelandic and other gaited breeds in Ohio wonderful opportunities to learn. It would be nice to have clinics focusing on trail riding, which is the easiest and most economical means of using and showing the horse in Ohio. Often with the Icelandic breed, we focus only on how to move the horse through the different gaits on the

straight or oval tack. I believe we should also recognize the technical discipline, safety, yet freedom and fellowship of being on the trail as well!

Because of the economy, finances are tight and now a number of us have to pick and choose what equine organizations we wish to be members of. Likewise, breed loyal organizations which operated alone in the past are now opening up their shows to all breeds to help fund their events. Knowing how other gaited breeds or specific equine disciplines show makes for good public relations when adding Icelandics into the mix. We have the horses, but need to educate our riders, meaning we need clinics or school/fun shows to build technique and confidence. Based on the response to this clinic I too will plan for another schooling clinic the second weekend in September 2012. It will be open to all gaited breeds, with the clinic tailored to the needs and interests of the participants and the day will include young horse assessment.

This clinic was slow to come into existence because I used an inner circle of friends in an open forum to bring it all together from planning stages, logistics, to implementation. It may have hurt the number of attendees, but in the long run made the event a success. There is plenty of room for improvement on my part, but I really don't think I could have asked or planned for a better group of people that attended. For whatever reason, it seemed easier for me to grasp certain concepts watching other breeds being worked and riders riding within frame, the similarity and differences of how the beats of a gait fell and the different terminology for each breed being used. All participants seemed to be courteous and mindful of others, regardless of the horse and/or rider's skill level and, in a nutshell, we all had fun! With the next clinic maybe we can include a shoeing and possibly one or more driving demonstrations as well.

Finally, I wanted to take this opportunity to congratulate six-year-old Luke and his newly acquired filly Kaeti US0920418, who was purchased at the clinic. Within two weeks of the clinic this young pair won first place in lead line at the Canfield, Ohio Fair, the third largest fair in the U.S. Even the judge commented, encouraging these two to grow up together. Happy Trails!

THE LONG RIDE

BY ALYS CULHANE

I mountain-biked solo from Roosevelt, MT to Antelope Wells, NM in 2002. Afterward, I determined that I'd like to do the same 2,000-mile route on horseback. I didn't believe I'd pull this one off. I didn't own a horse then, and had no trail-riding experience. We moved from Montana to Alaska in 2003. My proposed trek now seemed like a complete impossibility since southcentral Alaska was even more distant from my proposed starting point. But I again got to thinking that I could do a long ride after I purchased my first Icelandic horse, Raudhetta (or Raudi). I must have sounded convincing, because four years later, Pete (my husband) agreed to come along. Together we began dealing with what, for the next three years, was a seemingly endless list of what-ifs.

We did a shorter, two-month, 500-mile version of the above-mentioned trip this past spring and summer. Afterward, I concluded that what-ifs are two-sided. You can either use them to convince yourself that the trip in question is too dangerous, and put the very notion of travel out of your mind, or you can take them into consideration when planning and carrying out your adventure. We did the latter. There are, of course, also unforeseen what-ifs. We dealt with them by remaining flexible in the face of supposed adversity.

PREPARATIONS: PALMER, ALASKA

The Anticipated: What if we have a horse or human-related accident or illness? What if we run out of food in the backcountry? What if we get lost? What if a bear decides to disembowel us, our horses, or our dog? What if we can't find anyone to care for our animals and our home when we're out of town?

My most pressing fear was that I'd be at a loss if (heaven forbid) we ever had to deal with horse and/or human-related injury or sickness. I reckoned with the internal paralysis that accompanied these musings by taking several veterinary tech courses at the local college and afterward, a nine-day wilderness responder course. In addition, I read everything that I could



Alys Culhane on Raudhetta and Pete Praetorius on Sigg, with Signy as their pack horse, head out from Andrea Brodie's Lough Arrow Icelandics at the start of their 500-mile ride through Colorado. Photo by Andrea Brodie.

find on the subjects of equine and human first aid. I also enlisted the assistance of our veterinarian, who prior to our departure carefully answered Pete's and my innumerable health-related questions. Dr. Wellington also examined our first aid kit, which when complete included Bute and Banamine. He suggested that we also carry surgical hose, and when asked what it was for, explained that should a horse get bitten by a rattlesnake, that its nose might swell. The inserted hose would enable the horse to continue breathing.

Pete and I also reduced the likelihood of there being an accident by becoming more adept trail riders. Tinni, our older, more experienced horse, was an excellent teacher. And by the time we were ready to leave, Sigg, age seven, and Raudi, age eight, were fairly trail savvy. My co-founding a local Back Country Horsemen of Alaska affiliate led to my going to the Nine Mile Ranger Station in Missoula,

MT. There I took a four-day Leave No Trace course and learned the very basics of horse packing.

Pete and I had previously done lengthy bicycle tours, and in 2001 spent two months sea kayaking Alaska's Inside Passage. Thus, we were adept at preparing and cooking backcountry meals. In preparation for our venture, we dehydrated the bulk of our food, dried fruit, sauces, and soups included. Additionally, a friend agreed to mail food boxes and horse supplements to pre-determined locations.

Pete took on the role of logistics expert. Beforehand, he pored over innumerable maps and charted out our route. He also talked with U.S. Forest Service representatives, and acquired additional trail specifics. He eventually suggested that we ride south to north, saying that forage would be more plentiful, to which I agreed.

Pete also assisted with gear selection



Pete leads Signy across a bridge on Clear Creek.

and repair. We ordered a new saddle for Raudi, a bitless bridle for Sigg, a pack saddle, saddle pads, rigging, ropes, shipping boots, feed bags, collapsible water bags, and hobbles. We also economized by ordering a new tent pole for our older two-person tent, and sewing the rips in our down sleeping bags.

Wildlife-related what-ifs surfaced repeatedly. We opted not to bring firearms, but did carry pepper spray. In addition, we took bear behaviorist Steve Stringham's semester-long college course. And, as in the past, we packed ropes and dry bags, so that we'd be able to tie up our food when in camp.

We planned on taking two riding, and one pack horse. However, we owned a two-horse trailer. And additionally, high altitudes would be hard on Tinni, who



Signy at the stock tank on Moon Pass.

has heaves. A solution materialized in a near-serendipitous fashion. Last January, Andrea Brodie of Lough Arrow Icelandics in Gulnare, CO agreed to lend us Signy fra Dareag Dair.

Parting out our animals was a piecemeal affair. A friend took on our three goats and three chickens, and a house sitter agreed to watch one of our two dogs. And we found summer lodging for Tinni.

EN ROUTE: ALASKA TO COLORADO

The Anticipated: What if we can't find places to stay at night? What if we err while in transit, and one or both of our beloved horses colics and dies?

The Alaska-Canada Highway is over 2,000 miles in length, and in stretches it lacks what I consider to be essential services, such as horse hotels. We knew this and, beforehand, purchased portable fence accoutrements: braided wire, fence poles, electric charger, and a grounding rod included. We also sought advice from those who'd previously hauled horses to and from the Lower 48. And car reading material included the *Milepost*, a comprehensive travel-related information source.

I checked off items on my clipboard list on the morning of our departure, of course making sure that we had the green folder with the horses' health paperwork. Lastly, we loaded up Raudi and Sigg, who stepped up into our new two-horse trailer. Pete and I then began adhering to a predetermined routine. We stopped every two hours en route, opened the side windows, and offered our so-called "circus ponies" hay and water baited with either apple cider vinegar or hay pellets.

We spent our first evening in Tok, AK with friends who had a corral. We seques-

tered the horses in the portable fence on the second and third nights of trailer travel. On Day Four we discovered that most places in British Columbia and points beyond have fairgrounds or rodeo grounds. It was May, early in the riding season, so we had these places to ourselves. We checked the pens for glass, metal, and other sharp objects before unloading the horses. As for our lodging—we either set up our tent, or slept in the truck bed.

The Unanticipated: What if we can't get into Canada?

Beaver Creek, Yukon Territory, is located in the middle of nowhere. There are no coffee shops, stores, or print shops, just a handful of stunted spruce trees, burn barrels, and a one-story customs office.

We drove up to the window, and handed the agent our passports. He glanced at them, and then asked for the horses' papers. Pete handed him this information. He disappeared, then after an interminable amount of time, returned and said that we had two copies of Raudi's Coggins test results, but no copies of Sigg's. Pete deduced that the federal veterinarian had messed up when returning our paperwork.

The customs agent told us to "pull over to the right." The implication was that we, and we alone, would have to figure out a solution. We glumly parked in the area I dubbed Customs Limbo, that place to which travelers who don't fully have their act together are sent. My unexpressed thought was that there was to be no going back. I'd unload Raudi, put her gear in a plastic bag, tie it to my saddle, continue on down the road, and send Pete and Sigg home. Pete's expressed thought was that we call Dr. Wellington and have him email the customs agent the correct form.

Our veterinarian wasn't sitting by



Alys and Raudhetta at Eagle's Rest summit in Vail, CO.

the phone, waiting for us to call; however, he eventually sent the customs agent the additional paperwork. In response to my question, Might we make a copy of Siggí's test result? I was told, "Lady, this ain't no Kinkos!" It was probably for the best that he didn't hear what I mumbled, which was that having one here in the hinterlands would sure be handy.

PREPARATIONS: GULNARE, COLORADO

The Anticipated: What if the loaner horse is too difficult for us to handle? What if we have more gear than she can carry?

Andrea Brodie had previously provided us with background information on the mare she called Signy the Beast. "She's a good mare," her owner said. "She's powerful, and where she walks, no grass remains. She's also hard of character, but will listen to you. But you must be careful, because she can be difficult to catch." Andrea was correct. Signy, who was at first hard to catch, was willing, polite, and self confident. An added plus was that she got along well with Siggí and Raudi.

We began packing early on the morning of May 17. I'd winnowed the gear pile down considerably, but not enough. It was with some reluctance that we jettisoned what previously had been essential items: laptop computer, additional notebooks, solar charger, and extra horse and human footwear included. I rued the fact that we had thirty pounds of dog food, and a full drybag stashed on nearby Cordova Pass, but agreed with Pete that we couldn't send Rainbow (our dog) home.

Pat, Pete's brother, was to accompany us to southern New Mexico and then, a few days later, take the trailer back to Andrea's. However, he decided to return to California before we were ready to leave. This turned out to be fortuitous as it was a bad fire year in the Southwest. So we packed and repacked, making sure that the load was even on both sides.

The Unanticipated: What if I can't pony Rainbow?

I presumed that because I was able to pony 800-pound Siggí, I'd have no problem ponying a 50-pound dog. I presumed wrong. We mounted up, and one of Andrea's cats walked under Raudi's legs. Rainbow lunged for it, and I dropped the rope. Pete dismounted, handed Siggí and Signy to Andrea and her friend Loren, and

took off after her. A tight-lipped Pete finally handed me the grinning dog. We continued across Andrea's property, and out onto the road. A mile out, and I declared that I couldn't both hang on to Raudi's reins and Rainbow's line. Pete suggested that we fasten our ski-joring quick release to the D Ring of my saddle. This worked, and we continued on our way.

ON THE TRAIL: SOUTHERN COLORADO

The Anticipated: What if we can't find water, forage, or campsites? And what if we're unable to locate good farriers when we need them?

We headed over Cordova Pass, in the direction of the San Luis Valley. In the spring, the valley is hot, windy, and dusty. We found water in irrigation ditches and forage by the roadsides. As we progressed, finding places to camp became increasingly more difficult, because most of the land in this area is privately owned. Locals let us put our horses in backyard corrals and ranchers let us camp on their land. Grass hay was practically non-existent, which was why we grazed the horses whenever possible. Water sources included stock tanks and, one evening, an artesian well that was on BLM land.

As for shoeing—we got lucky. Two chance, roadside meetings led to making an acquaintance with farriers, one of whom gave us an assist when we were further north. Thus, we were able to keep the horses in shoes the entire trip.

The Unanticipated: What if Raudi spooks, shies, or bolts?

Signy, who was from Ireland, was a world traveler. However, Siggí and Raudi had never before seen irrigation systems, odd-looking domestic animals, backpackers, or road construction equipment. And so, in this respect, this trip was an instance of trial by fire. A case in point: A week into it Raudi, who'd up until now been doing just fine, began chuffing. The predator in question wasn't, as it would be at home, a junked car, but rather, a tire on a fencepost. I froze, as a road grader rumbled up behind us. Raudi, who was by now beside herself, did a tap dance that would have made Fred Astaire proud. I pointed her in the direction of a sparse patch of brown-green grass. Raudi ignored Mr. Road Grader, who smiled and waved.

We continued on, that is until Mr.



Signy at Del Norte, CO.

Road Grader turned around. Pete suggested that we turn down a nearby side road, to which I agreed. "Look," he said. A handful of loose horses were trotting in our direction. Siggí grew wide-eyed, and Raudi, who was in season, neighed loudly. I released Rainbow's line. The horses and the grader grew closer. I dismounted, and watched from the ground as a burly white guard dog dove through a nearby barbwire fence, and a mule appeared on the far side of the road. I hung on to Raudi, and attempted to keep her from getting entangled in a nearby snarl of barbed wire.

Then I saw a snake slithering through the sagebrush! "Rattler!" I yelled. Pete's response, that it was a bull snake, and therefore quite harmless, had a somewhat calming effect. It occurred to me to do as my yoga teacher said, and put myself in the present moment by breathing. The present didn't look too good, so I thought about how I'd erred in leaving Alaska. Mr. Road Grader stopped at the intersection. We walked the horses past the machine, retrieved our dog, and headed down the road. The stray horses followed, and then lost interest in Mae West, who with her hips swinging from side-to-side, encouraged the big boys to follow.

ATTITUDE AND ALTITUDE: CENTRAL COLORADO

The Anticipated: What if we or the horses have difficulty acclimating to the higher elevations?

I did some research, and discovered that little, if anything, has been written about acclimating horses to high altitudes. I'd considered bringing oxygen tanks along, like they do when climbing Everest, but rightly figured that we'd then have to feed a dozen-or-so sherpas. I



Crossing Cumberland Pass in Colorado, the trekkers encountered unexpectedly deep snowfields.

finally decided that should any of us show signs of distress, we'd retreat to pre-determined base camps.

Early on, Pete and I both experienced shortness of breath. However, the horses thrived on the rarified air. This was especially true of Siggie, who by the summer's end was outpacing his supposed stronger half-sister.

The Unanticipated: What if, for snow-related reasons, we can't make it over given passes?

"It's been a heavy snow year!" This oft-repeated statement was true. We dealt with our first snow-related impasse outside of Cuchara, CO by taking an offered stock trailer ride to nearby Smith Reservoir. Nevertheless, we were determined to get over 12,015-foot Cumberland Pass. Not even a (supposed) snow berm was going to stop us. We got to the top in record time, and unpacked Signy. Pete then began leading her across the firm footing. I gasped as she hit a soft spot, and sunk to her knees, then breathed a sigh of relief as she scrambled to the far side of the drift. We tied her to a bush, retrieved Raudi and Siggie, carried our gear to the far side of the mound, and repacked.

Our celebratory activity (which consisted of Pete's taking a photo of me on Raudi) was premature, for there was more snow ahead. Pete suggested that we take the narrow side-trail that hugged the edge of the pass. To our left was a steep drop off, and to our right, loose scree. I wasn't too keen on traversing this half-mile section, but like Pete, I didn't want to backtrack. It was getting late. Stormclouds were rolling in. And furthermore, we were a mere eight miles from Tincup, CO and our supposed mail drop. So off we went, with Raudi and me boldly going where no horse and rider had ever gone

before.

We were about a quarter-mile into the ride, and in fact could see the downhill road leading to the day's destination. It was then that the best-laid plans went awry. "Pete," I yelled, "Look straight ahead!" He groaned as he saw what I saw: The trail ended at the top of an abandoned mine shaft. We dismounted, and Pete removed the orange shovel from Signy's pack. For the next hour, the three horses and I watched the orange-coated figure fling snow over the trail's edge.

I pictured us slipping and sliding downhill, into an unfathomable abyss. An hour later, Raudi, who was hungry, took matters into her own hooves. She yanked the reins out of my hand, did a neat little pivot, then raced, bucking and snorting, back up-trail. The subsequent scene resembled an illustration in Dr. Seuss's *Oh, the Places You'll Go*: Siggie followed Raudi, Signy followed Siggie, I followed Siggie, and Pete followed me across the lunar-like landscape.

We retreated, first doing the berm crossing in reverse, and then making our way back down to Granite Creek Campground. Undaunted, we tried to get to Tincup via Shaw Ridge. Finally, we conceded defeat, and took a route that was considerably more circuitous. Afterward, there were several more pass-related detours. The up-side was that we saw more of CO than we'd expected. The down-side was that we didn't go as far north as we had originally planned.

TRIP'S END: NORTHERN COLORADO

What if . . . indeed.

We concluded our 56-day, 500-mile unsupported trek at the base of the Vail, CO ski slopes. It was mid-July, and Pete

needed to get ready for the upcoming teaching year. I had a decision to make, which was whether or not to continue on solo. I first considered the pros, which were that the horses and I were having a wonderful time and wanted to keep on going. Then I considered the cons. Traveling alone would create logistical complications. Pete could take Siggie home. However, I'd need to find a way of getting Raudi home and Signy back to Andrea's. Plus I'd also have to spend considerable time obtaining the border-crossing paperwork. The cons outweighed the pros when I considered this: Traveling long-distance by horseback in the back-country *is* dangerous, for as we'd learned, unstable footing, steep passes, and late afternoon thunderstorms are the norm. I might be able to deal with unforeseen, but I didn't want to chance it.

I informed Pete of my decision, and that night we celebrated the conclusion of our journey by eating dinner in Vail's East Village. Over pizza, we talked about the trip home. As planned, Pete took the Greyhound bus south, picked up the trailer, and returned to our ski slope campsite. We loaded up the three horses, and then on the return trip did trailer-supported trail rides. Readers take note: I wrote, "We loaded up the *three* horses." Yes, we purchased Signy, who next spring will be part of Long Ride, Part II. We'll continue where we left off, and ride from southern Wyoming to northern Montana. Any takers? We'd like it if other Icelandic horse owners accompanied us.

To learn more about this year's trip, read my dispatches on www.alysculhane.com.

SPLITTING HAIRS

BY JESS HAYNSWORTH

If you have been involved with Icelandic horses for an extended period of time, then chances are you have encountered a horse whose crest has “fallen over.” This problem is most common in stallions, as they naturally have thicker manes and heavier necks than mares, but it can happen to any horse whose mane is thick and falls on only one side of the neck. Once a neck has “fallen over,” it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to fix it. Not only is a “fallen over” neck unsightly, it is also very damaging to the horse’s balance and flexibility (imagine slinging an extremely heavy backpack over just one of your shoulders, and then trying to run evenly). Good training and riding is an important part of keeping your horse’s crest muscles strong and evenly developed, which helps to prevent a neck falling over. But even if your horse doesn’t have a mane that is thick enough to pull the neck over, a one-sided mane will always have a negative effect on his balance. Fortunately, there is a solution: splitting your horse’s mane.

Similar to the way “big horse” people often pay professional braiders to plait their horses’ manes before a competition, when I lived in Iceland I would occasionally split manes for a small fee the night before a sport competition, in addition to splitting the manes of all of my boss, Baldvin Ari Gudlaugsson’s horses. It is illegal to have bands in your horse’s mane during a breeding evaluation, so if you are competing in breeding, you have to take the bands out right before the horse goes in to be judged for conformation. For sport competitions, however, it is legal and makes the horse’s neck look much nicer.

I also split the manes of the young horses I was training, if they had one-sided manes. This helped their necks to develop evenly, and made them much more comfortable in their jobs. More than once, when I got older horses in for training, I corrected serious balance and anxiety issues by splitting their manes. A horse that cannot hold himself evenly is uncomfortable in his job and can



Thor competing with his mane split. “Notice how much cleaner his topline looks now, that the mane is parted,” Jessica says. “It is much easier to see how nice his neck is.”

often become anxious. Also, if a horse is naturally a bit tense, being able to watch what the rider is doing out of only one eye, because all of his mane is on one side, can make him even more uneven. Splitting the mane blocks the horse’s view of the rider, and often these tense horses became much more relaxed almost immediately after their manes were split. I was so excited by the positive results I got from splitting my horses’ manes, that I wrote this tutorial on how to do it.

PRACTICE & PATIENCE

Before I begin, let me say that there are many ways to split a mane. This is my way, a way that I have found to be very successful, quick, and easy. It takes practice and patience to be able to do this quickly and well. I have been told that I am very good and very quick, and it still takes me about 20 minutes per horse, after the mane has been washed. If you are trying to make a horse’s mane split permanently, some

people may tell you to braid the clumps, rather than just banding them. In my experience, braiding the mane pulls out more hair, because the plait pulls on the roots of the hair. Banding has proven itself to me as the most gentle method, but you should check the bands every day to make sure that they aren’t pulling out mane if you are going to leave them in for an extended period of time. They will probably have to be redone every two weeks if your horse’s mane doesn’t stay split when you take them out.

About half of the manes that I have split before a competition have stayed split forever afterwards, and about half haven’t. There is no guarantee that your horse’s mane will ever stay split without your help. Hair type, natural cowlicks, and hair length are all factors that vary from horse to horse. My competition horse, Thor, has a long but not very thick mane. It doesn’t pull his neck either way, but I split it before competitions to make



All washed and brushed straight back, Thor's mane is ready to be parted and banded.

his neckline more visible and attractive. His mane has never stayed split, even though the neck does not fall one way or another. That is just the luck of the draw.

SUPPLIES

What you will need:

A large nail (the kind for hammering).

Tiny braiding rubberbands in the color of your horse's mane—no “fun” colors! (These can be purchased very cheaply at your local tack shop.)

A brush or comb. I like “Tail Tamer” brushes, because the curve in the brush and the flexible bristles pull out less hair.

Mane and tail shampoo.

HOW TO SPLIT A MANE

1. Wash the mane. A wet mane is much easier to work with, and has a much better chance of staying split permanently. Shampoo thoroughly into the roots of the hair, because these will be exposed when the mane is split and no one wants to see clean ends and dirty roots. Do not use conditioner: this will make the mane slippery and harder to work with. Rinse *very* well. You don't want leftover shampoo drying out your horse's skin and making him itchy.

2. Brush the mane free of tangles. Do not add any leave-in conditioner or spray-in detangle products, as these will make the mane (and your fingers) slippery and harder to work with.

3. Brush the mane back, down the crest, so that it does not fall to either side, but straight back.

4. Using your nail, start at the poll and part the mane all the way down the crest. Be sure to make the part as close to the center as possible, so that equal amounts of mane fall on each side of the neck.

5. Comb out both sides of the mane, so that they are again free of tangles, and the part is clear of flyaways. You should be able to look down at your part and see the skin of your horse's crest. At this point, it is very important not to leave your horse unattended. Why? Because if he is anything like my Thor, he will not be particularly thrilled to stand tied in your barn aisle with wet hair while his friends are out playing, and he will probably shake his head around and ruin your beautiful part.

6. Now we begin to separate the mane into the pieces that we will band. Make these about half an inch wide, each. Wider sections will not stay in as well, especially if your horse likes to play with his friends and roll around a lot like mine does. Smaller sections are unnecessary. The mane will look just as good with half-inch sections, and there is no need to

make more work for yourself. Your horse will be impatient enough with standing still as it is. Separating and banding the mane is a process that takes me about 20 minutes, but it might take longer if this is your first time.

7. Begin at the poll. Some people like to begin at the withers, but I always begin at the poll. Why? Because if your horse is impatient, getting him to stand still enough so that you can separate the hair at his poll is almost impossible. I find it best to get this out of the way early on, when he is perhaps not quite so impatient yet. With younger horses, once I have gotten past the mid-point of the neck, if they are being particularly fidgety I sometimes allow them to eat hay out of a manger while I work. They should not eat hay off the ground, though, because their necks will be stretched down and it will affect how tight and well separated your bands are.

8. Using your nail, start at the part and drag the nail toward you, creating a straight line that separates the mane into a half-inch-wide clump.

9. Hold the clump straight up. Wrap the band three or four times around the base of the clump. Take care not to get any stray hairs from other parts of the mane banded in with this clump. Tighten afterwards.

10. Repeat all the way down the neck.

11. Now is the time to add your leave-in



Close-up of how to use a nail to divide the cleaned, parted, and well-combed mane into clumps for banding.

conditioners or spray-in products. Brush through the mane, adding whatever you normally add. Do not, however, add MTG, a popular hair-growth product. This product works very well, and I personally love it for use on horses that itch and rub their manes, but I learned the hard way that if you use this on a split mane, it will eat through your rubber bands over night and you will have to start all over.

People often worry that their horses will rub out their manes if the bands are left in while the horses are unattended. While I have seen this happen when the clumps are braided, if a horse is rubbing his neck with the bands in, the bands will loosen and eventually pull out without really damaging the mane. However, as I said before, if you are leaving the bands in for an extended period of time, you should check them regularly to make sure that they aren't pulling out hair, and you should redo them every two weeks in most cases.



All finished. The mane is neatly divided while wet; the bands keep it parted while it dries and for up to two weeks afterwards. Some manes stay permanently divided once they are split, but many don't.

THE MANE DIFFERENCE

BY MICHELE TRAPP

Oh, those manes! Glorious, flowing, lustrous, thick manes. Watching them blow in the wind during tolt is captivating to the human. To the Icelandic horse, the thick mane serves him well in the climatic conditions he's typically accustomed to. Once in a while they even help with those pesky flies.

All this beauty is attached to the crest of the horse's neck. The crest is formed by a nuchal ligament, which is a strong elastic and tendon-like structure. The nuchal ligament supports and holds the horse's head in position and allows the head to be raised and lowered. Healthy elasticity protects against muscle exertion while grazing. It is one of the most important structures that influence the support of the horse's back.

The integrity of the nuchal ligament can be affected by nutrition, too much exercise, incorrect development, or poor saddle fit. The result is that the horse's posture and performance are compromised.

MUSCLE GROUPS

A crest that becomes heavy and leans to one side will interfere with cervical flexion. When the vertebrae become compressed, nerves leading to internal systems can also be affected. Careful building and strengthening of the following muscle groups will help maintain the integrity of the nuchal ligament.

1. *The longis coli:* This is the root and main support of the neck. Working with the scalene muscles, they are responsible for raising the base of the neck and initiating the telescoping gesture. A tense trapezius can interfere with movement.
2. *The cervical trapezius:* This attaches to the neck and pulls the shoulder forward. When working with the thoracic trapezius, it acts to pull the shoulder upward. A tense trapezius will interfere with the movement of the shoulder.

3. *The thoracic trapezius:* This attaches to the thoracic spine and pulls the shoulder backward. When working with the cervical trapezius, it acts to pull the shoulder upward. When it is correctly developed, the horse works in a more balanced frame.
4. *The brachiocephalic muscle:* This begins at the atlas and pulls the limb forward after the hoof leaves the ground, raises in collection, extends the shoulder, and bends the head and neck. Too strong a rein contact prevents free forward movement.

MAINTENANCE

Some helpful suggestions to maintain and restore the efficiency and balance of the crest:

1. *Braid the mane to the opposite side.* Use the heavy, thick mane as a tool. This will help restore tautness to the side it is leaning to and increase the elasticity on the side it is pulling on. It will also reduce nerve compression.
2. *A combination of massage and specific exercises.* This depends on the needs of the individual muscle groups and the horse's specific situation. Try brushing the mane to the opposite side while rocking the crest and holding for 10 seconds and releasing.
3. *A good nutritional program.* Designed for building lean, strong muscle free of lactic acid buildup. Identify and address the source of any fat deposits along your horse's body.
4. *Natural feeding.* Help your horse build his muscles naturally by feeding and watering him at ground level.

Keeping those manes in tiptop shape is just more than aesthetic. It can affect you and your horse's performance for years to come.

Michele Trapp is an Equi-Pro Peak Performance therapist at Holly Acres Farm, Cedar Hill, TN.

A PORTABLE LONGEING CIRCLE

BY NICKI ESDORN

Every time I go back to Iceland for my Icelandic training and riding “fix,” I find something really helpful and interesting that I did not even know I was missing.

Several years ago I walked into the beautiful indoor ring at Thingeyrar and found an assembly of what looked like small plastic feed buckets filled with concrete with pieces of pipe stuck into them. A young trainer was busy drawing a circle on the ground with the help of a longe line and a stick. She set up the buckets like the numbers on a clock on the circle line and connected the pipes with a bright plastic tape about three feet from the ground. Bingo! A “round pen” that probably cost less than \$50.

A VISUAL BOUNDARY

During that trip I also learned how to use the double longe and found the visual boundary that this “round pen” provided extremely helpful for the horse and me. *Visual boundary* is the operative word here. This is not a solid round pen made of tall metal parts designed to keep a horse safely inside. It is extremely impor-

tant that the pipes are connected with a soft and breakable tape so no one can get tangled up in rope when things go wrong. For free longeing one must have a solid metal round pen. For work with a double longe and as a training aid to keep to a nice round circle line when riding or doing groundwork, this contraption works great.

It is a good idea to change the position of the circle every few weeks so the ground does not get compacted along the track. It only takes a few minutes! Sometimes I set up the pipe buckets to ride serpentine around them or in another pattern to practice accuracy. I can create a partition of the ring if I need specific measurements for practicing a drill routine. These portable and sturdy posts come in handy for a lot of things—but never to tie a horse to!

Introduce your horse to the new contraption from the ground. If you place the circle in an outdoor ring, the plastic tape can flutter in the breeze. Lead your horse calmly around the outside and inside of the circle from both sides so it gets the idea.

DOUBLE LONGE

A beautiful demonstration of how to use a double longe can be seen on Benni Lindal’s “Training” video. It is a very useful exercise to teach a horse to stretch down and walk and trot using the correct muscles—to relax the back and build stomach muscles without the interference or the weight of a rider. It is very important that the longe lines are loose, the weight and set-up of the longe alone does the work. The horse can easily follow the visual cue of the circle tape.

As always, when you start a new exercise, break it up into easy steps. Get the horse used to the longeing surcingle and all those long lines around him. Ask a friend to walk at the horse’s head until it is completely comfortable with the exercise. It takes a bit of practice from the longeing person to handle the lines as softly as reins, especially if you also have to hold a longeing whip. Your body language and voice tell the horse to go and stop.

Why double longe, one might ask? Wouldn’t a single one do the same job?



Longeing on a double longe in the circle. Says Nicki, “I really like this photo of Haukur Freyr trotting in a nice frame, being very relaxed. I am gently encouraging with my body language, and the longe lines are loose like they are supposed to be.”



his photo shows how the set-up looks from the outside. It's only a visual aid, not a sturdy pen.

And why not simply put the horse in side reins?

Longeing on a single longe is often used with big horses to "take the edge off" a fresh horse before you ride. If you have a solid ring or round pen, I would prefer free play with a fresh Icelandic to get some release of energy, rather than hanging on the end of a longe line and pulling on its head or even mouth.

Longeing a fresh horse in this longe-



Close-up of a bucket, pipe, and tape array—the building blocks of your longeing circle.

ing circle, however, is asking for trouble. Once it learns it can get away from you and break the plastic or jump over it you have lost the game.

Longeing on a single longe line also will not achieve what the double longe does: teach the horse to stretch down and bend and develop correct muscling in a frame.

To tie a horse in position in side reins can make it feel quite claustrophobic. My gelding could not trot in a circle on a double longe in the beginning. Whenever he lost his balance he needed to catch himself with a few tolt steps and raise his neck. It took a while for him to develop the muscles and balance, and I had to be ready to always give and softly get him back to trot.

I also use the longeing circle for riding and teaching. I go in the ring for a warm up before a trail ride and use it for bending and leg-yielding exercises. It makes it easy for a rider to concentrate more on herself while the trained horse follows the track of the circle.

The "Portable Longeing Circle" does not replace a solid round pen, but it is an inexpensive necessity for double longeing and a great teaching and training aid. I would not want to be without one!

HERE IS THE HOW TO:

You will need:

- 12 small buckets (about 7" diameter)
- 12 pieces of 1" plastic pipe, 36" long (have them cut it to size at the hardware store)

Quick-set concrete (the "just add water" kind)

- Clothesline and duct tape
- two sturdy chairs or stepladders
- 1" wide plastic flagging tape (that you can tear by hand)

Use a garage or other temperate indoor area where the buckets will not be disturbed while the concrete sets. Spread layers of newspaper on the ground. Divide the concrete mix evenly in the buckets, filling them to about 1.5 inches below the top. Slowly add water while stirring the mix into a thick paste. Set the buckets up in a straight line close together. Place a chair or stepladder at each end. Tie the clothesline between these at about 3 feet off the ground, over the middle of the buckets. Now place the pipes nice and straight into the buckets and tape them to the clothes line, so they stay vertical while the cement sets fully. Walk away and do not disturb for a day or two or until completely set!

SET UP:

Place one pipe bucket at the center of your intended longeing circle. Slip the loop of your longe line over the pipe and walk out to the end. Using your heel or a stick, mark a circle around the middle, the radius being the length of the longe. Put away your longe line and replace the center pipe bucket with a small cone. Place one pipe bucket on the circle line and one directly opposite, using the cone to sight a straight line. Then put one bucket at 3 o'clock and one at 9 and divide the rest up evenly. String the plastic tape along at the top of the pipes, and tie a loop at the end, so you can use the last space as a "gate." Done!



Here's a close-up of how to hold the longe line in loops, not wrapped around your hand.

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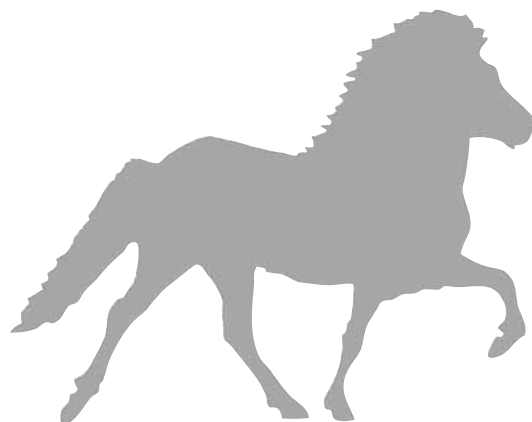
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