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ISSUE ONE

THE

2016

# ICELANDIC HORSE

Q U A R T E R L Y



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

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Photo Martina Gates



# The 4th annual **NEIHC OPEN**

USIHC Sanctioned Show

**July 30 & 31, 2016**

Judge: Thorgeir Gudlaugsson

## **NEIHC 2016 Events!**

March 5: Annual meeting and Thorrablot party

June: Schooling Show

July 30 and 31: NEIHC Open Sanctioned Show hosted by Thor Icelandics, Pre-show clinic with Nicole Kempf

August: Games Day!

Check our website [www.neihc.com](http://www.neihc.com) for all info and dates



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# THE USIHC MISSION

- To promote the knowledge of the Icelandic horse within the United States and its correct use as a competition and riding horse.
- To keep a registry of purebred Icelandic horses in the United States.
- To facilitate communication among all USIHC members.
- To represent the United States in FEIF.

*The U.S. Icelandic Horse Congress is a member of FEIF ([www.feif.org](http://www.feif.org)), the International Federation of Icelandic Horse Associations, representing the national Icelandic horse associations of 19 countries. FEIF governs competition activities and regulates the breeding and registration of Icelandic horses throughout the world outside of Iceland.*

*The USIHC was formed in 1987 by representatives of the U.S. Icelandic Horse Federation and the International Icelandic Horse Association to meet the FEIF rule that only one association from each country is allowed to represent the breed.*



Photo by Andrea Brodie

## W H Y J O I N T H E U S I H C ?

### LEARN

As the owner or rider of an Icelandic horse, you chose a very special breed with its own culture and history. It is important to learn about the breed's unique traits, capabilities, and needs, so that you and your Icelandic horse will have a happy relationship and it will live a healthy and long life in a country far from its origin. As a USIHC member, you have a wealth of information at your fingertips and a personal connection to the best experts in the country.

You receive *The Icelandic Horse Quarterly*, a 52-page all-color magazine, four times a year. All issues since 2008 are available online.

You have free access to WorldFengur, the worldwide database of all registered Icelandic horses. About 400,000 horses, alive and deceased, are included, with pedigrees, offspring, ownership, and evaluation and competition results. Some horses even have photos and videos. WorldFengur is an invaluable tool for all Icelandic horse breeders and very interesting for the rest of us. Go to "Search Horses" on the USIHC website and find any US-registered Icelandic horse by its

number, name, or farm name to link to WorldFengur.

You can take part in—and even help create—educational seminars and teaching programs. For example, the USIHC Education committee developed and now administers the Riding Badge Program for pleasure and competition riders of all ages. On the USIHC website you can find links to certified trainers who are USIHC members and can help you get the best out of your Icelandic horse. In 2014, the Education committee began offering yearly Sport Judges Seminars for those wanting to learn to judge competitions.

The USIHC also has a scholarship fund for members who complete their certification to become national or international judges.

### CONNECT

Icelandic horses are social animals, and so are their people. The USIHC is the umbrella organization of Regional Clubs all over the U.S.: There are currently 12 active clubs. Find the regional Icelandic riding club in your area through the USIHC website, so that you and your horse can ride with friends. Beginning in 2016,

the USIHC Board has set aside \$9,000 per year to fund regional club events and schooling shows. For more information on how to apply for funding, contact the Regional Clubs Committee chair.

USIHC Youth members can apply to participate in the American Youth Cup or the international FEIF Youth Cup or Youth Camp. These are great events designed to bring young riders together for a week of fun, learning, and competition.

Through the USIHC website, you can sign up for RSS feeds for the Events Calendar or web updates. You can check the membership list to see if your friends are members and when your own membership expires. And you can stay connected through the USIHC Facebook page.

## COMPETE

The Icelandic horse has international competition rules: You can compete in the same classes and under the same rules in any of the 19 FEIF member countries and compare your progress with competition riders from around the world.

The USIHC Competition committee adapts these international FEIF rules for American venues and special circumstances, publishing a new set of USIHC Competition Rules each year. These are available on the USIHC website, along with all the tools needed to put on a sanctioned show, such as entry forms, judging forms, judges' cards, and announcers' cards. (These tools are also useful for organizing fun shows and schooling shows.) Also on the website are lists of prohibited tack and equipment and other necessary information for competition riders.

Sanctioned shows are eligible for funding under the Flagship Event Funding Program. Sanctioned-show organizers have access to the IceTest software to record show scores so that they immediately appear in the U.S. National Ranking; qualified shows can also send scores to the FEIF World Ranking list. Scores are posted on the USIHC website for everyone to see and compare.

Only USIHC members can join the U.S. team at the Icelandic Horse World Championships, held in a FEIF country every other year. If you hope to compete at an international level, see the team recommendations and requirements on the USIHC website. Tryouts for the team are open and are National Ranking events: Anyone can ride for scores and to get feedback from an interna-

tional judge, whether or not you intend to compete in the World Championships.

## PROMOTE

USIHC members promote the Icelandic horse at many equine expositions around the country. The USIHC provides a beautiful display, brochures, and copies of the *Quarterly*.

The USIHC Breed Ambassador program rewards members who take their Icelandic horses to all-breed events and shows.

Trainers, breeding farms, and trekking barns can promote their services through the USIHC Farm List in the *Quarterly* and on the website. Stallion owners can promote their stud services through the online USIHC Stallion Book.

And everybody, members or non-members, can advertise in the *Quarterly*.

## REGISTER

Whether you plan to breed one mare or have a breeding farm, the USIHC Registry and the Breeding committee provide information and services to help you.

The Icelandic horse is one of few breeds with international evaluation standards, so that breeding horses from all over the world are judged on the same 10 points of conformation and 10 points of ridden abilities, and all scores are entered into the WorldFengur database. That allows you to compare the quality of your breeding stock with Icelandic horses around the world, both past and present.

USIHC-sanctioned breeding evaluation shows for registered adult horses ages four and up are scheduled by USIHC Regional Clubs and private farms. Breeding shows are eligible for funding under the Flagship Event Funding Program. All rules and regulations are supplied by the Breeding committee from the international FEIF rules and are available on the USIHC website. Regional Clubs and private farms can also organize Young Horse Assessments for foals to three-year-olds. These assessments also qualify for USIHC funding; contact the Breeding Leader.

In accordance with FEIF rules, the USIHC has adopted stringent tests before a foal can be registered as a purebred Icelandic horse. You can be sure of the parentage of any registered Icelandic horse and know that your registered foals have proof of their value.

You don't have to be a USIHC member to register your Icelandic horse, but by becoming a member you help support this vital USIHC program.

## INNOVATE

The USIHC is a member-driven organization. The more active and involved our members are, the stronger the USIHC becomes. Do you have an idea for a project or event that will support the Icelandic horse in America?

Requests for funding for special events and programs that do not qualify under the Flagship Event Funding Program can be submitted to the USIHC board of directors and will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. Contact the USIHC president for more information.

## JOIN US

There are only about 5,800 registered Icelandic horses in the U.S. and the USIHC, at about 625 members, is still a small "pioneer" organization compared to our counterparts in Iceland and Germany. Our committee members and board of directors are all volunteers. Please join us so that the USIHC can, as FEIF's mission states, "bring people together in their passion for the Icelandic horse"!

Yearly membership for an adult is \$45; youth memberships are \$35; or for a family (two adults, unlimited kids) it is \$65. Mail in the form in this magazine or join online at [www.icelandics.org/join](http://www.icelandics.org/join)

## QUESTIONS?

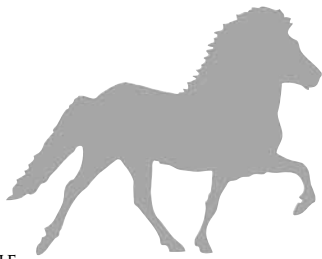
USIHC Board members and Committee chairs are here to answer them. For general questions, call or email our information desk or check the website.

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FEIF'S MISSION: FEIF BRINGS PEOPLE TOGETHER  
IN THEIR PASSION FOR THE ICELANDIC HORSE

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# ICELANDIC HORSE

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ICELANDIC  
HORSE  
QUARTERLY  
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**On the cover:** Spring is the most  
exhausting but eagerly awaited sea-  
son for Icelandic horse breeders—all  
the planning, careful selection of a  
good match, and care for the brood-  
mare finally result in a foal. Even at  
just a few days old, foals show their  
temperament and charm, and make  
us laugh! Little Sprækur of Sand  
Meadow is one of them, captured  
here by photographer (and breeder)  
Andrea Barber.

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# COMMENTARY

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## MY IMMERSION IN ICELANDICS

I would like to introduce myself: My name is Leslie Chambers, and I am the newest member of the board of the U.S. Icelandic Horse Congress (USIHC). I am originally from West Chester, PA, but grew up in northeast Ohio, where I was one of the original members of Congress Lands Pony Club. My college years were spent at Kent State University (BA in Psychology, 1981) and the University of Florida (MS in Biopsychology, 1984). I had a 22-year career in the pharmaceutical industry, primarily at Pfizer in Groton, CT. My work involved animal models of human disease. The highlight of my career was being part of the Pfizer team that brought Chantix (a smoking cessation medication) to market.

I have been riding since I was 10 years old, but I wasn't introduced to the Icelandic horse until 2001 when I went to Iceland for a four-day trip. Although it was a short trip, it made a big impression on me; so much that, in 2009, when it came time for me to buy my second horse (the first was an Appaloosa jumper I bought when I was in high school), I knew it had to be an Icelandic. I got lucky and ended up with a wonderful mare. I was also fortunate to become involved with the Northeast Icelandic Horse Club (NEIHC), a regional club of the USIHC, as I met most of my "Icelandic friends" through the club. I decided on an immersion course and joined the NEIHC board in 2012.

I decided to continue my immersion course and accepted an invitation to join the USIHC board late in 2015. My main interest is in the relationship between the regional clubs and the Congress. A survey was conducted last year to try and figure out why USIHC membership has been stagnant for so long. The survey seemed to suggest the problem wasn't with bringing in new members, but rather with retaining members once they joined. The vast majority of survey respondents were primarily interested in leisure riding. About half of the respondents were also

interested in clinics (education) and over a quarter have an interest in competing. It was interesting to me that 49% of the respondents did not belong to a regional club. I have also found out that only about 40% of the NEIHC adult members are also USIHC members.

So how do we increase membership in regional clubs and the USIHC while providing members with what they want most? Shared leisure rides and coming together for clinics are activities that are best organized by regional clubs. It would seem that our efforts would best be spent on helping people find the regional club nearest to them, or helping them set one up in their area if nothing currently exists. Communication is key to these efforts. Members and potential members need to be able to convey what they want and need in a timely manner.

The USIHC has two valuable means of communication already in place: the website ([www.icelandics.org](http://www.icelandics.org)) and *The Icelandic Horse Quarterly* (and to a lesser extent, Facebook). The website is a great source of information on all things Icelandic. The *Quarterly* is an excellent way to keep up with what different regional clubs are doing. I believe our goal should be to make the website and *Quarterly* a

one-stop shop for individuals looking to join the Icelandic horse community, because at the end of the day what each of us really wants is to have more "neighbors" who share our passion.

We need to take a look at what we already have and make improvements that are inclusive to all Icelandic horse owners, both individuals and farms. We can facilitate the building of these "neighborhoods" by increasing communication, perhaps by way of a Yahoo chat group (board member Sara Lyter's idea). Once we build these neighborhoods they can become regional clubs, and the more regional clubs we have the stronger we will become as a national club. The USIHC, as a member of FEIF (the International Federation of Icelandic Horse Associations), is our link to the rest of the world.

The USIHC and the regional clubs already share essentially the same mission statements, so we can agree on our goals. What needs to be examined, however, is the relationship between them. I look forward to working with everyone on optimizing the relationship between the regional clubs and the national organization to mutual advantage.

—Leslie Chambers, USIHC Board member



New USIHC Board member Leslie Chambers with her husband, Frost White, and Thokki from Four Winds.

# USIHC NEWS

## ANNUAL MEETING

The USIHC's 2016 Annual Meeting took place in Portland, OR, from January 15 to 17. It was hosted by the Cascade Club and organized by Susan Wellington. Early arrivals got together for an informal dinner in the Radisson hotel on Friday evening. The meeting itself was held all day Saturday, and interested parties could explore Portland or visit Red Feather Icelandic Horse Farm on Sunday.

Incoming USIHC president Will Covert arrived together with his wife Ásta (the USIHC Registrar) and baby daughter Anna Bella, who represented the next generation with great charm. Other board members in attendance were Kari Pietsch-Wangard (USIHC treasurer), vice president Lori Cretney, ex-president Sara Lyter, new board member Leslie Chambers (who came all the way from New York), and USIHC webmaster Doug Smith, who moderated the meeting and shared his extensive knowledge by answering lots of questions.

We started the day with two talks by Robert Eversole, aka the "Trail Meister." The many Cascade Club members attending really enjoyed his presentations on back country riding safety and camping with horses. The photos shown during his entertaining program explained why—they live in a gloriously beautiful part of the country open to hiking and horse camping, and many Cascade Club members do go out on overnight trips with their horses. To find out more, go to [www.trailmeister.com](http://www.trailmeister.com), and watch for an upcoming article in the *Quarterly*.

The other presenter was Red Feather Icelandics' trainer Freya Sturm (please see her profile in Issue Four 2015 of the *Quarterly*). Red Feather, located about two hours from Portland, had brought lots of tack and other items for sale from their Tölt Tack store, and also their "Isi-rider": a mechanical horse. Freya's theme was how she uses the Isi-rider exercises to help her students improve their seat, fitness, and body awareness for the five elements of riding: balance, rhythm, elasticity, awareness, technique, harmony, and enjoyment. (Incidentally, the first letters spell out the



Sasha Roland and Svartbakur at an Equine Air Scenting clinic in Oregon. Her essay about the experience won the 2015 Spaeri Award. Photo by Kate Beardsley.

word "breathe"!)

Brave participants from the audience—Janella Radetich, Dawn Shaw, and new board member Leslie Chambers—"rode" the Isi-rider to lots of applause from the audience. Freya said she herself uses the Isi-rider daily for a warm-up before getting on her real horses. More information can be found at [www.redfeathericelandics.com](http://www.redfeathericelandics.com).

The presentations were interspersed with the business parts of the meeting. For each committee's annual report, please see the USIHC website at [www.icelandics.org/bod/agenda/2016AnnualMtg.pdf](http://www.icelandics.org/bod/agenda/2016AnnualMtg.pdf). Topics from those reports are also highlighted in the news items below.

About 50 members attended the meeting and the mood was very upbeat and constructive. It was mentioned that it was a good idea to have the USIHC

meeting hosted by a Regional Club, as the local members can easily attend and introduce everyone to the special features and interests of their club. Which club will step forward to host the annual meeting in 2017?

## REGIONAL CLUBS

At the Annual Meeting Doug Smith, who wears another hat as FEIF sport committee leader, explained the structure of FEIF and how the USIHC works within the FEIF family of member countries. Out of his presentation grew a lively discussion about the relationship of the USIHC and its Regional Clubs.

Board member Leslie Chambers concludes: "The annual USIHC meeting proved a great opportunity for members of the Regional Clubs attending to share their thoughts and concerns with each

other and with members of the board. One common theme was concern around communications: Is my voice being heard? Another thing that became quite apparent is that each Regional Club has a different set of priorities. After extensive discussion, there seemed to be a general consensus that it would make a lot of sense to utilize the Regional Club committee in a much more structured manner. The proposal is to have at least one representative from each of the Regional Clubs be an active member on this committee. Each Regional Club representative will have the responsibility of knowing their individual club members' concerns and their club's planned activities, which they will then share with the committee. The Regional Club committee chair will then keep the USIHC board informed of Regional Club activities and concerns; in this way we can ensure that each individual's voice is heard. The Regional Club committee would also provide a venue for clubs to work together, either directly or indirectly. Neighboring clubs may be able to coordinate clinics and split some expenses, like airfares. Clubs would also be able to share 'how-to's' for educational programs. The Congress would also have another means of sharing any changes made by FEIF with our Regional Clubs. This structure is similar to the type of regional-national club structure used in Iceland and in other FEIF countries, and perhaps now is the time to try it in the U.S."

## SECRETARY'S REPORT

The membership of the USIHC averaged 450 households each month in 2015. The total number of individual members (adult and youth) averaged 625. Juli Cole also reminded the members that, among her other duties, the secretary posts items to the USIHC website News and Calendar sections, and these items in turn automatically cross post to the USIHC Facebook page. Members can submit items for the USIHC website through this address: [secretary@icelandics.org](mailto:secretary@icelandics.org).

## REGISTRY REPORT

In 2015, 148 horses were registered, a decrease of 12 from 2014; 71 were mares,

38 stallions (of whom 22 were under 12 months old), and 39 geldings. The registrations of 193 horses were transferred, an increase of 3; 114 were mares, 16 stallions, and 63 geldings. The total number of USIHC-member owned Icelandic horses registered in the international World-Fengur database, as of December 31, was 5,764. Of these 3,129 were domestic-bred and 2,635 were imported.

## SANCTIONED SHOWS

Eight USIHC-sanctioned shows were held in 2015, vs. 6 in 2014. They took place in Watsonville, CA; Reston, VA; Shelbyville, KY (three shows); Claverack, NY; Eagle, WI; and Santa Ynez, CA.

## NATIONAL RANKING

Congratulations to the winners of the 2015 National Ranking: T1—Ásta Covert (score 7.80), T2—Ásta Covert (7.35), T3—Mitch Martin (6.20), T4—Alexandra Venable (5.95), T5—Elizabeth Robertson (5.90), T6—not awarded, T7—Tammy Martin (5.55), T8—Elizabeth Monsef (6.75), V1—Ásta Covert (7.25), V2—Mitch Martin (6.23), V3—Colleen Monsef (5.80), V5—Kelly Blough (5.30), V6—Elizabeth Monsef (6.50), F1—Terral Hill (6.45), F2—Gabrielle Pittman & Willy Ma (tie 4.40).

The USIHC Sport Committee started

the National Ranking in its current form in 2007. After each sanctioned show is closed and approved by the Sport Leader, its scores are incorporated into the ranking. The current ranking is posted on the USIHC website at [www.icelandics.org/ranking.php](http://www.icelandics.org/ranking.php). At the end of each year, a wooden plaque is awarded as a perpetual award to the winner for each class. The winner's name is added to the plaque and the winner keeps the plaque for one year. Each winner also receives a small "Iceberg" award to keep. Descriptions of the various show classes can be found at <http://www.icelandics.org/rules.php>.

## BREEDING AWARDS

Barbara Frische is the 2015 winner of the Anne Elwell Breeding Award for her horse Marel from Creekside Farm. This award is given annually to the breeder of the highest evaluated and registered adult horse bred in the U.S. For more information, see [www.icelandics.org/elwell\\_award/](http://www.icelandics.org/elwell_award/).

Kathy Love is the winner of the 2015 Caryn Cantella Breeding Award for her horse Ástarljós from Pegasus Flughestar. This award is given annually to the breeder of the highest evaluated and registered young horse bred in the U.S. For more information, see [www.icelandics.org/cantella\\_award/](http://www.icelandics.org/cantella_award/).



Ástarljós from Pegasus Flughestar won the Cantella Award for her breeder, Kathy Love. Photo by Charlotte Reilly.



Marel from Creekside Farm won the Elwell Award for her breeder, Barbara Frische; the rider is Nicole Kempf. Photo by Sina Günther.

## YOUTH ESSAY AWARD

Sasha Roland won the 2015 Spaeri Award for her essay, "Search and Rescue"; an edited version of her story was printed in Issue One 2015 of the *Quarterly*. Sasha receives a prize of \$50. The judges chose Sasha's essay for its very interesting and unusual topic. Said one, "It was not something I had ever thought of before... Search and rescue and learning to listen to your horse's behavior." Said another, "I just wish she had written more!" All youth essays submitted to the *Quarterly* until December 31 will be eligible for the 2016 award. For more information, see [www.icelandics.org/youth.php#spaeri](http://www.icelandics.org/youth.php#spaeri).

## AMBASSADORS

The winners of the 2015 Breed Ambassador Awards were selected by random drawing at the USIHC Annual Meeting on January 16. Each winner will receive a \$50 Visa gift card and an official USIHC Breed Ambassador T-shirt. Qualifying events are any organized all-breed events. For complete rules, see [www.icelandics.org/ambassador.php](http://www.icelandics.org/ambassador.php). Congratulations to: Nancy Wines-Dewan with Brenna from Ice Follies, participating in the Spurwink All Breed Pleasure Drive in Cape Elizabeth, ME; Jessica Zamboni with Loki from Meant To Be Farm, participating in

the AZ All-Breed In Hand Trail Challenge; Jessica Zamboni with Vinda from Schmaltztopf, participating in the AZ All-Breed Trail Challenge; Anne Own with Gná frá Syðri-Úlfsstaðahjáleigu, participating in the Readington Trail Association New Year's Ride; and Susy Oliver with Keli from Tolthaven, participating in the NDSCS All-Breed Demo.



NEIHC youth member Isabelle Maranda, competing on Vaskur from Four Winds Farm, won the Featherlight Award for harmonious riding at the Kentucky Show. Photo by Jess Haynsworth.

## EDUCATION

The Education Committee is currently working on organizing an annual Sport Judge Seminar, translating the IPZV trainer level 1 materials out of German, editing the Riding Badge materials, developing a promotional video, and planning future trainer courses and ongoing educational seminars for trainers and judges.

At the Annual Meeting, USIHC ex-board member Bernie Willis explained and promoted the Riding Badge Program, to which he has contributed greatly. In 2015, five USIHC members were awarded Riding Badges at Basic Levels 1 and 2 and Competition Level 1: Amelia Carney, Brooke Wehrheim, Haley Wehrheim, Robyn Schmutz, and Karli Schmutz. Their instructor was Janet Mulder of AK Icefarm in Anchorage, AK. Examiner was Bernie Willis.

## YOUTH

The Youth Committee reported on a number of highlights from 2015, topped by the first ever American Youth Cup (AYC). As one participant noted, "Nothing I say can describe the magic that occurred during the wonderful short six days of the AYC." Said another, "I realized that the AYC had been one of the most

memorable weeks of my life.”

Looking ahead, eight young riders have applied to attend the FEIF Youth Cup, to be held in the Netherlands in 2016. This is the largest number of applications received by the committee to date, as well as the most diverse, with riders coming from Maine, Vermont, New York, and California.

## YOUNG ADULT RIDERS

The Youth committee is also looking at ways to encourage Young Adult riders (ages 18-25), specifically by encouraging riders who have “aged out” of events to return and help with leadership and organization. For example, the American Youth Cup organizers recruited Kevin Draeger (20), Madison Prestine (21), and Ayla Green (21), all former FEIF Youth Cup participants, to lead the AYC teams. They also created an award specifically designed to encourage young adult riders to return to help with the program, offering Julia Hasenauer a scholarship to return to the AYC as a team leader in a future year.

## QUARTERLY

In 2015 the 17 members of the *Quarterly* Committee produced four 52-page full-color issues. A consistent 40-50 contributors per issue (about 10% of all USIHC households) provided the exceptional content that makes the magazine an effective face of the USIHC. We also surveyed our readers, receiving comments from more than 300 individuals; these will direct our editorial decisions in future issues. Many suggestions reinforce what the committee has been striving to achieve, such as: be inclusive, show the versatility of the horse, cover the whole country, and remember most of us are leisure riders. In the future we plan to include more articles by professional trainers and more information on horse health and welfare. Free copies of back issues are available to members to use for promotional purposes. Contact [promotion@icelandics.org](mailto:promotion@icelandics.org) or [quarterly@icelandics.org](mailto:quarterly@icelandics.org).

## PLEASURE RIDING

In late 2015, the Board announced that it had not been able to find member volun-

teers to lead the Leisure Riding Committee or to administrate the Pleasure Riding Program. “We understand the importance of the PRP, but without member support we have no choice but to suspend the committee and the PRP. They may be reactivated at any time we have member volunteers come forward to help keep these activities running.” When this information was repeated at the 2016 Annual Meeting in Portland, several Cascade and Hestafolk Club members expressed dismay at the discontinuation of the PRP and decided on the spot to get together and try to resurrect it.

## USIHC BOARD

The USIHC Board of Directors welcomed Leslie Chambers to its ranks effective January 1. Leslie takes the seat vacated by Anne Elwell when she decided not to stand for re-election. As there were no nominees, the 2015 election was cancelled and the task of filling the open seat reverted to the Board. Said Leslie, “The recent survey done by the USIHC suggests

there is an issue in retaining members. If you are a current member, but have thoughts on things you would like to see changed, I’d love to hear from you. Please email me at [lchambers17@comcast.net](mailto:lchambers17@comcast.net).” Also see Leslie’s Commentary in this issue of the *Quarterly*.

We’re also pleased to announce that Sara Lyter has agreed to stay on the Board. Sara reconsidered her departure since no other member showed interest and none of the Regional Clubs proposed anyone to fill the vacancy.

The USIHC Board met on October 20, November 16, and December 15. The meeting minutes can be found online at [www.icelandics.org/bod/minutes.php](http://www.icelandics.org/bod/minutes.php).

## CORRECTION

On pages 14-15 of Issue Four 2015 of the *Quarterly*, we missed several photographers’ credits. Thanks to Pat Moore for the FIRC trail ride photo, to Rich Moore for that from the NEIHC show, and to Erna Pomrenke for that from the FIRC schooling show.

We are excited to announce that after many years, the official USIHC registration certificates have been re-designed by board member Doug Smith. The new certificates (left) are in full color, have the correct USIHC name on them, and are printed on paper that is easier to endorse. However, it is important to note that both the new and old designs (as well as yellow-colored duplicates) are all valid certificates. All official certificates should bear the signature of the USIHC Registrar (either Caryn Cantella or Asta Covert) and have a metallic USIHC sticker affixed to the face of the document. If you ever have a question as to the validity of a document, please contact the USIHC Registrar at [registry@icelandics.org](mailto:registry@icelandics.org).

## MALMO MEETINGS

The FEIF working committees met in Malmö, Sweden on October 24 and 25, 2015. Many of them subsequently prepared recommendations for consideration at the 2016 FEIF Conference, which was held in Haarlem, Netherlands in February 2016, while this issue of the *Quarterly* was at press; that meeting will be reported on in our June issue. Following are some highlights from the October meetings.

## SPORT

The FEIF Sport Committee conducted a review of the 2015 World Championships and made suggestions for the future. It also considered some adjustments to FIPO and other topics, such as the regulations concerning the nationality of our sport riders. The committee joined its colleagues from the Sport Judges Committee and Education Committee to discuss a joint seminar to be held next year as a follow-on to the very successful event held two years ago in Germany, as well as to discuss the status of the FIPO tests from the combined perspective of the three areas of expertise.

## BREEDING

The joint meeting of the FEIF Breeding and Breeding Judge committees focused on future projects, such as how the breeding show at the 2017 World Championships could be improved. Establishing an additional FEIF event with breeding assessments, offspring and studfarm shows, and a Gæðingakeppni competition was also discussed. This FEIF Breeding Mót (its working title) would be planned for the years in which we do not hold a World Championships. Another project is the revision of breeding assessment guidelines and descriptions to integrate recent scientific research and experiences. Educational programs, including the exchange of information and ideas between breeders, trainers, judges, and officials will continue to be a focus of the committees: a breeding judge seminar, a seminar for young breeding horse trainers, ringmaster and WorldFengur registrar meetings, and an Open Breeders' Meeting (most probably in Germany) are on the agenda for 2016.



## SPORT JUDGES

The FEIF Sport Judges Committee reviewed the World Championships 2015 in particular and the World Ranking competition season in general. The committee identified a few aspects where WR competitions can improve in order to ensure fair and equal conditions for all riders, including the reporting system to FEIF and the working hours for judges. The committee also discussed the recent Sport Judges' Exam and was pleased by the number of successful candidates, as well as the improved overall workflow. Iceland indicated interest in organizing the next exam. A seminar for FEIF Sport Judges will take place in Sweden in March, and judges and trainers will meet for a joint seminar

mainly focusing on Tölt in Harmony. The constant training of judges was another important topic of the meeting: The committee opted to put more emphasis on Pacetest (PP1). Joint sessions with the Sport Committee and the Education Committee were used to discuss possible ways of catering more to the needs of riders beginning their tournament career, among several other topics.

## EDUCATION

The main topic for the FEIF Education Committee was the joint FEIF Education-Youth seminar for riding instructors, trainers, and national youth and education leaders held in Austria in November (see below). A future seminar to keep train-

ers' and judges' licenses current is being planned for 2016, in cooperation with the Sport and Sport Judges committees. It will be held in March in Sweden, with the focus on Tölt in Harmony and other interesting topics. Iceland has offered to organize a FEIF trainer seminar for 2017.

## LEISURE

During the FEIF Leisure Riding Committee meeting, substantial progress was made in relation to the test of the ideal leisure horse. Ideas were tested on two live horses, who patiently agreed to the fun. Great thanks to Lena Brandsten from Helgagården, who kindly allowed us to use her premises and one of her horses, and to Desiree, who showed us both her own competition horse and her young mare Álfadís. The exercise showed how important it is to test ideas in real life; the conclusion is that there will be a good, long period of "testing the test" before going ahead with a standardized model of the ideal leisure horse. This will include the involvement of both the Breeding Committee and the Education Committee.

## YOUTH

A main topic on the agenda of the FEIF Youth Committee was working on new projects, such as providing networking and training opportunities in the form of seminars and workshops for the age group 18-25. All too often young people leave the horse world at this stage in their lives. Maybe part of the reason is that we do not offer very much to these young adults? A second focus was on the next FEIF Youth Cup, to be held July 23-30 in Exloo, the Netherlands. We also revised the guidelines for the FEIF Award "Youth Country of the Year 2015." The winning country will enjoy one extra place at the Youth Cup 2016.

## SOFTWARE GROUP

The FEIF Software Group met to plan the next steps in the development of IceTest NG, the much anticipated successor to the IceTest software suite. The group is on target to have a first release of NG to be unveiled at the FEIF 2016 Conference. The first release (code name "Polar Circle")



will offer the full set of features necessary to manage a basic Sport tournament. The Software Group continues to seek persons actively interested in helping with the project. We need software engineers and user-interface designers and those willing to help with translations of the screens. Please contact Doug Smith (doug@feif.org) if you have time and skills to lend to the project.

## FEIF SEMINAR

At the FEIF Education/Youth Seminar, held in Weistrach, Austria on November 27-29, 2015, participants from 10 member countries enjoyed both theoretical and practical sessions on the theme "Teaching the New Generation." A lecture by Barbara Kirchmayr on how children learn,



with a strong focus on physiological brain processes and cognitive learning steps, was followed by an introduction to the Hippolini system by Roswitha Schreiber-Jetzinger. Hippolini is a systematic approach which turns these concepts of how children learn into a joyful, practical method of introducing young children to the horse, and develops both riding and horse-handling skills from a very early age. A demonstration of riding lessons for children from the age of 3 showed how this systematic approach, based on the physical and mental developmental stages of the growing child, can lead to impressive results. Franz Grönbeck's introduction to the fascia-technique, promoting the pain-free development of the horse, was also given in the form of a lecture followed by a practical demonstration. The seminar concluded with a detailed lecture by Herdís Reynisdóttir on the effect of equipment, particularly bits, which gave rise to a lively discussion.

## YOUTH VIDEOS

What are young people up to with their horses? How can we support them, and ensure that their knowledge and understanding of good riding and good horsemanship is fostered and promoted? To help answer these questions, FEIF sponsored a youth video competition. To view the submissions and winners, see: [youtu.be/scHMWgS3kCY?list=PLMUt8r9ImvFcPVkyyTJ6PI5L0LFyLdk3N](https://youtu.be/scHMWgS3kCY?list=PLMUt8r9ImvFcPVkyyTJ6PI5L0LFyLdk3N)

# REGIONAL CLUB UPDATES

There are 12 Regional Clubs affiliated with the U.S. Icelandic Horse Congress. To find the one nearest you, see the USIHC website at <http://www.icelandics.org/regionalclubs.php>. Contact information for each club can also be found there. The following clubs filed updates on their activities this quarter.

## AIHA (ALASKA)

BY FRAN BUNDTZEN

It has been a busy time for the Alaskan Icelandic Horse Association. The club held two clinics last summer, one with Steinar Sigurbjörnsson and one with Bill Burke. We always appreciate the opportunity to improve our riding skills at these clinics, and they are well attended.

Tolt Alaska, the youth division of our club, has met once every three weeks for the past year to study for the USIHC Riding Badge. They have learned basic knowledge about Icelandic horses, such as the five gaits and how to ride them, plus horse and tack care. They have practiced a drill team both on foot and on horseback. Tolt Alaska ran a booth at Equifest in Anchorage in May, where they promoted the breed and sold cookies to raise money. They organized a schooling show in June, and nine riders participated in tests on an oval track. Two Play Days were also held as a way to raise money; these were popular with both kids and adults. A new oval track was finished at Arctic Arrow Farm in Wasilla, AK, partly with volunteer labor by the youth group. At the end of the summer, a riding camp was held there, to brush up on Riding Badge skills and ride on the oval track.

Bernie Willis and Janet Mulder have worked hard to develop the USIHC Riding Badge Program in Alaska, and several AIHA members—adults as well as youth—have taken advantage of the opportunity to study and earn badges this year.

Some of our members were able to travel to far-off horse destinations this year. Amelia Carney participated in the American Youth Cup in Louisville, KY. Haley and Brooke Wehrheim and their mother Jane, traveled to Germany to take part in the FEIF Youth Camp (see their article in the last issue of the *Quarterly*); on their way,



AIHA member Alea Robinson and Pennin-gur competing in the Challenge of the North Competitive Trail Ride in July. Photo by Brit-tany Dammann.

they stopped off in Iceland for some trail riding. Stephanie Flynn and her daughter Annika also went riding in Iceland.

Five Icelandic horses and their riders took part in the 2015 Challenge of the North Competitive Trail Ride, held near Fairbanks this July. The cold rainy

weather did not dampen their spirits and all finished and took home ribbons. Riders were Amelia Carney, Alys Culhane, Pete Praetorius, Alea Robinson, and Brooke Wehrheim.

As always, aside from these organized activities, our members enjoyed just getting out on the trail with our furry buddies. For many of us, this is what it's all about.

## CASCADE (PACIFIC NORTHWEST)

BY SUSAN WELLINGTON

In October, a full Happy and Supple Riding Clinic was taught by the amazing Danielle Fulsher at Wren Hill Farm in Ridgefield, WA. Lisa Brandenburger, Rachel Clark, Ginny Crawford, Linda Eddy, Mary Fosgard, Diane Graves, Mark Josey, and Janella Radetich rode in the clinic, which was originally scheduled for May but rescheduled due to the extreme heat. It was a great clinic for both riders and auditors.

Liv Fava and Susan Wellington braved



Vincent Coverdell receives instruction from Steinar Sigurbjörnsson at the AIHA clinic in May. Photo by Dan Coverdell.





Above left: Cascade member Mary Fosgard with Odin: "She taught us to live beautifully." Photo by Janella Radetich. Above right: Mark Josey taking part in the Cascade Club's "Happy and Supple" clinic with Danielle Fulsher in October. Photo by Rachel Clark.



the low temperatures of late November in The Dalles, OR to ride in the Starlight Parade. Glowing in the dark and keeping warm are two important elements of this parade. Their two Icelandic horses took to it like ducks to water.

In early December, we lost our friend Mary Fosgard to cancer. She taught us how to live beautifully as she rode her wonderful Odin.

In addition to regional club activities, the Pacific Northwest is favored by Icelandic horse farms which offer outstanding training and breeding opportunities. Red Feather Farm is standing the outstanding stallion *Pröstur frá Hvammi* (IS2001187041) in 2016 and Five Gait Farm has added *Bót frá Feti*, a blue dun first-prize mare, to their breeding roster. Red Feather has a busy clinic schedule and a full time trainer, Freya Sturm (who was profiled in the last issue of the *Quarterly*). Both of these farms have Facebook pages where you can get current information.

## FIRC (MID-ATLANTIC)

BY RICH MOORE

Members of the Frida Icelandic Riding Club (FIRC) were active in the fall of 2015, with monthly drill team practices and several other events. On December 12, Bar-

bara Sollner-Webb and Denis Webb hosted the annual FIRC Christmas Party at their home in Laurel, MD. A silent action there raised over \$100 to help support the FIRC Sanctioned Show on May 21-22, 2016.



Guðmar Pétursson gave a clinic for FIRC members in October. Photo by Marilyn Tully.

Everyone had a great time and looked forward to events in the coming year.

Laura and Tony Colicchio left the FIRC board of directors after many years of service. The club thanks them for all they did. It also welcomes Antje Freygang and Curt Pierce as new members of the board.

Other recent events included a riding clinic with Guðmar Pétursson and a Halloween ride, as detailed below.

*Marilyn Tully writes:* FIRC members participated in a clinic given by Guðmar Pétursson on October 2-4. It was a rainy weekend and a hurricane even threatened! But that didn't stop anyone. The clinic was held in a beautiful indoor arena at Ardará Sport Horses in Cochranville, PA. The facilities were all connected, so everyone stayed dry all weekend. Participants were Nancy Adler, Millie Angelino, Kathleen Fromme, Janice Gaydos, Mycah Gaydos, Lisa Giacco, Diane Hatcher, Carrie Miller, Jo Ann Trostle, and Marilyn Tully. Several auditors were there as well. Everyone received focused attention.

Guðmar emphasized the importance of the horse responding to your aids. One way to start an exercise session with your horse, he said, is to start with one rein and go to the right and then to the left listening to your horse. Does he resist going to



Millie Angelino on Greta at FIRC's clinic with Guðmar Pétursson. Photo by Marilyn Tully.

one side or the other? Is he a bit stiff to one side? Implement one rein work and suppling especially on the stiffer side.

Guðmar then introduced bending with both reins to stop, using the inside rein first and stopping the bend by using the outside rein as well. He emphasized the importance of not forgetting about your seat. Don't just focus on reins. Our horses were learning to trust our hands. We would start out riding on a loose rein, which was a new concept for some. Guðmar stressed the importance of doing this, as it helps to take the tension out of the horse and prepare it for the exercises to follow. As the horse loosened up, we would gently take up more contact at a slow walk, moving a little faster through the corners, teaching the horse to wait for the rider and to soften through the transitions.

By the end of the clinic, we were all learning how to prepare our horse for tölt, transitioning from walk to tölt, and tölting in circles in both directions. Guðmar helped each rider feel if their horse was pacy or trotty in tölt and how to make corrections. As Lisa said, "Tölting is fun, but there's a lot more to it than just sitting there and going." On the last morning of the clinic, Guðmar performed a riding

demonstration on Nancy Adler's horse, Lilja, reviewing lesson pointers from the previous day.

*Laura Colicchio writes:* The weather could not have been better for our Halloween ride in Rosaryville State Park in Maryland on October 31. The leaves were at their peak, the beech trees a vibrant gold. The group followed a trail that twisted and wound through magnificent, massive trees with sunlight sparkling down from a sky of blue. One particular stretch of the ride was a lot of fun, with a long run of trot and tölt making several turns with straight paths in between. It was simply a spectacular day and a successful ride.

## FLUGNIR (MINNESOTA & WISCONSIN)

BY KYDEE SHEETZ

While the people and horses of the upper Midwest are tough and resilient, minus-30 degree weather and snow banks reaching for the sky force even the hardest riders to sit in front of a fire clutching steaming mugs of hot chocolate. As the temperature and snow fall here in the "Land of the Frozen Chosen," the focus of Flugnir changes from riding and showing our horses to strategic planning for the future. We review what programs worked in 2015, and what could have been more successful. We answer specific questions and make our plans for 2016 based upon the answers.

1. What is the purpose of our organization?
2. What forces in the current social and economic environment help or impede



Danni from Aslan's Country enjoying himself in "The Land of the Freeze and Home of the Crazy." Photo by Danni's owner, Flugnir member Kydee Sheetz.

the fulfillment of that purpose?

3. What creative and specific concrete responses can Flugnir members offer to help fulfill that purpose?

The first one is easy to answer, as our stated mission is "to preserve the uniqueness and integrity of the Icelandic horse." By doing this, we "advance the study, breeding, and exhibition of the Icelandic horse," as encouraged by the USIHC.

Many things in modern America can help us to meet our goals of preserving and advancing our beloved Icelandic horse. The internet allows us to communicate quickly with more people than ever before. Flugnir has worked hard this year to make better use of the internet and social media. Our 2015 board was blessed with some computer whizzes who completely revamped our website, updated our Facebook page, and even maintained a Twitter account! We are able to instantly advertise everything from shows to clinics to promotional events such as the Minnesota Horse Expo. One major challenge in a large computerized society, however, is getting individuals to feel included and valued. We discovered that people really missed the personal touch of a letter delivered by the U.S. Postal Service. We resumed mailing our quarterly paper newsletter in 2015, and this was one of the most popular things we did all year! Several members on the edge of giving up membership were pleased and surprised to receive a paper newsletter, and the inaugural edition arrived with a beautiful and professionally printed calendar with photos of various members' horses.

The increasing fragmentation of the horse industry is a tremendous challenge. People are divided by breed biases, riding activities (pleasure riding vs. competition, etc.), style (gaited vs. non-gaited, etc.), and many other things. If the horse industry is to thrive we need to work together to draw new people into horses in general and Icelandics in particular. In 2015 several Flugnir members again reached out to build bridges with others in the industry. Our most exciting partnership, which started in 2014, has been with the Minnesota Tennessee Walking Horse Association.

This year we held two excellent schooling shows together, with each breed providing their own experienced judge, and found greater success by working together than either organization could alone. We shared expenses, split the work load, and had a great time trying out each other's horses. We plan to continue working together in 2016 and are already scheduling future events.

For several years horse people have lamented the dismal effect of the economy on the horse industry. Members of Flugnir worked hard in 2015 to introduce horses to newcomers in fun and affordable ways. We hosted free open houses at two farms, which drew in everyone from local farriers to horseless neighbor kids. In addition, several members were incredibly generous with freely loaning horses to people for riding lessons and clinics. Members blessed with trailers coordinated equine transportation to events. Newcomers were sponsored financially at shows and loaned talented horses. It has been exciting to see some of these people purchase their first Icelandic horse! Many members took advantage of the opportunity to take lessons from Barbara Frische during the two years she lived in Minnesota, and the improvement in riders and horses alike has been amazing.

Flugnir members are excited to see what 2016 will bring. We have an event planned at a new horse owner's home



The campground at the Moab Fairgrounds, where the Klettafjalla club members stayed, had excellent corrals. Photo by Marisue Wells.

which will include a brainstorming session to gather new ideas and figure out how to improve programs that are already working. We're considering adding internet forums for breeders and instructors/trainers to our website to help current and prospective Icelandic owners find and work with their own perfect Icelandic horse. Holding additional clinics with more horses available for leasing is also a goal. Schooling shows are an excellent way to attract new people when they are expertly judged but still affordable and welcoming, and we are considering expanding that program. Adding more fun events like camping weekends and trail trials to draw more pleasure riders into the group is also a goal. We have a dedicated and enthusiastic group of Icelandic horse owners

up here in "The Land of the Freeze and Home of the Crazy." Keep an eye on this spot for updates on how 2016 develops.

## **KLETTAFJALLA (ROCKY MOUNTAINS)**

*BY MARISUE WELLS*

Three Klettafjalla Icelandic Horse Club (KIHC) members from Utah decided to come up with and practice a drill team routine to demo at the Utah State Fair in September to show our Icelandics to the larger horse community. Barbara Ohm watched online videos of drill teams and applied her choreography background to come up with a routine for three horses, set to Icelandic music. We memorized it first by walking it without horses, then by riding it at a walk. By the time we were ready to add speed, the horses knew what to do. Our regular practice sessions were the best part: We all had a job to do, and tölt improved. We put together "Viking" costumes. A huge rainstorm the day of our outdoor performance cancelled it, so we emailed family and friends to join us at the local arena for a Sunday afternoon show. The whole process of transforming into the "Wanship Valkyries" was great fun and now we'll be ready to shine in next year's fair. Wouldn't it be cool if we could ride with six or eight Icelandics?

Five intrepid Icelandics made the trip to Moab, UT for a fun Halloween weekend of trail riding in gorgeous red rock country. With truly world-class scenery—snow-capped mountains in the background, red-



Members of the Klettafjalla Club visited Moab, UT in October. Photo by Marisue Wells.

rock towers, walls, and buttes rising from the Colorado River, and endless plateaus of sagebrush and juniper high mountain desert—sunshine and trails in all directions, we found great tölting dirt roads and thoroughly enjoyed being out. Moab has a huge, modern fairground where we kept the horses overnight and sat around a campfire. An approaching snowstorm meant that our Colorado neighbors who were planning to come couldn't haul over the mountain passes—we missed them! We encourage our KIHC members around the Rockies to share their favorite places to trail ride.

## **KRAFTUR (NORTHERN CALIFORNIA)**

*BY BERT BATES*

Kraftur members made extremely good use of the mild weather this fall. We're all bracing for a heavy El Nino winter, so we packed a bunch of horse activities in before having to batten down the hatches.

In October, Laura Benson hosted a Working Equitation clinic at Coast Road Stables. The clinician was renowned Portuguese trainer Miguel Fonseca. The fun-filled and challenging event was well attended by Kraftur members, and the consensus was that we'd all like to see Working Equitation become a common component in our horse-related activities.

Also in October, Flying C Ranch hosted their annual fall show, which was also well attended by Kraftur members. Kraftur class winners were: Lucy Nold in T4

and Speed Pace, Elizabeth Robertson in T5, Julia Hasenauer in T6, Jessica Blough in T8 and V6 (wow), Isra Saalisi in T8J and 3GC (nice), Elizabeth Robertson in TGH, VGH, and V3 (wow), Ayla Green in V1, V2, and F1 (wow!), Kelly Blough in V5, and finally Jamie Blough and Madeline Pollock in Pairs. Awesome showing riders!

Among the various trail rides from the fall, a standout was the November ocean beach ride on Monterey Bay's beautiful Salinas River State Beach. We had 10 riders and horses making use of the firm sand to do some hauling ass, and a few brave riders got their horses to spend a little time in the surf.

Kraftur held its annual meeting and picnic at Coast Road Stables. We hacked our way through club business and then had a fine picnic and raffle. Annette Coulon presented each board member with a 2013 Syrah from her own Mountain Icelandic Farm vineyards. (Easily the highlight of the picnic for your reporter.)

In December, Laura Hinson hosted a semi-official, equine-assisted elf hunt and a subsequent, not-very-equine-assisted elephant gift exchange. Well groomed trails, an obstacle course, and a fine potluck lunch all combined for a fine outing.

Also in December, Kraftur's Los Gatos contingency put a lot of effort into coordinating Kraftur's perennial participation in the Los Gatos holiday parade. Boasting 22 horses and riders and fine weather, this is a great way to show off our horses to a large crowd. The Monsef family hosted a holiday party after the parade.

We wrapped up 2015 by celebrating six Kraftur members winning coveted, USIHC "Iceberg" awards this year for top placement in the National Ranking. Alexandra Venable won for T4, Elizabeth Robertson for T5, Elizabeth Monsef for T8, Colleen Monsef for V3, Kelly Blough for V5, and Elizabeth Monsef for V6. Congratulations on a fine year of riding!

2016 is already shaping up to be another fun year at Kraftur, with a Spring Show (March 26-27) at Mountain Icelandic Farm, early plans for late spring horse camping, organized by Lisa Herbert, and many more events to come.

And finally, many thanks to Annie Aston and Kelly Blough for their detailed field reports, without which this already brief report would have been far shorter.

## **NEIHC (NORTHEAST)**

*BY JESS HAYNSWORTH*

This Fall, several NEIHC members made the long journey to compete in the Kentucky Icelandic Horse Show. Youth member Isabelle Maranda from Vermont won the Featherlight Youth Award, as well as V6 and Green Horse Fourgait, on Vaskur from Four Winds Farm. Emese Dunn won the Youth Tölt class on Brá frá Fellskoti, as well as a special award for being such a helpful volunteer. Youth member Alicia Flanigan competed on three horses, most notably winning T5 on Salvör frá Grafarkoti. There were two Vermont residents in the T1 final—Jessica Haynsworth on Vigni frá Vallanesi and Richard Davis on Ríma frá Efri-Þverá—and one in the V1 final,



Kraftur members rode on Monterey Bay's Salinas River State Beach in November. Photo by Linda Moerer.



Left: NEIHC youth member Alicia Flanigan and Salvör frá Grafarkoti competing at the Kentucky Show. Photo by Jess Haynsworth. Middle: NEIHC youth member Emese Dunn and Brá frá Fellskoti winning the Youth Tölt class at the Kentucky Show. Photo by Jess Haynsworth. Right: Sigrún Brynjarsdóttir and Parker frá Sólheimum competing in V1 Four Gait at the Kentucky Show. Photo by Shaila Ann Sigsgaard.

Sigrún Brynjarsdóttir on Parker frá Sólheimum. Rebecca Daddona also traveled from the Northeast to compete on Stassa frá Nýjabæ. For some of us, this show wouldn't have been possible without the generosity of Curtis Pierce, who offered discount shipping from the Northeast to Kentucky and back for our horses, an 18-20 hour trip, both ways! Thank you, Curtis!

The Icelandic horse was well-represented at Equine Affaire in Springfield, MA this year from November 12-15. Kara Noble reported: "Over the course of its four-day run, the event had an attendance of approximately 100,000 people from all over the northeastern U.S. and Canada. In addition, we regularly posted information about what was happening at Equine Affaire on the NEIHC Facebook page, which allowed us to reach an additional 2,100 people online. The NEIHC's booth was located in the Breed Pavilion, and included a 10-by-20-foot display area and a 10-by-10 stall. The booth was staffed by 25 volunteers, including 3 youth members; horses from our breed demo and the Fantasia show 'staffed' the stall. Numerous club members stopped by to help out.

"We displayed videos, photos, books, and magazines with information about Icelandics. The videos were very successful at catching the attention of passersby, and they enabled us to draw many people into the booth and speak to them about the breed. We answered questions about the horses and riding opportunities; we

distributed literature about local farms and about the NEIHC and the USIHC; and we handed out information sheets about horses available for sale. We also distributed 100 copies of the USIHC's *Quarterly* magazine and dozens of copies of *Tölt News*. We talked to people who had recently adopted horses from the Cornell study on summer eczema, people looking to buy their first Icelandic, people who had been researching breeds and who had decided that Icelandics were the right horse for them, and many equestrians who told us they have always wanted to try Icelandics and wanted to know how to get started. Many people stopped to pat and meet the horses.

"The NEIHC also presented a 15-minute ridden breed demonstration, and two unmounted 'breed discussions.' The ridden breed demo was presented by Sigrún Brynjarsdóttir with Richard Davis, Rebecca Hoyt, and Emily Potts. It was held at the Mallory South Arena, a large riding ring surrounded on three sides by bleachers, and most seats were filled. The first in-hand demo was presented by Richard Davis, Emily Potts, and Rebecca Hoyt. The second was presented by Leah Greenberger, John Prenosil, and youth members Malin Prenosil, Avery Prenosil, and Grace Greenberger. Each lasted about 45 minutes and took place in much smaller pens that allowed audience members to speak directly with the presenters and to ask questions about the horses. Both of those produced a

steady stream of people who wanted to talk about the horses and see one close up.

"We shared the booth with the Íshestar trekking company, and also with Guðmar Pétursson and the Knights of Iceland, who performed in the Fantasia on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday evenings. Íshestar and the Knights of Iceland each paid one-third of the cost of the booth. Some horses used in the NEIHC breed demos were also used in the Fantasia performances, so the Knights' team stabled those horses in their barn area, and they helped switch the horses in the exhibit stall throughout the day. Our booth partners distributed information about trips to Iceland and talked about training gaited horses.

"Guðmar presented two clinic/workshops, the first titled 'Getting the Balance Right: The Key to a Balanced & Supple Gaited or Icelandic Horse' and the second titled 'The Differences in Riding & Training Gaited Horses vs. Non-Gaited Horses.' Both were well attended and well received."

As I write this update, NEIHC members are looking forward to our Annual Meeting and Thorrablót party, which will take place on March 5; see the NEIHC website ([www.neihc.com](http://www.neihc.com)) for details.

Our annual sanctioned show, the NEIHC Open, will take place on July 30-31 at Thor Icelandics in Claverack, NY. Þorgeir Guðlaugsson will be the judge, and it promises to be a fun and exciting weekend for all!

# GROUNDWORK 101

BY NICKI ESDORN

PHOTOS BY MARTINA GATES

Working with your horse does not start when you swing into the saddle, it starts from the moment you enter the stable. Groundwork is literally the foundation of training—and it is more than that. It is whatever you do with your horse unless you are riding. You may even spend more time hanging out, grooming, tacking, mucking, feeding, leading, and perhaps playing with your horse than you do on horseback. It is really nice to have a horse that politely comes with you, moves out of the way, or stands still when asked! Since I wrote the article “Hold Your Horses” in Issue Three 2012 of the *Quarterly*, I have started to play with horse agility and dream of working with my horses at liberty. It was really fun for me to try to use more body language instead of always tugging on the halter as the first signal. It works, and the horses appreciate it!

The most important tool in your training box is your attitude. Icelandic horses are very good at reading your energy level, body tension, breathing rate,



A little treat is not a bribe, but a reward for her coming to me. While chewing, she is breathing and relaxed, a good start.



My four-year-old mare Jenný from Thor Icelandics is happy to see me coming, even with halter and rope. I am smiling and relaxed, looking forward to working with her.

and your mood—even from a distance. Horses will work well with a calm, confident, relaxed person who has a clear idea of what he or she wants and a positive and friendly attitude. You have to pay attention. If you are frustrated or angry or anxious, stop working with your horse and come back later.

The only other tools you need for groundwork are a well-fitting halter, a long lead rope (10 to 12 feet), and a stiff dressage whip (to use as an extension of your arm).

## FIRST THINGS FIRST

Always bring something nice when you go to your horse. It can be a treat, or an extra good scratch. Does your horse come to you when you go to the field or paddock? That means it is ready and happy to work with you. If not, examine your attitude. Calm, confident, relaxed, positive? Are you smiling? Looking forward to the next hour? Predator mode will not work! See what happens if you actually go backwards a few steps away from the horse once it looks

at you. Ask the horse to come a few steps towards you before haltering.

Once you have the horse standing still next to you, scratch the withers to reinforce your friendly intentions, and put the lead rope around its neck. Then hold the halter so the horse can stick its nose into it, reach carefully over the ears, and fasten. Congratulations!

## GOING FORWARD

Now you turn around and drag the horse behind you—not! Stand by the horse's head, look forward, raise your hands to chest level and point forwards, lean your upper body forward, inhale, raise your energy and cluck or say “walk,” and start walking. Give the horse a moment to respond to all your body and voice cues before you tug on the halter. It will probably not be necessary. Now look to where you want to go and keep walking, lead rope loose.

Should your horse remain rooted to the ground despite your best efforts, it just does not quite understand your cues.



Left: I scratch Jenný's withers and put the lead rope around her neck, connecting her to me. Right: Jenný easily puts her nose in the halter. Next time, I will ask her to lower her head more.



Please ask a friend or your instructor to help by standing on the same side as you are at croup level, and to touch the horse lightly and rhythmically with a dressage whip on the croup when you give your cues. Stop this aid as soon as the horse shifts to move forward.

## STOPPING

As you are walking next to your horse's head, slow down a bit, raise your hands to chest level, lean your upper body back, let your energy drop, and with an audible exhale, say "whooha" and stop. Chances are, your horse read your energy, saw the hand signal, heard the voice command, and stopped before you even got around to tugging on the halter! Stand still for a bit, even counting to 10 or so, making sure you are relaxed, breathing, have a loose rope, and are standing still yourself. This dropping of energy together with an exhale will carry over to your riding. Eventually you can stop your horse from a canter by just relaxing and exhaling.

## TURNING

Let's say you are on your horse's left side and you want to turn left. Turn yourself slightly to the left and drop your right hip and shoulder, making room and inviting the horse to come with you. It will probably follow you even before you tug on the lead rope. Turning right you need to make sure you keep up beside the horse's head

while you walk the longer way. You need to turn slightly right, raise your hands to the right and ask the horse to yield away from you while rhythmically walking to the right. If you can get your horse to yield away from you, it reinforces your position as "the boss." Conversely, your horse must be willing to follow you in the left turn, but since you are the one doing the yielding it reinforces the horse.

## BACKING UP

Backing up can be done while you back up yourself next to the horse, or you ask the horse to back away from you. At first, it is easier to practice if you place the horse along a fence or wall. Standing next to the horse's head, lean back, raise your hands to chest level, and start walking very clearly and slowly backwards, raising your knees a bit, saying "baack." Again,



I walk forward, looking where I want to go with Jenný coming along on a loose rope.

your horse will probably come along back even before you tug on the halter.

Asking the horse to back away from you can be done in a few different ways. You can push on the nose or push on the middle of the chest, always releasing as soon as the horse takes a step. This is a good way to start training what the command “baack” means. Horses respond to rhythmic movement, so you can stand in front of the horse and rhythmically move your hands towards the horse, “pushing” it back. Or you can wave a dressage whip at your horse’s chest rhythmically. It is fun to teach your horse to back up from your wagging finger or hand, but if you see someone flinging a rope and metal buckle at their horse’s head it just shows that something is very wrong.

## TURNING THE FOREQUARTERS

Turning the front end of the horse from a standstill works just like turning while leading, only it requires a bit more energy to get going. You can either tug the halter toward you or gently push the horse’s head away from you, or you can try with doing it with rhythmic movements and a cluck. Stop giving the signal as soon as the horse responds to let it know that it is doing the right thing.



I have lowered my shoulder and hip while rhythmically turning, inviting Jenny to make a left turn with me. She follows without any tension on the lead rope.



I slow down, raise my hands, lean backwards, and with a long exhale say “whooooo,” and Jenny is about to stop on a loose rope.

## TURNING THE HINDQUARTERS

You can ask your horse to move the hindquarters sideways in several different ways. Let’s say you stand on the horse’s left side. Turn toward the horse, lead rope in your left hand. Give a push on the horse’s barrel with your right hand just where your calf would give the signal, increasing in strength until the horse moves sideways. You can reinforce it with a cluck. As the

horse starts moving, quickly release. Eventually it should move from a very slight touch. You want a calm response, step by step, not a hurried swinging sideways.

Do you want to go a step further and move the hindquarters without touching the horse? Stand in front of the horse, facing it, with a loose lead rope. Bend a little down sideways and focus on the near hindleg. Use a dressage whip to point to the leg, move the whip rhythmically, and cluck. Stop immediately, as soon as the horse starts moving, to tell it, Yes! That’s it! Again, you want a calm step-by-step response. Eventually, your horse can learn to move and disengage the hindquarters from just your focused look and a small hand signal.

## THE BASIS FOR EVERYTHING

Walking, stopping, and turning from the ground establish how you and your horse work together and set the tone for all further progress. Imagine the difference between dancing and being pulled or shoved around! Make it a habit to do everything from both sides, especially if one side feels awkward. Remember, if the horse does not do as you think you’re asking, you are probably not asking correctly. Try something else: Step forward or back and check how you are giving the signal. Have a friend or instructor watch you and give you feedback, or take a video. Horses are the masters of body language; we are



not. Keep your practice sessions short and positive and incorporate them into your daily stable and riding routine.

With this kind of groundwork you change the relationship with your horse into one of cooperation and partnership. At worst you will have a well-behaved horse that already knows many signals used in riding. At best you may have embarked on an exciting path leading to a horse running free with you through an obstacle course or dancing with you at liberty!

*Nicki Esdorn is a FEIF International Trainer Level 1, certified in the U.S. For more information on Icelandic horse trainers and riding instructors, and their certifications, see [www.icelandics.org/Trainers/index.php](http://www.icelandics.org/Trainers/index.php).*



My body language is “pushing” Jenný to yield away from me to the right, helped by rhythmic steps and a clear hand signal. I make sure I stay with her on the longer way around.

My body language is asking Jenný to back up, helped by gentle pressure on her nose. As soon as she starts making a step, I release the pressure without taking my hand away, then give another light push asking for the next step.

I am very proud of Jenný for working with me so nicely and not even looking at the five young boys (some of them stallions) watching her every move!



# STAMPEDE: 100 ICELANDICS

BY ROBYNN SMITH

I've been a rider all my life. I started taking riding lessons at age seven, at Kentucky Stables in Westchester County, NY. I became a horse owner for the first time when I moved to Santa Cruz, CA right after college, in 1978. I traded two paintings for Gabriell, a magnificent Arabian gelding. He was a flaming red chestnut with a flaxen mane and tail and four white socks. Gabe taught me everything, as a great horse will, and we were partners for 16 years. Together we did it all: trail, English, Western, dressage, driving, and a bit of endurance. He was a versatile horse and I became a versatile rider.

When Gabriell passed away, there was no question that I would get another Arab. The beauty, intelligence, and spirit of the breed was in my blood. For the next 17 years, my partner was Noche, a beautifully bred, complicated black mare, with whom I continued my education. In 2011, I had to retire her due to arthritis, at the age of 20. Having always boarded my horses, I faced the frightening and all too common situation of paying pasture board for a horse I could no longer ride. There was no possibility of getting another horse while Noche was alive. And she could live a long time. What was I to do? How much of riding was Noche herself, and how much was the sport? Would I still enjoy riding if I were not on her? If I wanted to keep riding, how was I to do so?

As part of my midlife equine identity crisis, I booked a four day Equitrekking vacation to Iceland, to celebrate my 55th birthday.

## THE HERD

Before I saw them, I felt the herd. The ground rumbled as the first furry creatures rose up over the hill and spilled over into the valley, manes, tails, and forelocks flying. The herd was over 100 strong, and it took some time for the sheepdog to drive them all into the corral. They moved like flowing water, spilling into each other and becoming the landscape itself.

Four glorious days in Iceland. Slanting autumn light, bracing winds, aurora



"Riders in the Sky" by Robynn Smith.



Robynn Smith with her installation “Stampede: 100 Icelandics” at the Carl Cherry Foundation in Carmel, CA.

borealis, and the tölt. Ahh. The tölt.

My mind was spinning on the return trip home. I had seen so much and I had so many questions. I made the decision to learn more about Icelandics, to try to find some in California, and to think seriously about whether or not I wanted to continue riding the borrowed Andalusian/Thoroughbred cross who had recently thrown me in a random bucking fit.

A week later I was in the parking lot of the local feed store when a big white truck rolled in. On the inside of the truck was a friendly woman with a big welcoming smile. On the outside of the truck was the logo for Mountain Icelandic Farm, Watsonville, CA.

Wait a minute. I *live* in Watsonville, CA.

I was so fortunate to meet Annette Coulon that day. The perfect ambassador for the breed, she invited me to visit Mountain Icelandic Farm, which is located 10 minutes from my house and one mile from Noche’s former home of 20 years. I went out to her farm later that week and the next day said goodbye to the Andalusian cross.

Annette needed help with some of her horses, and I needed a new direction for my riding. I brought 40 years of big horse experience to the Icelandics. In return I received a new path as a rider. Putting my prior knowledge to work with these profoundly wise and compliant horses has been a revelation and a challenge. New behaviors, new tack, new gaits,

new people. Mountain Icelandic farm is a generous, soul-nourishing environment. On any given day you might find a trailer full of horses heading to the beach, Jec Ballou giving a dressage lesson, or Steinar Sigurbjörnsson töltting a high-stepping horse around the track in a lovely, balanced frame.

## IMAGES OF ICELAND

I’ve now been riding with Annette for four years, and I have been back to Iceland three times. My involvement with Icelandic horses has spilled over into my artistic practice. Images of Iceland and Icelandic horses have made their way into my etchings, monotypes, and mixed media paintings.

I have always drawn horses. I was one of those girls. In the early stages of my career, right after art school, I painted horses exclusively. In graduate school my focus shifted, and my work became more



Two of the 100 prints of Icelandic horses in Robynn’s “Stampede”. Her work was inspired by Hokusai’s famous “100 Views of Mount Fuji” and by her trips to Iceland.

of a visual record of my connection to the world.

Through the exploration of resonant imagery, I connect the dots of humanity’s magnificent opportunities and repeated mistakes. I work with contrasting images to create detailed comparisons of the wretched and the sublime, life and death, light and dark. I’ve used images of horses in this work, often symbolically, or to tell a story. For example, the relationship of cavalry soldiers and their horses fascinates me, how their horses become a lifeline to their own humanity in the most wretched of circumstances.

Since my first trip to Iceland, imagery from the country has surfaced quite a bit in my work. Glaciers are holding the space that tombstones once did. In the summer of 2015, I exhibited *Stampede. 100 Icelandics*, at the Carl Cherry Foundation in Carmel, CA. This installation of 100 solar plate prints of Icelandic horses was based on *100 Views of Mount Fuji*, Hokusai’s woodcut prints of the 1830s.

My most recent trip to Iceland was a three-week artist’s residency in the north of the country. I am now producing paintings and prints based on photographs shot in and around Ólafsfjörður, north of Akureyri.

Through riding Icelandic horses, Icelandic culture permeates my life. Do I seek this connection with Iceland because I seek a change in my work, or is my imagery changing due to my involvement with Iceland?

*Robynn Smith teaches studio art at Monterey Peninsula College and at her own Blue Mouse Studios, in Aptos, CA. For more information, see her website, [www.robynnsmith.com](http://www.robynnsmith.com), or contact her by email at [robynn@cruzio.com](mailto:robynn@cruzio.com) or phone 831-685-4723 or 408-482-9802.*



# THE OVAL TRACK

BY DORTE GRAM

*Editors' note: Last year, FEIF (the USIHC's parent organization) commissioned a report from the company Xenia Pharma on what is currently known about track surfaces for Icelandic horses. The complete report is available on the FEIF website at [www.feif.org](http://www.feif.org) (under "Information"). What follows is an edited version of the summary submitted by chief author Dorte Gram. A leisure rider and small-scale breeder of Icelandic horses, as well as a veterinarian with a Ph.D. and the CEO of the company, Dorte is Danish and lives in Sweden. Her company, Xenia Pharma, provides scientific advice, such as literature searches, on various topics, with a focus on veterinary issues.*

The ground on which horses compete, train, and work can influence both their performance and their risk of injury. Currently, the track surfaces used for Icelandic horses are not systematically assessed. No qualitative parameters have been defined and no methods to assess those parameters have been approved.

According to Doug Smith, FEIF Director of Sport, this situation presents a challenge to FEIF in its commitment to promoting Icelandic horse welfare around the world. Said Doug, "We are interested in looking into the topic of the best surfaces for our various tracks and how to define appropriate hardness and surface materials to allow our horses to be shown to their best advantage in the frame of their best welfare."

What do we currently know about the track surfaces used for Icelandic horses? To answer this question, Xenia Pharma performed a literature search using databases available through Roskilde University in Denmark. We identified a substantial body of scientific work on track surfaces and the risk of injuries in horses.

The research fell into four categories: 1) methods to evaluate track properties; 2) the effects of track design, management, or materials on the physical properties of the tracks; 3) the effects of track design, management, or materials on the horse's performance or its risk of injury; and 4) the effects of track properties on the horse's performance or its risk of injury.



Dorte Gram, who headed the FEIF track surface study, is an avid Icelandic horse rider. She lives in Sweden.

None of these studies, however, were specific to Icelandic horses.

## OTHER BREEDS

Other equestrian societies are currently dealing with precisely the same questions as FEIF. Track surface materials are not regulated, nor are there any guidelines for their proper use. Therefore, marketing has largely determined the selection and use of materials to date.

Methods to assess the quality of equine surfaces have been established—particularly for jumping, dressage, and racing horses—but no guidelines for how to test the surfaces or on the optimal ranges for the measurements are available as of yet.

Most likely, each horse discipline will require its own specific track surface, depending on the weight of the horse, its speed, and on how many turns or sideways movements it performs. Experts do not consider it likely that a track can be created that is optimal for both performance and safety.

## THE HOOF

To evaluate track surfaces, it is important to understand the interaction between the horse's hoof and the ground. The gait

phase that lasts from heel strike to toe off (also called the stance phase) can itself be divided into four different sub-phases: first and second impact, support, and rollover. Each sub-phase is associated with different magnitudes of force. (See the illustration.)

When the hoof hits the ground (first impact), it is decelerated very rapidly in the vertical direction. This creates a shock, of which 70% is absorbed by the hoof; the rest of the shock energy affects other parts of the leg. The peak impact deceleration—and thus the damaging potential—is primarily related to the hardness of the track surface.

At the second impact, the accelerations are low and the forces on the hoof begin to increase. The hoof slides slightly forward until it stops completely.

During the support phase, the hoof is loaded with the full body weight of the horse and the forces acting on the leg increase. The hoof is pushed into the ground and the ground reacts with an equal force (called the ground reaction force), which is of importance for the risk of injury.

During rollover, the forces and accelerations are low, thus causing low risk of injury. However, the duration of this sub-phase is important in affecting the

kinematics of the following swing phase (not shown in the illustration) and thereby the loading of the hoof at the next stance phase.

The risk of injury is thus a result of the magnitude of forces created at the hoof-surface interaction, and can be diminished by having a surface that provides cushioning and that allows the hoof to slide forward.

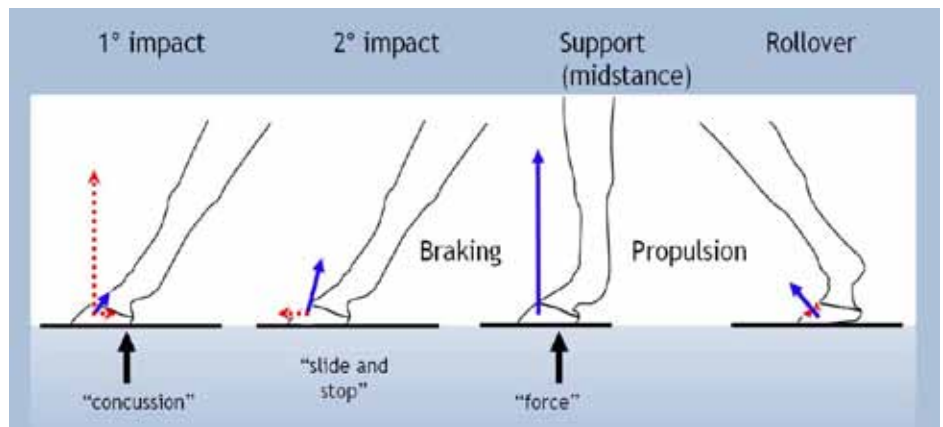
## THE GROUND

The surface properties of an arena or track are determined by the interaction of several factors: the mechanical and physical properties of the surface material, the properties of the base, the drainage system, maintenance procedures, environmental factors (such as temperature and rainfall), the age of the arena or track and its surface, how much it is used, and its design and layout.

Track professionals use standard physical terms to describe their tracks. Standard deformation is how much a surface can change shape or resist penetration. Shear resistance is the frictional force generated by the hoof-surface interaction. Force reduction, shock absorption, damping, or cushioning are measured in comparison to concrete. Stiffness is the resistance of the surface to a load. Response time is how quickly the surface recovers from a load. Loss of energy refers to the energy lost when the hoof impacts the surface. Maximum bulk density refers to how compact the surface can get; compaction is in general reduced by maintenance, however a compacted surface can be



When the hoof meets the track, how does the track surface affect the horse's performance—or safety? Here Laura Benson shows Viður frá Lækjamóti at the 2014 evaluation in Kentucky. Photo by Alex Pregitzer.



desirable, depending on the base layer. Consistency describes whether the properties are the same on different parts of the track (spatial consistency) or at different times (temporal consistency).

Riders, on the other hand, use a completely different set of terms to describe tracks. To them, impact firmness is the shock (that is, the sudden deceleration) experienced as the horse's hoof hits the surface. Cushioning is how the surface reacts to the forces produced by the horse. Responsiveness describes how active and springy the surface feels and if the rebound returns energy to the horse at the right time in its stride. Grip is how much the foot of the horse can slide. Uniformity describes how much the surface changes with time and use.

## TESTING

In principle, ground surface properties can be tested in the lab or at the track's location, by horse-based tests or by mechanical tests. Examples of horse-based methods are instrumented horse shoes (to measure forces at the ground), accelerometers (to measure impact shocks and vibrations), kinematic techniques such as 2-D videotaping or 3-D infrared detection of reflective markers (to measure locomotion characteristics such as stride frequency or hoof lift), and equipment to measure tendon loads. The results of such methods depend on the horses used, and measurements obtained from different horses may not be comparable.

The advantage of mechanical tests is their repeatability. Examples of mechanical methods used in the racetrack industry are the Clegg hammer, the dynamic penetrometer, the agricultural penetrometer, the going stick, and the biomechanical hoof tester.

Several methods of assessing the properties of track surfaces have been established for use by other equine societies. Although none of them has been applied systematically to the evaluation of tracks for Icelandic horses, it is highly likely that several (if not all) the tests will be applicable.

## ICELANDIC HORSES

A few studies on the kinematic properties of Icelandic horses were identified in our literature search. These studies suggest that the impact firmness (or hardness) and the consistency of the track surface are of importance for Icelandic horses. The speed of the horse and added weights to the hooves increase the peak impact deceleration, and thus the force with which the horse touches the ground, making the track's impact firmness (or hardness) important.

The need for both cushioning and responsiveness in tracks seems, on the other hand, to be less for Icelandic horses than for horses of heavier breeds.

Grip seems to be of great importance to Icelandic horse competitions, but mainly in the corners of the oval track or in dressage tests.

The consistency of the track appears to be of prime importance both for performance and the risk of injury, and should probably be addressed for all Icelandic track surfaces.

These preliminary conclusions, however, need to be substantiated by data. Therefore, the future definition of an optimal track surface for Icelandic horses may require gathering evidence from experienced people or officials, or generating experimental data.

For references, or to read the full report, go to [www.feif.org/Service/Documents/General.aspx](http://www.feif.org/Service/Documents/General.aspx)

# THE HISTORY OF ICELANDICS IN AMERICA

BY PORGEIR GUÐLAUGSSON AND ANNIE SHIELDS

**E**ditor's Note: On his Facebook page, "Anecdotes of Icelandic Horse History," FEIF International Sport Judge Þorgeir Guðlaugsson traces the history of the Icelandic horse in America—as well as throughout the world. He has posted several anecdotes in which American travelers to Iceland, as long ago as the late 1800s, brought home a horse or two as a souvenir. But the horses he reports on in the following story, and which were trained by Annie Shields as a teenager, seem to be the first American breeding herd.

We contacted Annie, now 71, and asked her to share more of her stories. "A long time ago," she says, "I was paid by Miriam Pinkwater's publisher to write my story for Miriam to use for a teen novel she was writing. I wrote extensively, but it was never used because she completely changed the focus of her story. It's a great little book called *Cloud Horse*, but it's not about me or my experiences. So I have a lot written about those years. I'll try to trim it down to a manageable size." In this issue, we're proud to share two of her true-life tales, "The Wild Horses" and "The Story of Tinna."

Annie has also shared some of her photographs from the 1960s in the album "50 Years of Icelandics" on her Facebook page. In reproducing some of them here, we have decided to break our rule against showing riders without helmets. As Annie writes, "When I was 15 years old, I met Icelandic horses. There weren't any others in the U.S. There was no one to teach me about them. Everything I know, I learned from the horses."

## INTRODUCTION

BY PORGEIR GUÐLAUGSSON

Annie Shields is one of the first Americans to work professionally with Icelandic horses after they were imported again to America in the late 1950s. Annie was introduced to Icelandic horses at the age of 15 when the husband of her mother's college friend, Sam Ashelman, brought 13 mares (all pregnant by different stallions) and one stallion to his farm in Ashton, MD. Only two of those horses had been started in Iceland,



Annie and Firefly resting between jumps. He was called Firefly because no one was able to pronounce his Icelandic name.

and soon after their arrival Annie and her high-school mates started training the others during weekends and after school hours.

In the early 1960s those horses were

moved to Berkeley Springs, WV, where Mr. Ashelman had established the well known Coolfont Resort and Conference center. The Icelandic horses were one of the resort's attractions, used mainly as trail



Bonnie Weiss (left) helped Annie run a trailride stable at Sam Ashelman's resort in Berkeley Springs, WV for several summers.

mounts for guests, and Annie was hired to manage that part of the organization. At the center, the horses were bred on a considerable scale and at its peak there were about 65 Icelandic horses at the Coolfont Resort.

When the Icelandic horses were made redundant at the resort in 1966, Annie managed to buy 50 of them and became the biggest Icelandic horse owner in America. At first, she trained and sold the horses to buyers in her immediate surroundings and occasionally demonstrated them at horse shows. Once she brought a group of Icelandics to the Washington International Horse Show, where the horses caught much attention and 10 of them were sold on the spot.

When a businessman named Peter Strong transported a shipment of 40 horses from Iceland to Connecticut in 1969, Annie was hired to train them together with some professional Icelandic horse trainers. In the following year, she worked with horses from that shipment in Southern Vermont, preparing them for the Green Mountain Horse Association's famous 100-mile competitive ride.

From that transport, horses were sold to various buyers in America, amongst them the Rockefeller family, who bought a chestnut gelding that was delivered to the family estate by Annie herself. She also came in contact with Icelandic horse people from other countries, and in 1970 she travelled to Iceland to attend the Landsmót at Þingvellir. With a broken leg in a cast due

to a car accident, Annie brought home a unique souvenir from Iceland, namely the autographs of many famous Icelanders on her cast, including that of the Icelandic president, Kristján Eldjarn.

Annie later moved to Georgia, where for 18 years she used Icelandic horses in therapeutic riding programs she developed herself, mostly for children with behavioral or emotional problems and autism. Retired now, she still keeps a small herd of Icelandics at her home in Rome, GA.

## THE WILD HORSES

BY ANNIE SHIELDS

I had never even heard of an Icelandic horse when my mother found a little article in *The Washington Star* about a group of 12 mares being shipped to America. "First Icelandic horses in America," it said. She read the paragraph aloud because the horses' new owner was someone she knew from when she was in college, and as we climbed into the family car to go to try to find Ashton, MD I realized she was much more interested in seeing her old friend again than in finding out what a horse is like that is able to thrive in sub-zero weather. I was 15 at the time, quite immature and horse-crazy.

We found the farm about 20 miles outside of the Washington, DC city limits. It had a large frame house and a poorly maintained barn, a 55-acre field,

and patched fences. My mother and Mr. Ashelman shouted at each other, as people do who haven't seen each other in a long time.

While that was going on, I ran to the field where the mares stood in a nervous bunch. They had only been in Maryland a few days and they had not settled in from their long journey. It occurred to me, as I looked at their expressive faces, their shaggy bodies and abundant manes and tails, that all the horses I had known up until this point, the camp horses, the Pony Club horses, the horses that pulled the drays and carriages at Mackinac Island where we went in the summers, those horses were just long-legged, slick-haired, cheap knock-offs; they'd never been on the ark with Noah, but these horses reeked of authenticity. These are true wild horses, was my teen-age girl's romantic thought.

I came closer to the herd. The white of an eye flashed at me through a coarse forelock. A head tossed up from the depths of the general shagginess, and in an instant the entire herd tore down through the pasture, splattering my good school coat with mud. As the observer of birds wonders which individual decides the direction the flock will soar and turn, so I wondered about the movement of these horses. Is there a strong leader who calls the shots that the others follow, or do they share a common brain?



This imported mare, Tinna, was "wild as a March hare," Annie recalls. "She couldn't be gentled, so I brought her to Washington D.C. Against city ordinances she lived with me for months so that I could spend time with her. Here we are in front of our house in March 1962."

They galloped in great cursive loops to the far end of the pasture, hesitated a moment before heading my way again, this time with heightened speed in an arrow formation pointed directly at me. “You are the one,” I interpreted this behavior to mean. “We have chosen you to tame us and ride us!” Their intensity and speed left no doubt as to what they were trying to communicate. Their hoof beats and rhythmic snortings were precisely matching my own heartbeat. They were very close now, the earth was shaking...

“Now what year in school did you say you were in?” said a deep male voice from behind me. I let go of the fence post I had been grasping and turned to see Mr. Ashelman.

I couldn’t even remember what grade I was in. I looked at the sturdy man with vigorous gray hair. I wanted him to tell me about the horses.

“All these horses—what are you going to do with them?” I asked him.

He waved his hand vaguely at the surrounding acreage. “There’s plenty of room for them to run. Twelve mares and a stallion that’s coming soon, they’ll find something to do to stay busy.”

“Will they always be wild? I mean, won’t they ever be broke to ride?”

“You look like an able-bodied young lady. I’ll bet you could whip these horses into shape in no time.”

That brief dialogue was the job interview and the contract. I agreed to come out on weekends and try to train the horses. I had never trained a horse be-

fore, but I was a pretty good rider and not fearful. I would have my driver’s license soon. When I told Sam Ashelman I would train all those horses, I don’t think either one of us thought I really would.

## THE STORY OF TINNA

BY ANNIE SHIELDS

Tinna was one of the mares. Even though she appeared identical to the two other black mares in the herd, there was never any confusion about her identity. Even viewed from a distance she appeared nervous and insecure.

When I was working with the Icelandics, attempting to teach them good ground manners and to be ridden, I realized right away that with Tinna there would be some unusual challenges. She couldn’t be caught in the pasture. If you herded her into a stall in the barn and then tried to approach her, she would become so terrified she would begin scrambling around in a desperate attempt to get away: She would gallop in place and even fall to the ground, weak-kneed with fear. It was pitiful.

By 1962, all the horses were rideable but Tinna. I talked to Sam Ashelman about her, and we agreed that she needed to be somewhere where she could be handled every day. I came up with an idea.

At that time, I lived with my family in a big house in northwest Washington, DC, my home since I was two years old. Although this house was well within the city limits, the area had almost a country feel to it. The houses were spaced fairly far apart and several large estates graced our neighborhood. The Washington Cathedral was on a spacious lot close by.

The Episcopal Church owned “Rosedale,” an old farm that dated back to Colonial times and could brag that “George Washington once slept here.” It was right across the street from us. All traces of its agricultural past had disappeared except for a nice old barn, a farm house, and a vegetable garden. I wrote a letter to the bishop of the Washington Cathedral asking him if it would be okay if I kept Tinna in the Rosedale barn. I told him that Tinna had been running as a wild horse in Iceland and needed daily attention and handling from people in order to become tame. I strongly suspect that Sturgis Warner, the father of one of my friends and a prominent DC lawyer,

talked to the bishop about this matter and encouraged him to say yes. The bishop responded charmingly, agreeing to my proposal, and asked only that I pile the manure near the vegetable garden.

Sam Ashelman had Tinna hauled to Rosedale. She lived in a large stall with a concrete floor that opened out onto a tiny paddock. I don’t doubt that this wild herd animal was miserable in this strange new setting, especially at first. She continued to scramble and collapse when I approached her. I would feed her in the morning, muck out her stall, and spend a few minutes talking to her before riding my bike to high school. In the afternoon, I would pile hay in the corner of the stall and sit in it, reading my school assignments aloud to her. Eventually, I was able to approach her without an extreme reaction. She would always turn her butt to me. Before long, she would permit me to rub her on her back and tail.

Every time I worked with her, she would allow my hand to move a little closer to her head. In her mind, it seemed, there was an ever-receding boundary in regards to how far she would permit my hand to move. If I went over the line, I could feel her rising panic and then I’d have to retreat a few inches, back into her comfort zone. After three weeks of twice-a-day handling (much more on weekends), I was able to rub her head, handle her face, etc. Once she had accepted me, getting her in rideable condition was easy. I became a familiar sight, riding her all over northwestern Washington, even in Rock Creek Park. As a riding horse, she was as quiet and good as she could be. The hustle and bustle of the city didn’t seem to bother her.

After four months, she was returned to the herd. I’m sorry to say, without daily handling and riding, she reverted somewhat back to her old ways of eluding people and acting frightened when cornered. But with kind words and quiet hands, she could be helped to remember she was an honest and reliable riding horse.

*We hope to print more of Annie’s recollections in future issues of the Quarterly. You can find Þorgeir Guðlaugsson’s “Anecdotes of Icelandic Horse History” page at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/387579584660638/>, and Annie’s photos at [https://www.facebook.com/annie.shields1/media\\_set?set=a.1252492522275.2039006.1528389454&type=3&page=1](https://www.facebook.com/annie.shields1/media_set?set=a.1252492522275.2039006.1528389454&type=3&page=1).*



Fifty years later, Annie Shields still loves Icelandic horses. Here she is with Gloa (the chestnut) and Netta (pinto) in front of her barn at Lavender’s End Farm. Photo by Pat York.



# JOURNEY TO THE FINALS

BY SHIRIN GEIER

*Editors' note: Shirin Geier made history by being the first rider to place in the World Championship Youth Rider Tölt T1 finals with a U.S. bred horse, Prins from Creekside Farm. Shirin placed fourth overall. She told her story to Lynn LaPointe Wiese, and it was translated from German by Hannah Hofmann.*



Shirin Geier, 21, and Prins. Photo by Sina Günther.

“My eyes grew wide as the U.S. Customs Officer pulled me aside. I had just landed in Atlanta from Germany and I was being bombarded by questions including, “What is the purpose of your visit?” In my limited English, I tried to explain that I was here to visit an Icelandic horse farm and experience American life. After several hours, I was allowed to begin my American adventure.

I grew up with Icelandic horses, since my mother is an enthusiastic Icelandic horse breeder. Today, we have about 45 Icelandic horses on our beautiful farm in Bergischem Land in Germany.

Before I flew to the United States, I had already ridden in a few competitions. I had graduated from school and wanted

to gain new experiences abroad. Initially, I wanted to go to Iceland, but my father wanted me to learn proper English, so I looked for an internship in the U.S. (At that point, I didn't know I would end up riding with three German girls and a German host.) During my search, I found Creekside Farm in Rutledge, GA, owned by Katrin Sheehan. I sent an inquiry to Katrin and we made arrangements for a lengthy visit.

Prins attracted my attention on the very first day. At that point, he was being trained by my former colleague Josi Maier. When she went back to Germany, I took over Prins's training. The first time I rode him, I knew that we fit together. When I returned to Germany in May 2013, Prins, at five years old, came along to be my new competition horse. Prins has an amazing character, and is always willing to work for his rider. When I come to the barn and call his name, he nickers to say hello. Everyday Prins gives me joy, and I am lucky to have him.

Upon my return to Germany, I started my apprenticeship as a horse trainer, and we had our first competition season together. As you can imagine, training a competition horse at the highest level requires an enormous amount of time and energy. For the past two years, I have invested my entire free time into Prins's training, and did not have enough time for any other horses.



Competing at the 2015 World Championships in Denmark.



Shirin Geier's journey from Germany to the 2015 World Championships in Denmark took a detour to Atlanta, GA, in 2013. There she visited Katrin Sheehan's Creekside Farm and fell in love with a young horse, Prins. Photo by Sina Günther.

Certainly, I gained fame with my participation in the 2015 World Championship Finals and I hope that it gives me a good start as a professional horse trainer. Prins is still very young and hopefully will further develop as a competition horse. I'm already looking forward to our next competition season. Once I'm finished with my current apprenticeship, I want to gain more experience on a few other horse farms before I take over my parents' horse farm, which has always been my dream.

*Prins from Creekside Farm (US2007103468) was sired by Stigandi frá Leysingjastöðum II. His dam is Prinsessa frá Meðalfelli. Katrin Sheehan is a member of the USIHC Board of Directors.*

# CARE OF OLDER ICELANDIC HORSES

BY GABRIELE MEYER

Last fall, after a long and strenuous clinic day, I asked the Icelandic clinician for advice on how to exercise my other horse, a senior gelding who has Cushing's disease and arthritis, and therefore is on pergolide and Previcox. "What is pergolide?" he asked, and "What is Previcox?"

I realized that what seems to be so normal for me might not necessarily be common knowledge for someone who so far did not have to deal with all the little and big ailments of an aging companion horse.

In this article I report about what I have learned during the last years of caring for my now 29-year-old gelding Stefmir. The scope of this article is to make you aware of some of the most important chronic conditions of older horses that can, if not be prevented, at least be managed with knowledge and good care.

## HOW OLD IS OLD?

Most veterinarians would classify horses older than 20 years of age as old. Aging is determined by individual genetics, but also by breed. Some breeds tend to age somewhat slower, Icelandics (and others like Arabs, Welsh Ponies, Norwegian Fjords) belong to this group. Horses that are older than 30 years of age are considered to be very old.

It has been suggested to base age classification on the ability of a horse to absorb and metabolize feed: A horse is old when its weight cannot be maintained with a normal diet. As you will see later on, there is a lot of truth to this.

The number of old horses has increased over the last decades, because their role has shifted from being a working horse (that would not be kept around if it couldn't do the job any longer) to being a family member (which is treasured and loved no matter what). Throughout their life we took care of their needs, gave them a healthy and balanced nutrition, kept current on vaccinations and parasite control. All that bears fruit now, as the horses reach their golden years and live



Gabriele and Stefmir have lots of practice "dancing" together. Regular groundwork keeps the old horse strong and flexible. Photo by Hans Krueger.

longer and healthier than ever before.

Many of the conditions and illnesses of geriatric horses have been identified and described just recently, maybe within the last 10 to 15 years. Kristin Dietrich, DVM, a veterinarian in the San Francisco Bay area, notes, "The reason we see so many age-related conditions is not that the horses generally have become more prone to illnesses. Rather, because prevention and medical care have been greatly improved, more horses are actually reaching their senior years these days."

## SIGNS OF AGING

How can I see that my horse is getting old? Accepting that our horse is aging might not be easy. According to a recent study performed in England, owners of old horses tend to underestimate and under-report disease conditions. (See reference 1.) The changes might be subtle

in the beginning: Maybe some stiffness in the morning, just becoming slower overall, or a hint of a sagging topline. Unfortunately these symptoms are progressive and irreversible. But with appropriate care the progression can be slowed down and well-being can be maintained.

Researchers have gathered statistics and found out that most senior horses show at least one of the following symptoms, and many horses exhibit two or more of them (see reference 2):

- Weight problems: 15-35% of older horses lose weight, 25% are overweight
- Vision problems, partial deafness
- Reduced muscle tone, senile muscle atrophy
- Increased/reduced water intake
- Watery stool
- Slow eating, quidding (hay balling)

- Lethargy, depression
- Delayed shedding, change of hair structure
- Coughing, shortness of breath
- Stiffness, hoof problems, being off or lame

If you notice any of the symptoms on this list, it might be a good idea to call the vet for a comprehensive wellness exam.

## TOOTH PROBLEMS

Dental health is essential to the function of the digestive system. It is estimated that 95% of all horses older than 25 have tooth issues. In order to stay on top of these events, it is essential to have the senior horse's teeth checked frequently; my vet recommends checking them at least every six months. Some dental work needs to be performed by a dental specialist, using a speculum and under sedation.

Tooth care for a senior actually starts when the horse is young by maintaining a well-balanced chewing surface through yearly dental check-ups and floating if needed. Unlike in dogs or humans, the horses' teeth erupt continuously out of the jawbone to replace worn crown material. The initial length of a young horse's molar tooth is about 4 inches (crown and root combined), which is reduced to about 1 inch by age 30. At one point, the crown substance will be worn down entirely and the tooth is said to have "expired." If several teeth have expired, the horse might not be able to chew his hay effectively any longer and you might see little balls of half-chewed hay lying in his stall; this is called quidding.

Diastemata are gaps between adjacent teeth. As the crown wears down, the teeth, once standing in a tight row, now do not touch each other any longer. This creates gaps, in which food gets trapped. (Yes, like the bit of chicken that gets caught in your teeth!) In some cases the packed food flushes out by itself and new food gets trapped during the next meal (which is relatively okay). If it does not flush out, however, the material gets broken down by bacteria, which will cause infection of the gums and create deep pockets between the teeth. Eventually the tooth will become loose and infected, and needs to be removed.

What you see: The horse eats slowly and you might see him grimacing with an open mouth, trying to get the trapped

food out with his tongue. Sometimes you might notice his smelly breath.

Management: To delay losing the tooth due to periodontal disease, the dentist will clean the gaps and pockets (under sedation, as these are very sensitive) and possibly widen the gap, so that the food can flush out more easily. While this helps to slow down the process, it cannot be halted. Tooth extraction will follow at some point to spare the horse pain.

EOTRH, or Equine Odontoclastic Tooth Resorption and Hypercementosis, is a non-curable and very painful disease of the incisors in horses older than 15. As the name implies, this disease is characterized by an initial resorption of the root material, followed by an excessive production of tooth cement around the roots. This process leads to large and bulbous roots that press on each other.

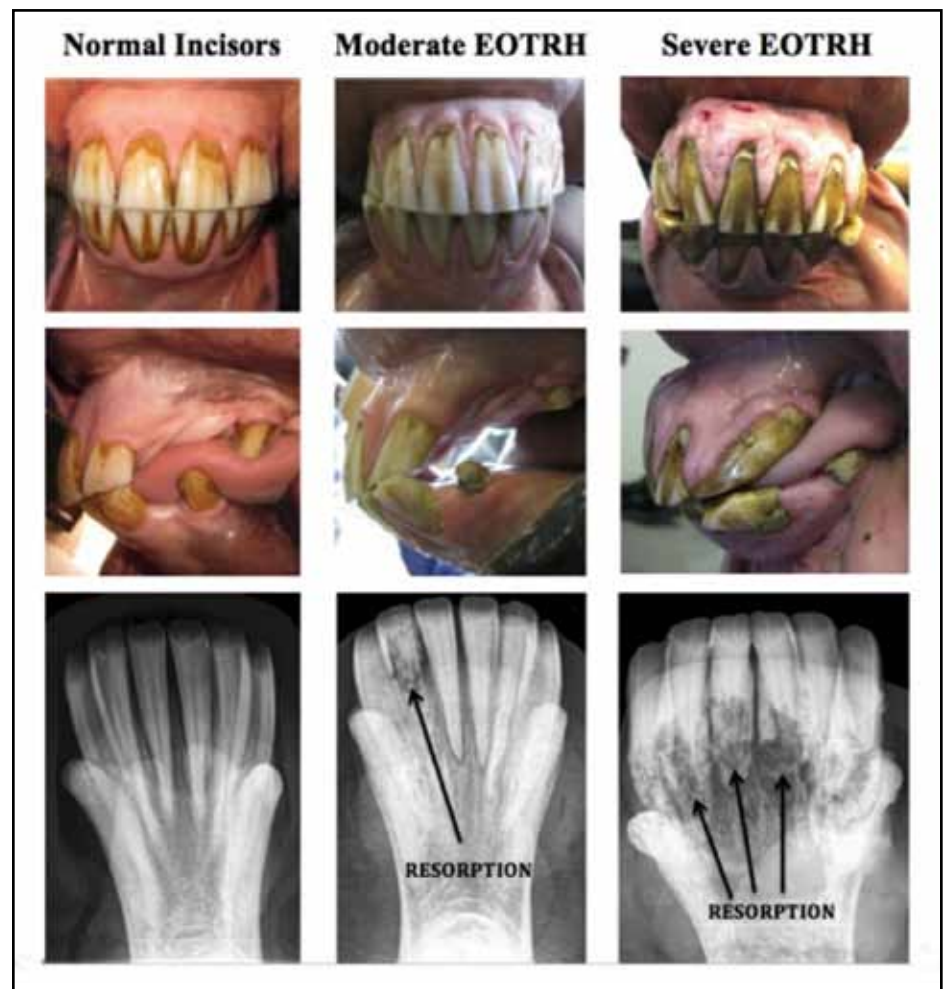
As Bo Felix, a DVM who specializes in equine dentistry and serves the northern California area, explains, "This tooth

condition is extremely painful for the horse. It just recently has been identified and described as a disease, but its cause is unclear at this point."

It has been reported that Icelandics, Haflingers, and Norwegian Fjords are very frequently affected by this disease. (See reference 3.) If this is because there simply are greater numbers of old horses of these breeds, or because they actually are more susceptible to the disease, is not known. Horses with Cushings Disease (see below) also seem to have a higher risk of developing this tooth disease.

What you see: The beginning stages are very easy to miss. Initially there might be just one or two red blisters in the gums around the roots of the incisors, and/or one to several slightly elevated whitish-pale bumps about half an inch above gum line.

The horse will likely hesitate to take a bite of a carrot and doesn't like to open his mouth to take the bit when being tacked up. As the disease progresses, more



Three horses with normal incisors, and moderate and severe EOTRH. Note the receding gum line, the bulbous appearance of the gums, and the red fistulas in the EOTRH horses. Photo by Travis Henry, DVM, Midwest Equine Services, Elkhorn, WI.



Stefnir and his younger buddy, Askur. Photo by Hans Krueger.

and larger fistulas appear, and the gums show inflammation and degradation. The horse might try to pull his head away if you knock on the incisors with your finger, or depress the gums above the roots. Some horses have been seen keeping their tongue between their upper and lower incisors to alleviate the pressure.

What you can do: An x-ray of the area can be taken to confirm diagnosis. Progression over time and severity varies from horse to horse. Bo Felix says, "Different approaches have been tried, but currently there is no proven effective method of curing or even just slowing down this very painful tooth disease." Some dentists shorten the incisors to relieve pressure. A study at the University of Vienna has shown some evidence that a preparation

of six different mushroom mycelia derived from Chinese medicine (Equident Matrix) helps to slow down the progression of EOTRH.

I have used this product over the past 12 months in my gelding, who had been diagnosed with early stage EOTRH. The gum sores he initially had have completely vanished and it seems that the whitish bumps are somewhat diminished.

Ultimately, however, the affected incisors (in most cases all of them) will have to be removed. Usually this procedure needs to be done in an equine hospital. Horse owners who have gone through this report that their horse was much happier and livelier after recovery from the surgery. While all this sounds very drastic, it helps to keep in mind that EOTRH seems to be

extremely painful. So if surgery is not an option (because, for example, the over-all condition of the horse makes the outcome questionable), euthanasia should be considered.

## **CUSHINGS DISEASE**

Cushings Disease (or PPID, Pituitary Pars Intermedia Dysfunction) is a complex condition that is caused by a hormone-secreting tumor in the pituitary gland located in the brain. The tumor triggers a cascade of hormonal events, resulting in an enhanced level of the stress hormone cortisol. While cortisol is useful in small amounts and during short durations (stress responses, fight or flight responses), continuous elevated levels of this hormone are counterproductive and even detrimental.

PPID had not been clearly characterized and diagnosed until the early 2000s (many PPID symptoms look like just simple aging), but these days the vets are very aware of it and there is a plethora of websites that help to research the condition if you suspect your horse might be affected.

You see: Shaggy coat, that might not readily shed, increased thirst and increased urination, muscle wasting in particular of the top-line and around the hip bones, a swaybacked/potbellied appearance, lethargy/depression, possibly training issues or poor performance, and increased susceptibility to infections. The symptoms are very obvious in advanced cases, less so in early cases.

Outlook/Strategy: Research shows that around a fifth of all horses older than 15 are affected, the average age of it being diagnosed is around 20. All breeds and both genders can get it, and this condition can be found with or without concurrent insulin resistance (see below). No cure is available, but with proper medication and management the symptoms can be reduced and the horse's quality of life maintained or even restored. If not treated, the symptoms get worse over time and the horses die, usually from an infection or colic.

Management: To properly diagnose the condition the vet will order a blood test. There are different blood tests available, and which one is used might be the preference of the vet. A recent update on the available tests was published in *The*

*Horse* in 2015 (see reference 4). If your horse tests positive, your vet will prescribe a medication (Prasceid, or compounded pergolide). This medication comes in the form of a liquid or capsules and is given once per day. The horse will stay on this medication for the rest of his life, the cost is \$1 to \$3 per day depending on the dosage and the type.

In my Icelandic, Stefnir, I saw a turn for the better after about a month on the medication: His lethargy was less notable and the muscle wasting could be halted (and somewhat reversed after 3 to 4 months). However the sagging topline and the potbelly more or less remained.

Affected horses need to be clipped frequently, as Cushings horses tend to sweat more.

Reduce training to what the horse can handle safely (emotionally and physically): Always remember that Cushings horses have elevated levels of the stress hormone cortisol, so try to avoid stress situations during training and care.

## EMS AND IR

EMS (Equine Metabolic Syndrome) and IR (Insulin Resistance) have long been recognized and can affect younger horses as well as seniors. Technically these conditions are not identical (IR is one of the manifestations of EMS), but for our purposes we can neglect that distinction. Basically EMS involves a genetic disposition paired with an imbalance of caloric demand and supply. If that state continues for too long, IR develops.

EMS/IR are included in this article for two reasons: First, our Icelandics do belong to the “easy keeper” category, and therefore are certainly at risk throughout all their life stages. But because of the fact that with increased age the horse’s exercise regimen usually decreases, it becomes more complicated to keep them lean, that is to balance out work and calories. Secondly, IR is common in Cushings horses, but not all Cushings horses are also IR. Therefore it is important to discern between these two conditions. IR horses do not benefit from pergolide medication.

Why is being overweight so bad? Body fat is usually regarded as an inert and inactive storage substance, but it is not! Fat cells (in particular those in the abdomen, around the organs) are metabolically and hormonally active and



An Icelandic horse with Cushings disease. Photo by Sonja Berger/Vetmeduni Vienna.

can trigger a host of metabolic disturbances that lead to elevated insulin levels and subsequent insulin resistance. These metabolic disturbances in return have a deleterious effect on the cardiovascular system, on cartilage and bones, and can even trigger laminitis.

You see: A horse that is obviously overweight and exhibits fat deposits along the crest, behind the shoulders and above the tailbone. He has decreased athletic performance, increased sweating and panting, due to fat layers preventing body heat from dissipating. He may have stiff gaits, a reluctance to move due to chronic laminitis, or even acute founder and repeated founder episodes.

Outlook/Strategy: Because laminitis is extremely painful, disabling, and expensive to treat, every effort needs to be taken to reduce the horse’s weight and get his elevated insulin level under control. In addition to that, it is certainly no fun to ride a fat and unfit horse. The prognosis is excellent once the horse has reached a normal body weight.

Management: First and foremost, plenty of daily exercise, which can be challenging to provide for an older horse. Arthritis and/or bad hoof condition (chronic laminitis) may make it necessary to exercise slowly and over a longer time period (like hand walking or ponying in walk). Provide a grass hay diet of about 1-1.2% of the target body weight (not the actual weight!). It’s important to get a weight tape to determine the horse’s weight and a barn scale to weigh the hay. Furthermore, you must banish all treats, carrots, sweet feed, grain, and grain hays.

Put a sign on your horse’s stall door to let everybody know that this horse cannot have any treats. Note: Do not reduce the grass hay to less than 1% of the horse’s body weight, as starving your horse is counterproductive and may even be dangerous!

You also need to take into consideration the quality of your hay and pasture. All plant material is comprised of three basic and nutritionally relevant building blocks: protein, fat, and carbohydrates. While all three are important (and therefore we strive to feed the best hay we can find), the carbohydrates are the most important group in the context of IR.

Carbohydrates can be divided into structural carbohydrates (making up the structure of the hay, e.g. the leaves and stems) and non-structural carbohydrates (or NSC, the molecules that are being stored within the structures). Ideally you should have your grass hay tested for its NSC content, but for those of us who have their horses in boarding barns this might not be feasible. Unfortunately you cannot determine the NSC content by looking at the hay. If you suspect that your grass hay is particularly high in sugar (because the horse doesn’t lose weight despite plenty of exercise and even though you are feeding no more than 1% of your horse’s body weight in hay, and no grain, treats, etc.), you can resort to grass pellets or pelleted complete feed that is low in NSC. This type of feed is being offered by most major feed manufacturers these days.

How about pasture quality? This is a very tricky question to answer, as the NSC in pastures varies widely over the U.S. and

its climate zones. Variables to consider are: grass variety, pasture management practices, soil type, irrigation/rain, sun intensity, temperature, and even time of the day. As this topic is highly complex, it cannot be discussed here, and I would like to refer you to the articles section of [www.safergrass.org](http://www.safergrass.org). It is safe to say, however, that IR horses cannot be on pasture without severe restrictions.

## OSTEOARTHRITIS (DJD)

Osteoarthritis or Degenerative Joint Disease (DJD) is one of the major reasons for pain in older horses. Problems in the joints due to arthritis usually creep up gradually. This condition can be brought on by earlier injuries as well as by wear and tear, and it is not curable or reversible. There is a lot of research going on to advance the knowledge about this disease and possibly find a cure. Until these efforts bear fruit, the goal is to reduce inflammation in the joints and slow the progress of the disease.

**You see:** In the beginning the signs might be subtle. The horse may seem stiff at the beginning of the ride, but can get worked out of it, or there can be low-grade lameness on and off, a reduced drive to move, or a reluctance to go downhill. Later on, the mobility of the affected joints is reduced and swelling might be noticed.

**Outlook/Strategy:** All that can be done is to manage the disease by reducing pain and inflammation. In principal, all joints can be affected, but it seems that hocks, knees, and pasterns are the most critical. Depending on the severity and on which joints are affected, different treatment options might be

chosen, ranging from feeding supplements and oral administration of NSAIDS, to intramuscular (IM) or intravenous (V) injections, or all the way to joint injections.

**Management:** It is recommended to not let the horse get overweight, so as to reduce the forces on the joints. Continuous freedom of movement helps, whereas confinement to a stall seems to exacerbate stiffness. To help reduce inflammation, omega-3s can be added to the diet (such as by feeding flax or fish oil, flax seed, or chia seed). Your vet may prescribe anti-inflammatory and pain relieving medications. While bute has been used for a long time, currently Equioxx, a slightly different substance but also belonging to the group of NSAIDS, is the drug of choice. Because Equioxx is very pricey, most veterinarians will agree to prescribe the identical but less expensive dog version, called Previcox. Depending on the affected joints, the vet will even recommend injections of substances such as Adequan and Legend.

**Feeding joint supplements:** Before you decide to feed joint supplements (costing anywhere from \$30 to \$90 per month) do your homework and research the efficacy of these supplements, as quite a number of equine practitioners question their validity. (See reference 5.)

When riding or otherwise exercising the horse, take the time for a proper warm-up, especially if the horse is confined in a smallish paddock or a stable for most of the day.

## FEEDING THE OLDER HORSE

Since older horses have somewhat reduced activity levels, they need about

80% of the energy requirements of a young horse. However, because their capacity to digest food is reduced, their feed needs to be of higher quality!

Protein levels should be increased to 12 to 14% protein by adding high quality protein sources that contain all essential amino acids. Alfalfa hay or alfalfa pellets, flax seed, hemp seed, or brewer's yeast can be used.

A comprehensive vitamin/mineral supplement can help. Often overlooked is the fact that old horses have a reduced capacity to synthesize vitamin C (vitamin C is normally produced by the horse, in contrast to humans, who need to eat their oranges to get it). One expert suggests adding 5000 mg of vitamin C per day to the feed. (See reference 6.)

If the horse has dental issues the food consistency is of importance. There are many choices, and what works will depend on the severity of the horse's dental issues. Let the horse graze if you have access to pasture, and feed hay if possible. If chewing the hay becomes a problem, replace hay (pound by pound) with grass hay pellets as needed to maintain weight and fitness. The pellets can be softened with water, but care should be taken that the soaked pellets don't ferment during hot weather conditions. A cup of (soaked if necessary) alfalfa pellets provides quality protein.

Add calories, if needed, by adding shredded beet pulp (without molasses). Beet pulp is also a welcome change



Above, moderate belly lifts help Stefniir to not forget that he does have abdominal muscles. At right, he demonstrates the highest he can lift his belly—he gets a treat for that! Photo by Hans Krueger.

that you can feed from time to time, as horses seem to get bored with the pelleted feed after a while.

Most feed companies offer so-called “senior complete feeds” that replace hay altogether. These feeds have increased protein, are extruded (easy to chew and digest), and have many beneficial components (like glucosamine, vitamins, and probiotics). Unfortunately senior complete feeds are usually formulated for picky eaters and contain a fair amount of molasses. As our horses tend to put on weight readily, and high sugar generally contributes to inflammation, this might not be the wisest choice! Make sure to read the label on any feed bag very carefully.

It goes without saying that the horse continues to need to be dewormed on a regular basis. Recent research has shown that the parasitic burden of older horses as measured by fecal egg counts is significantly higher than that of middle-aged horses. (See reference 7.)

## MANAGEMENT AND EXERCISE

Ideally the horse should have plenty of turnout or live in a large paddock with a suitable buddy. Old horses need more space, because turning around can become more difficult due to stiffness. A soft place might invite the horse to lie down (while all horses can nap standing, REM-sleep can only be reached lying down). Very old horses at one point will not dare to lie down any longer because they are afraid of not being able to get up again.

If the senior is living with younger horses, a different set of problem arises. The food requirement of young and middle-aged horses very likely will differ from that of the old horse. Some coarser hay that is perfectly fine for most horses may not be suited for the senior horse. The herd dynamics needs to be monitored closely. An older horse should not have to fight for hay, shade, shelter, or a soft spot to lie on!

Even if no sign of age-related issues is visible, yearly check-ups by a vet and bi-annual exams by a dentist help to detect issues before they become a problem.

Age-adjusted exercise can delay the onset of decline in the horse’s muscles, tendons, and bones. A regular or even daily routine of low-impact exercise is better than

occasional strenuous rides. Older horses with their seen-that-done-that attitude make awesome schoolmasters for young riders, or riders in need of confidence building. Once the horse is very old, though, he will need special attention that is best provided by the owner or caregiver, as they are better able to read the horse and adjust his exercise to the situation.

If a horse has arthritis, it is generally recommended to start any ride/exercise with a 20-minute-long warm-up phase in-hand, which includes big circles and leg-yields, before mounting. This stretches the sides of the horse and helps him to find his balance better when you mount. Once in the saddle, be mindful: Listen to your horse and be flexible in your approach. There are plenty of exercises that can be done with arthritic and old horses; please refer to reference 8 for inspiration and explanations of their respective benefits. Beyond the mere fitness aspect, these exercises help to keep the horse engaged and interested in working.

The fit of the saddle needs to be checked every half year or so. Just because it fit a few years ago doesn’t mean it will fit now as aging alters muscling, muscle tone, and skeletal back shape.

Flexing exercises are good. Carrot stretches, tail stretches, and belly lifts come to mind, but there are more. Ask your veterinarian or chiropractor which exercises and stretches they recommend. There are some great stretches described in reference 8. I do these stretches after riding when the horse is warm. Some people do flexing exercises before riding. You can try both.

Ponying is usually regarded as an excellent conditioning exercise. However, care must be taken to pony in a meaningful, beneficial way. My senior horse, Stefnir, belongs to the “stiff pacer” type, and he would prefer to just piggy pace next to the riding horse. Therefore I need to choose my terrain and speed wisely to avoid letting him do that, as it is generally assumed that piggy pace leads to more stiffness and letting any horse run in that gait would be counterproductive. Also, he has learned to keep right up with the riding horse, nose to nose (instead of keeping his head at the leg of the rider, as ponying is done with young horses). This way the rider is in a better position to address the hind end with the whip if needed and there is no risk of pulling him forward onto his front end.

## WATCHING OUT FOR PAIN

It is said that horses are programmed to avoid showing pain out of fear of drawing the attention of predators. While we all might be able to detect severe pain (for example, during a colic episode), the challenge in an older horse is to not overlook very subtle signs of pain. Experienced horsemen and women pay close attention to the eyes, body posture, and behavior. A strained look, wrinkles around the eyes, a tense muzzle, a hanging head, reluctance to go up/down hill, not coming to the gate—all these and much more are possible indicators of pain.

Even if we suspect our horse is in pain, it is sometimes impossible to tell where exactly the pain is. Unfortunately we cannot directly ask: Is this muscle hurting, or rather that tendon, or maybe the bone? Is the back pain caused by lameness, or is the lameness caused by back pain? Pain in the mouth will go undetected for a long time, because the horse continues to eat until the pain cannot be tolerated any longer.

If you haven’t done it yet, now is the time to build a good and trustful relationship with your equine vet, chiropractor, and dentist. Make sure they all work closely together and with you to optimize your senior horse’s care and wellbeing during his golden years.

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# WORK ON YOUR FIGURES!

BY ALEX PREGITZER

One of the many ways to entertain ourselves and our horses during long winter and spring evenings, when it is too cold or dark to ride outside or the footing is not good, is to practice our skills in an indoor riding arena. But what do you do in there? It gets way too boring to just ride around and around and around.

There is a great set of arena patterns that I recommend to my students: It's called riding figures. By definition, figures are prescribed paths for a horse to be ridden on indoors—but they really should not be limited to that. All of them can be practiced outside in a field or even on the trail: It is just a matter of being creative and wildly determined!

Have you ever wondered about those letters you see in riding arenas? In a riding ring (particularly a dressage ring), the arena will often be marked with letters. These letters help the riders keep the correct size or shape of the figures they want to ride. If your arena doesn't have letters, you can make do without. Trainer Nicki Esdorn suggests that "a little plastic cone can be a handy helper, if you feel like marking some points to prevent getting lost." Adds trainer Laura Benson, "The important thing is that you have a marker or a milestone. You need a focal point. That's why the letters are so handy. Outside, it can be a stone or a bush or some trees."

## WHY RIDE FIGURES?

Following a set pattern gives us feedback about our own skills as riders. Am I able to cue the horse correctly to turn at E? To stop at C? To change direction at H? Or to transition into tölt in the middle of the short side? Do I have a favorite side and need to improve my other side?

Following a set pattern also gives us feedback about our horse's training, both strengths and weaknesses. Can my horse canter on a 20-meter circle, using the correct lead in each direction? Or can he only manage a few steps of canter in the ring, but is great outside galloping up the hill? Can he trot on the left rein? Or only on the right rein? Can he go straight down the long side or is he lunging out, and it seems



Here Alex's student Kaitlyn Rose Schneider rides Alex's horse Svafnir, practicing arena figures in an indoor arena. Since there are no markers, Alex uses cones.

impossible to stay on the wall? Is he able to tölt a volte, that is, a small 10-meter circle?

Riding in an arena with more than one horse at a time will also give you feedback about your own and your horse's ability to focus. Can my horse handle a rider coming towards us or passing us from behind? On the trail, we will sometimes get passed, but we hardly ever have a horse coming towards us at a canter. Arena riding can help improve our skills on the trail and thus make our weekend trail rides much more enjoyable!

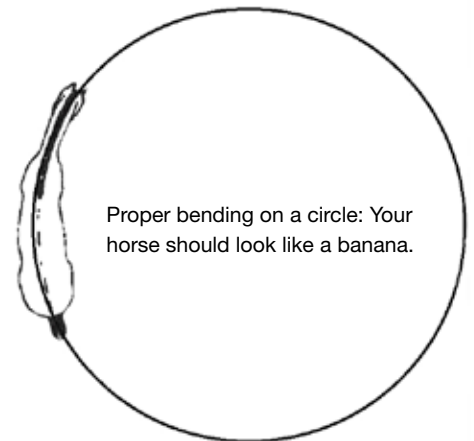
In upcoming issues of the *Quarterly*, we will introduce you to some common arena figures and explain them in depth. Today, we will start out with some basics.

## BENDING

All of the arena figures below ask for your horse to be bent correctly. But how do you bend your horse? Here are some tips:

The term bending refers to the whole horse, not just its neck. You want your horse to look like a banana.

Seat aids and leg aids: To bend your horse, you position your outside leg a hand's breadth behind the girth. This will automatically add weight onto your inside seat bone. Sit up straight! The weight will be there without you trying. The horse feels the weight and wants to stay underneath your center of gravity, so you can use that seat aid as a turning aid. At the same time, having your outside leg a little back prevents the horse's hind legs from swing-





ing out. It works as a barrier if your horse wants to move to the outside too much, for example, and enlarges the circle without you asking for him to do that. Your inside leg stays in its regular position. You use it to ask the horse to bring his hind leg forward and to hollow slightly around your leg as if it were a bending pole, even though the horse's rib cage obviously is not built to bend much. You also use your inside leg to push the horse out if he wants to fall to the inside and come further into the center of the circle or the arena.

**Rein aids:** When you bend your horse, you start out by flexing his neck gently a little bit to the desired side. For the figures below, you want that side to be the inside (toward the center of the arena). In technical dressage terms, the "inside" is the side your horse is bent towards: the hollow side. In everyday riding and training, however, we often refer to the center of the arena as the inside and to the rail as the outside. Remember that the outside rein has to give in order to allow the horse to flex his neck. Once the neck is flexed, the outside rein keeps up a gentle, steady rein contact. You don't want to flex the neck too much—a little goes a long way. You just want to make sure that your horse's neck is not straight. If you can get a glimpse of either your horse's inside nostril or his eye, that should be plenty.

Remember to always ask gently and never attempt to hold your horse in a certain position, as that would make him uncomfortable and lead to him bracing against you. This is not the goal! You can find more detailed descriptions of the basic leg, rein, and seat aids in Issue Two 2011 of the *Quarterly*.

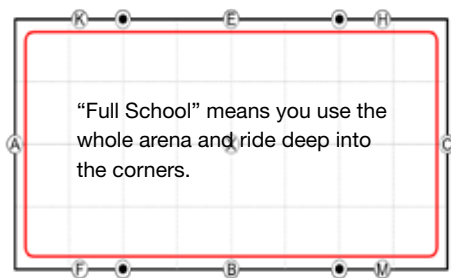
## FULL SCHOOL

"Full school" means staying on the rail (or against the wall) and using the whole arena. That sounds boring. But there are many good reasons to do it. Here's when I and my students ride full school:

**Warming up:** You want to avoid tight turns and bending the horse when you first start out.

**Cooling down:** You want to walk your horse on a loose rein and let him relax after a good workout.

Asking the horse to think forward, to ride with more energy, to focus on go: This is especially suited for a more laid-back horse and for young horses.



**Doing exercises without reins:** Your instructor may ask you to knot your reins up on the horse's withers and trot around the arena to work on your posture, for example.

**Practicing speed changes within the gaits:** For instance, begin töltng slowly, speed up on the long sides, and slow down before the short sides.

**Practicing canter on an unbalanced horse.**

**Practicing flying pace on the long sides of the arena**

**Working with young horses:** Green horses who have just started being ridden don't know left and right yet. The arena rail provides guidance without you having to worry too much about steering.

**Riding around the full arena sounds self-explanatory.** However, like any arena figure, doing it correctly is not as easy as it looks. Here's how to ride full school:

Make sure you are going straight down the long side and that your horse is not bent to either left or right.

As you approach a corner, you need to bend your horse to the inside. Slide your outside leg back to position it a hand's width behind the girth. At the same time, ask gently for a slight flexing of the neck with your inside rein. The outside rein gives enough to allow the flexion, but don't forget to afterwards keep a steady contact on the outside rein. Together with the use of your inside leg, this will help your horse stay on the outside riding track of the arena, rather than drifting in toward the center of the ring.

Once you are through the corner, you reposition your hands and legs so that you ride straight for a few strides before getting ready for your next turn. When riding full school along the rail, you want to use the corners and ride fairly deep into all of them.

## CHANGE OF REIN

Change of rein across the long diagonal is a relatively easy way of changing directions in

an arena. It is also a great exercise for other reasons:

It teaches precision (turn exactly at H and arrive exactly at F).

It teaches straightness.

It teaches you to bend the horse correctly.

Adds Laura, "Change of rein across the long diagonal is an especially good pattern for forward horses. Extension on the diagonal, and soft yielding to slow down before the corner on the short side, can make the horse more relaxed in his transitions. It also breaks up the infinite pattern of going around and around."

How do you do rein changes across the long diagonal? If you study the diagram, you'll see that there are four possible ways to change your direction. Riding on the left rein (counterclockwise), you can either make a diagonal line starting at H and heading toward F, or from F to H. Likewise, riding on the right rein (clockwise), you can either make a diagonal line from K to M, or from M to K.

In this example, you are riding on the left rein (counterclockwise) and you want to change direction to ride on the right rein (clockwise). You will ride across the diagonal from H to F.

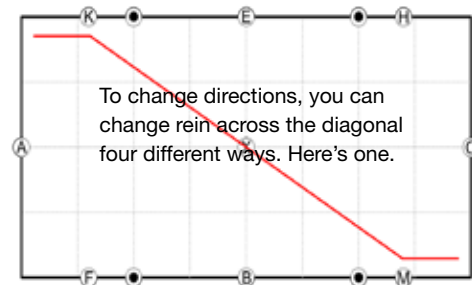
Make sure your horse is bent correctly to the inside while riding through the second corner on the short side, before you reach H (see the description of riding through a corner, above).

Once you have passed the corner, turn at H and ride towards F. Straighten your horse and yourself, as you are now riding straight.

Cross the exact center of the arena (X).

Once you have passed X and are approaching F, you want to slowly start to bend your horse the other way, as you will be changing direction. Bend your horse to the new inside (the right).

Ride deep into the first corner of the short side, asking your horse for a correct bend.



## 20-METER CIRCLE

The 20-meter circle is a staple of arena riding and a great tool for so many reasons. But there is one very important thing to know about riding a 20-meter circle: Riding it correctly is so much more difficult than it looks!

The 20-meter circle is one of those basics that you will always come back to. I use it with my students because it teaches:

**Precision:** You have to make an exact circle, not an egg.

**Correct use of the aids** (for both horse and rider): The rider has to use seat aids, leg aids, and rein aids, and the horse has to respond to each of them.

**Focus** (both horse and rider): It is only possible to ride it correctly with a horse that is on the aids for the full circle.

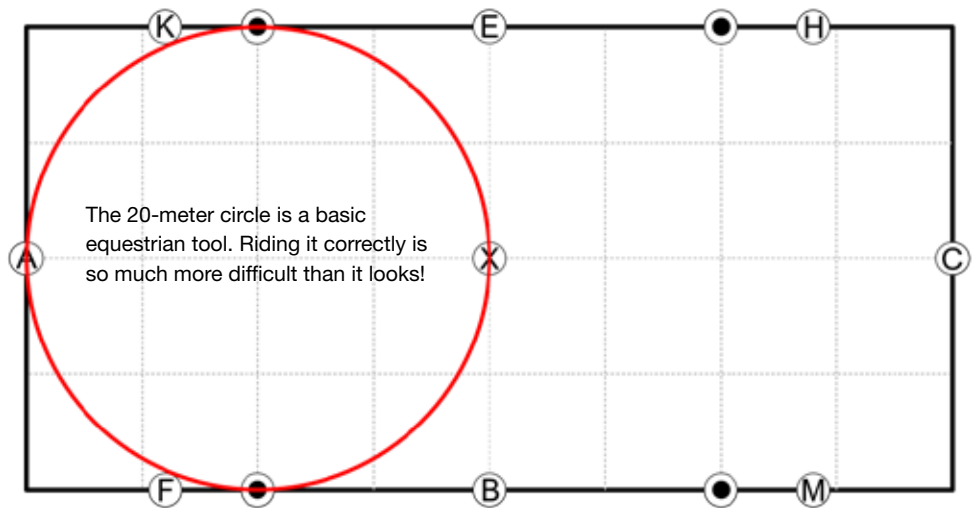
**Obedience:** the horse must yield to the inside leg.

Riding a 20-meter circle helps keep the horse supple and athletic, and helps improve the horse's rhythm. It can be used to teach a horse to tölt, trot, or canter on a circle, to work on collection, or to improve transitions. It can be used to slow down a horse without pulling on the reins. The circle can be used to ride in a smaller area if you don't quite trust your horse, want to stay close to the instructor, or to make room for somebody else on the other end of the arena.

Adds Laura, "The most important thing we need to remember about riding on a circle is that we train circles to teach the horse to be straight! On the circle, the horse tracks his hind legs in the path of his fore legs, teaching him to be equally balanced in both directions. Once he accomplishes this, he is more apt to be equal in both reins going straight."

"I emphasize to my students," says Nicki, "that it strengthens the hindquarters, since the inside hind leg needs to step more under the body. It also stretches the outside shoulder and increases shoulder movement, which is especially important for töltting. Riding circles and curves makes a horse stronger and more flexible."

How do you ride a 20-meter circle? First, you need to know that the arena I ride in—and the one in the diagrams—is a standard 40-meter size. So a 20-meter circle can be ridden in either half of the arena. When you no longer need the rail to provide guidance—or if your arena is smaller than 40 meters long—you can ride your circle in



the middle of the arena. Just make sure it's a circle! Here are some tips:

The most important part about riding a circle is not to just follow the circle line correctly, but to make sure that your horse is never straight and not bent to the outside (unless you are riding some very advanced dressage exercises that ask for it). Ideally, the horse is bent correctly to the inside while following the circle line.

Bend your horse correctly to the inside by positioning your outside leg about a hand's width behind the girth. At the same time, ask gently for a slight flexing of the neck with your inside rein. The outside rein gives enough to allow the flexion, but don't forget to keep a steady contact on that rein. Together with the use of your inside leg, this steady contact will help your horse stay on the circle line, rather than drifting into the inside of the circle.

Imagine you and your horse will touch (not quite but nearly) the circle points at A, X, and the two markings (if arena letters and markings are used) next to F and K. On the diagram, those markings are a big black dot.

When riding a circle, you don't ride into the corners of the short side (unlike riding full school).

## COMBINATIONS

Now if you combine those three patterns—full school, change of rein, and 20-meter circles—and ride them at different gaits, you already have a whole training session cut out for you!

In addition, both the diagonal change of rein across the arena and the circle are patterns you will find included in Tölt in Harmony, a new Icelandic horse discipline

which has become very popular in the U.S. and worldwide. Tölt in Harmony uses a large figure eight with a straight long diagonal. These patterns are ridden much like circles with a diagonal rein change across the arena. For more about Tölt in Harmony, and to see a diagram of the TiH pattern, consult the articles in Issue One 2015 ("Trausti Teaches Us to Dance") and Issue Three 2015 ("The Simple Things") of the *Quarterly*.

One last word... If you have an instructor to work with, I strongly encourage you to discuss these exercises with your instructor and to practice together. No article can replace a lesson with somebody who can show you how to do things correctly and let you know when you've succeeded. An article can be an inspiration or can help explain the theory, but it can never replace a one-on-one riding session.

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*Alexandra Pregitzer is an IPZV Trainer C, certified in Germany. Nicki Esdorn is a FEIF International Trainer Level 1, certified in the U.S. Laura Benson is a graduate of Hólar College and an FT Trainer C, certified in Iceland. For more information on Icelandic horse trainers and riding instructors, and their certifications, see [www.icelandics.org/Trainers/index.php](http://www.icelandics.org/Trainers/index.php).*



## WHY REGISTER YOUR HORSE WITH THE USIHC?

*Photo by Martina Gates*

### ***Proof of ownership***

Registering your horse is proof of ownership, like the title for your car. If the horse you buy is already registered with the USIHC, it means it is registered in the previous owner's name, both in the U.S. and in the worldwide database WorldFengur. In order to transfer ownership to you, the previous owner and you just need to sign the registration papers and send them to the USIHC Registrar. You will receive new papers—proving you are the new owner—in the mail shortly.

### ***Proof of pure breed***

Registration is proof that your horse is a purebred Icelandic, and that increases the value of your horse. All registered horses are DNA typed. This is especially important if your horse is a mare or stallion.

### ***Participation***

Some USIHC programs and events require the horse to be registered, such as the Pleasure Rider Program, the Ambassador Program, the World Championship tryouts, FEIF Youth Cup tryouts, American Youth Cup tryouts, and inclusion in the USIHC Stallion book. Registration keeps the international Icelandic horse database, WorldFengur, accurate and complete. Not only stallions and mares, but also geldings need to be registered for a full offspring record. The Icelandic horse community and breeders worldwide depend on this source of information, a model that other breed organizations do not have.

### ***How to Register***

Registering your horse costs only between \$15 and \$50. A surcharge of \$25 is due for non-USIHC members. The Registry Rules and all forms needed are available at [www.icelandics.org](http://www.icelandics.org), the Congress website. Or contact the Registrar, Ásta Covert, at [registry@icelandics.org](mailto:registry@icelandics.org) or 866-929-0009.

***Support the Icelandic horse nationally and internationally—register your horse with the USIHC!***



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# 5<sup>TH</sup> Annual Icelandic Horse Show May 21 - 22, 2016

USIHC Sport Judge A  
Alexandra Dannenmann



Chantal Jonkergouw  
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# F A R M L I S T

The owners of the farms listed below have offered to have you visit in order to become acquainted with the Icelandic horse. Some are breeders, some importers, and some are interested in breed promotion alone. Their listing here does not constitute an endorsement of any kind by the USIHC.

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laura@valkyrieicelandic.com  
www.valkyrieicelandic.com

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m.meier@hestar-ranch.us  
www.hestar-ranch.us

Lough Arrow Icelandics  
Andrea Brodie, Dvm  
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Aguilar, CO 81020  
(719) 680-2845 (phone)  
fiddlinvet@gmail.com  
tinyurl.com/3xn3yys

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(239) 223-5403 (phone)  
floridaicehorsefarm@gmail.com  
www.floridaicehorsefarm.com

## INDIANA

Windstar Ranch  
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Evansville, IN 47725  
(812) 983-4125 (phone)  
bonniwindell@yahoo.com  
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## MAINE

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(207) 257-2278 (phone)  
(207) 941-9871 (fax)  
grandviewfarm@midmaine.com

## MASSACHUSETTS

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ebbameehan@me.com

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toltstar@yahoo.com  
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slyterz@yahoo.com

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www.cytraas.net

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juli2875@yahoo.com  
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susan.peters@gmail.com  
www.silvermapleicelandics.com

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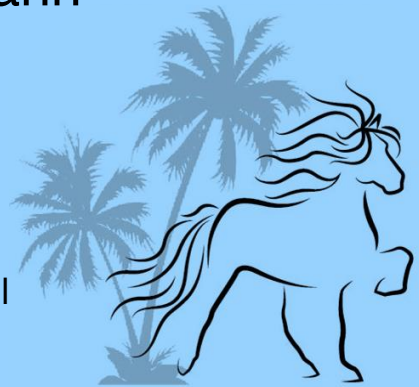
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