

Issue Two

THE

2017

ICELANDIC HORSE

Q U A R T E R L Y



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



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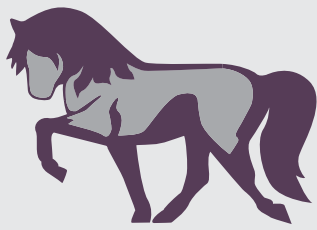
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WHY REGISTER YOUR HORSE WITH THE USIHC?

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.

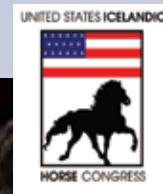
Participation

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, the Congress website. Or contact the Registrar, Ásta Covert, at registry@icelandics.org or 866-929-0009.

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



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), the International Federation of Icelandic Horse Associations, representing the national Icelandic horse associations of 21 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.

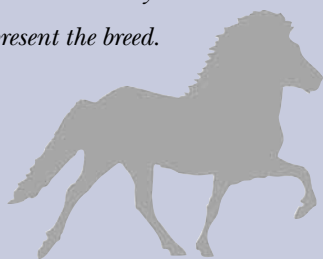


Photo by Martina Gates

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 indexed and available online.

You have free access to WorldFengur, the worldwide database of all registered Icelandic horses. About 450,000 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. The Education Committee also offers Sport Judges Seminars for those wanting to learn more about show rules and how to judge competitions. A \$1,000 grant is available to members who complete their certification to become national or international judges.

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 13 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. The USIHC Board has set aside funding for regional clubs to host clinics, schooling shows, sanctioned shows, young horse evaluations, and full breeding shows.

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 recommended and prohibited tack and equipment, track sizes, and other information for competition riders.

Sanctioned shows and schooling shows are eligible for USIHC Funding; contact the Competition committee. Show organizers have access to the IceTest software so that eligible scores 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 feed-

back from an international 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 display materials, including 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 nonmembers, 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 and seminars are eligible for USIHC funding. 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 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

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



ICELANDIC HORSE

Q U A R T E R L Y

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

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On the cover: Our cover girl, Addy, is ten years old and new to Icelandic Horses, but has been riding most of her life. She recently joined the brand new "Toppur" club. Virginia Lauridsen, one of Toppur's founders, introduced her to Gnyr fra Morastödum, a 12-year-old, five-gaited gelding. They formed an immediate bond! Here Addy shows him at the Iowa Horse Fair at a promotion for Icelandic horses by the Toppur club. Addy and Gnyr not only excelled at "Lemonade Tölt", but they also charmed the audience with their performance of tölt and even flying pace! Photo by Luke Shryer.

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FROM THE TREASURER

FROM THE EDITORS:

In our report from the USIHC Annual Meeting in the last issue of the Quarterly, we noted that “the Congress ended the year with about a 4% loss.” Treasurer Kari Pietsch-Wangard wrote to tell us after the issue had come out that this statement was not correct. “That percentage was the difference of the loss between 2015 and 2016,” she explained, “showing that they were pretty similar in amount: -\$9,462.78 in 2016 vs. -\$9,848.98 in 2015, meaning they were within almost 4% of each other. The actual loss from the funds from the beginning and the end of 2016 was closer to 9.3%.” How, we wondered, can the USIHC afford to spend over 9% more than we bring in each year through membership dues, registration fees, ads in the magazine and on the website, the Farm List, event fees, etc.? How quickly will we deplete our reserves? We asked Kari to discuss the USIHC’s finances, and we encourage you to check out her monthly treasurer’s reports at www.icelandics.org/bod/minutes.

TURNING A LOSS INTO A WIN

Those of you who have reviewed the Annual USIHC Treasurer’s reports over the last few years may have noticed that we are spending more than we’re receiving from income. In 2014, the year-end cash balances were reduced by around \$1,500 (1%). In 2015, the loss reduced these balances by \$9,850 (almost 7%). In 2016, it was \$9,460 (just over 7%).

Is this deficit spending a good thing or a bad thing? Well, it depends. To those who have been USIHC members for many years, these losses have been seen as good news.

Between 2006 and 2013, our year-end cash balances increased from \$92,600 to \$145,150, or over 56%. The founding Board members of the USIHC worked hard to build a strong financial base for our organization. Subsequent Boards felt obligated to be fiscally responsible and to maintain a strong operating reserve for the USIHC. This was especially true during the recent economic downturn and recession. The Board was concerned that the USIHC would experience a significant loss of membership (and income), as people had to make difficult decisions on how to spend their leisure dollars. Luck-



ily, the USIHC did not experience a large membership loss, which resulted in an increase of our cash reserves.

As our reserves grew, members kept asking why the Board was holding back and not spending more to support programs and events. Did the USIHC really need to carry such large cash balances? The answer was no, so the Board set about identifying ways to spend down the membership funds. The Board wanted these funds to reach as many members as possible as fairly as possible.

Their first approach, the USIHC Grant Program, attempted to give members complete freedom to fulfill their needs within the USIHC Mission Statement. This became frustrating both for the Board and for many members, however, since the boundaries were vague, and this program was suspended after a few years. However, it did help get the first American Youth Cup off the ground.

The challenge for the Board was to figure out how to support the core programs that fulfill USIHC’s Mission Statement (see page 6 in this issue for the entire Mission Statement). The Flagship Funding Program was started to support the Breeding and Sport branches of our organization. This program now provides \$1,000 per sanctioned Sport or Breeding Evaluation event. The Board also heard

calls for more educational programs. Using the Regional Clubs as a conduit, the USIHC now funds up to \$1,000 per club (\$500 for each event) for educational clinics. This approach seems to have solved the problem that kept coming up when members’ proposals to the Grant Program were turned down.

Last year the Board committed to the Icelandic Blood Profile Project. This research project at Cornell University will result in a standard blood profile unique to the Icelandic horse, something that will benefit every owner of an Icelandic horse in our country. While USIHC membership funds provided \$5,000 to get the project off the ground, so many generous individuals donated to this project that the balance needed was fully covered, with enough left over to allow for additional tests to be added. (For more information on the Blood Profile Project, see the articles in Issues Three 2016 and One 2017, as well as this issue, of the *Quarterly*.)

Will we be able to continue this deficit spending forever? Of course not. Each year the USIHC Board will work off a base budget, identifying the income and expenses that are part of our core mission. At the same time, the Board members will decide, on a year-by-year basis, what we feel is a comfortable excess funding pool to make available for Flagship and educational programs.

This approach explains how the USIHC Board is investing in the future of the organization while fulfilling our Mission Statement. By investing wisely and growing our membership numbers, we hope to get to a point where the USIHC is sustainable and still able to maintain these (and future) programs. This is how the USIHC can turn a loss into a win for us all.

—Kari Pietsch-Wangard

LEISURE RIDERS

The Leisure Committee is creating a new program for pleasure riders. Sea 2 Shining Sea (S2SS) will map a route circling through the U.S., starting and finishing at the Statue of Liberty. The program was designed to satisfy former members of the USIHC Pleasure Riding Program, as well as engaging those taking part in the FEIF Virtual Rides. Riders can participate as individuals, as teams of two or more, or as Regional Clubs. A Facebook page will be used to build the social and virtual aspect of the program through shared stories and photos, and riders will be able to earn several levels of awards (still to be determined). The program was approved by the USIHC Board in April, and the committee plans to launch it on the Fourth of July. Watch the USIHC website for details and how to sign up, or contact the committee at leisure_riding@icelandics.org to help out with these and other programs for leisure riders.



Virginia Lauridsen rides her stallion Gosi frá Lambastöðum in the stallion parade at the Iowa Horse Fair in April. "Everyone loved his thick mane and tail and calm demeanor. His attitude was especially striking following the other breeds' stallions, which were often quite agitated," Virginia says. Photo by Luke Shryver.

2017 SHOW SEASON

The first USIHC-sanctioned Icelandic horse show of the season was the CIA Open, held April 29-30 at Flying C Ranch in Santa Ynez, CA. Results are available at www.icelandics.org/showresults. The second show of the year is the Léttleiki Spring Show, June 3-4 at Swallowland Farm in Shelbyville, KY.

So far seven sanctioned shows have been approved for 2017: Two in Kentucky (in June and October, with the October show a WorldRanking Show), three in California (in April and October in Santa Ynez, and the American Youth Cup in July in Santa Cruz), one in Wisconsin (in August), and the upcoming NEIHC Open, which will be held at Thor Icelandics in Claverack, NY on June 24-25.

For competition rules, see www.icelandics.org/rules. For more information, contact Ásta Covert at competition@icelandics.org.

EASTERN REGIONAL CIRCUIT

Four USIHC-sanctioned shows are taking part in the Eastern Regional Icelandic Horse Championships in 2017: the Léttleiki Spring Show, the NEIHC Open, Flugniirkeppni in Wisconsin, and the Kentucky Icelandic Horse Show. To qualify for the championships, riders sign up online and declare the division in which they'd like to earn points. They then must compete in two or more shows on the circuit. The rider with the highest average score in each division will become an Eastern Regional Champion and win a special sponsored prize; the top five riders in each division will also earn a ribbon and trophy. Awards for green horses follow the horse, not the rider. For details, see www.erihc.org.

AMERICAN YOUTH CUP

The second American Youth Cup will be held from June 25 to July 2 at Sæstaðir in Santa Cruz, CA, with meals and lodging on the campus of the University of California at Santa Cruz. Organized by Heidi Benson, with help from the USIHC Youth Committee, the AYC is being supported by \$2,000 from the USIHC Youth Fund

and \$100 per member participant (not to exceed \$2,000) from USIHC General Funds. Applications and instructors' evaluations were due by March 25; successful applicants were notified in April.

WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS

The 2017 Icelandic Horse World Championships will be held August 7-13 in the Netherlands. USIHC members wishing to try out for the team had from March 12 to May 29 to submit a video; the team was to be chosen by USIHC Sport Leader Ásta Covert based solely on the marks given by the judge hired to evaluate the videos. According to FEIF rules, the U.S. can send seven adult riders and up to five additional youth riders. However, by the April Board meeting, only one USIHC member had expressed interest in trying out for the team. For more information on the selection process and on preparing for future championships, see www.icelandics.org/competition/wc_team.

For more information on this year's event, see wk2017.nl. Writes Ásta, "Even if you don't have any interest in ever participating as a rider, please consider joining us in the Netherlands. This is a great opportunity to see top Icelandic horses and to meet people from around the world who share your interest in the Icelandic horse."

TRAINER EDUCATION

The USIHC Education Committee has finished translating the German Icelandic Horse Association's (IPZV) Horse Trainer C course into English. The course content is in accordance with the international FEIF Level 1 trainer course and consists of over 350 PowerPoint slides covering a variety of topics from gaits, riding instruction, training matters, and accident prevention to arena riding, lungeing, ponying, long distance riding, trail riding, seat schooling, and more. The translators were a small group of bilingual volunteers led by Education chair Alexandra Dannenmann; native English speaker Kari Pietsch-Wangard edited the translations. These materials will be available to both instructors and students participating in future FEIF Trainer Level 1 courses in the U.S.



The "Girl Gang" practicing for their Equine Affair Ohio demo at Taktur Icelandics in April. Part of their routine was broadcast on Horse Network. (See www.horsenetwork.com/) Left to right, Lori Cretney on Flís, Maria Octavo on Gulldís, Grace Strausser on Snævör, Emma Strausser on Spurning, Alicia Flanagan on Rós, and Zoe Johnson on Stjarni. Photo by Coralie Denmeade.

BREEDING EDUCATION

In April, the USIHC Board approved four \$500 grants to support Young Horse Linear Description events in 2017. The Breeding Committee is restructuring the Cantella Award to reflect a new emphasis on education and breeder development; the results of the 2017 Young Horse Linear Description events will not be published, and no national award or ranking will be conferred.

Four new Breeding Evaluation Education/Promotion grants of \$500 were also approved by the Board in April. Grants will be given to USIHC-affiliated clubs that organize a clinic or seminar with the goal of educating breeders, owners, and potential buyers about evaluations for adult breeding horses. The intent is to increase interest and participation in future ridden evaluations.

The Breeding Committee is also devel-

oping a new Breeder of Merit program, as well as a breeders' activity club. Email breeding@icelandics.org for more information.

HORSES OF ICELAND

The USIHC has joined "Horses of Iceland," a marketing program for the Icelandic horse being managed from Iceland. The focus is on the horse, more than on the country, and although the program's initial efforts were more Iceland-centric its focus is spreading wider each year. The program includes a Facebook and social media presence, as well as a closed Facebook partners group for worldwide discussion, Skype meetings, workshops on marketing activities, market surveys and statistics, PR and media contacts, brochures, postcards, and other marketing materials. According to the project's goals, "The aim for the Horses of Iceland project is to strengthen the image of the Icelandic horse through strategic marketing and cohesive promotion activities. The main focus is on value creation and increased revenues within industries related to the Icelandic horse." Support in Iceland comes from the Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture; the Ministry of Fisheries and Agriculture; Íslandsstofa/Promote Iceland; the Horse Breeders Association of Iceland (FHB); the Equestrian



A group photo of the 2016 Eastern Regional Championships award ceremony at the Kentucky Icelandic Horse Show in October. Photo by Charlotte Reilly.



Enjoying the spring grass in New York are Fengur frá Litlu-Ásgeirsá on left, Jenny from Thor Icelandics in the middle, and Álfrún frá Hrafnstöðum on right. Photo by Nicki Esdorn.

Association of Iceland (LH); the Icelandic Horse Trainers Association (FT); Hólar University; the Agricultural University of Iceland; and the Icelandic Travel Industry Association (SAF).

AFFILIATED CLUBS

The USIHC Regional Clubs committee has been renamed the Affiliated Clubs committee to encourage the formation of activity-based clubs; Leslie Chambers remains the chair. The existing Regional Clubs have been asked to provide the names, city, and state of their members so that the USIHC can accurately calculate its census number (and thus voting power) within FEIF. In March, Toppur (in Iowa) became the 13th USIHC Regional Club, with Glitfaxa (in the San Francisco Bay area) joining as the 14th in April.

The following clubs have requested funding for clinics, under USIHC Policy #31: Alaska (Steinar Sigurbjörnsson in May and Trausti Guðmundsson in June), Flugnir (May and September), Hestafolk (Freya Sturm in March and May), Klettafjalla (Coralie Denmeade in April), NEIHC (Alex Dannenmann in April and Alex Pregitzer in June), NWIHC (Arnar

Sigurðarson in June), St Skutla (Terral Hill in June), and Toppur (Guðmundur Skúlason in April).



Hugar, who appeared on page 11 of the last issue of the *Quarterly*, adds to his fame by modeling for the cover of a young adult novel. Unfortunately *The Long Trail Home* is not about Icelandic horses. Hugar is owned by Jeanne Lyke of the Flugnir Regional Club.

BOARD MEETINGS

The USIHC Board of Directors met by conference call on February 7, March 7, and April 11. Complete minutes, including the monthly Treasurer's and Secretary's reports, can be found online at www.icelandics.org/bod/minutes.

NEIHC JUDGING SEMINAR

The Northeast Icelandic Horse Club hosted a USIHC Sport Judging Seminar on April 20-23 in Hudson, NY. FEIF International Sport Judge Þorgeir Guðlaugsson taught the seminar, and Alexandra Dannenmann—also a FEIF International Sport Judge—assisted him.

Þorgeir, who developed the course materials and content of the seminar, is a highly experienced and qualified FEIF international Sport Judge and has judged more Icelandic Horse World Championships than any other judge. He will be the chief judge at the World Championships this year in Holland.

Classroom instruction and final video testing was held in a conference room at the St. Charles Hotel in Hudson. Students were given the opportunity to “practice judge” a schooling show held at Thor Icelandics in Claverack, NY on the third day of the seminar.

Twelve people participated in the seminar, and six chose to take the test—which consists of both an oral theory exam and a written practical exam. Jana Meyer, an IPZV Trainer B who resides in Vermont, passed the test and earned a USIHC Sport Level B certification. This means that, not only did she pass the test on a C-level, but that her higher marks enabled her to earn the B-level certification as well. A B-level judge is entitled to judge sanctioned shows when there is more than one judge, excluding World Ranking events.

Many thanks to NEIHC and USIHC Board member Leslie Chambers for organizing this event. We encourage pleasure riders, competition riders, and anyone interested in the gaits and special qualities of the Icelandic horse to consider participating in a future seminar.



2017 RULES ONLINE

The General FEIF Rules and Regulations, as well as the versions for breeding, education, sport, and youth, are now online and available for download on the FEIF website at www.feif.org. All rules are valid as of April 1, 2017. In addition, all changes regarding sport competitions are published in a separate document on the Sport document page.

FEIF CONFERENCE

The Annual FEIF Conference took place in Helsinki, Finland for the first time this year. As every year, the conference started with the Annual Delegates' Assembly, the highest authority within FEIF. Twelve out of 18 FEIF member countries entitled to vote participated in the 2017 assembly. The Icelandic Horse Association of Liechtenstein (LIIV) was welcomed by the delegates as a full member of FEIF, so the FEIF family now includes 21 full and associate members.

The delegates unanimously reelected Gunnar Sturluson (FEIF president) and Gundula Sharman (FEIF Director of Youth) for two years. Doug Smith (FEIF Director of Sport) was elected for one year and Cosima König, member of the FEIF Arbitration Council, was elected for three years. The delegates unanimously approved the auditor's report, and the Board of FEIF was released from its responsibility.

The sport proposals on the descriptions of the pace tests were withdrawn to be further elaborated in the FEIF Sport Committee. The proposals on the membership fee for the next years, equipment and shoeing, standardization of terms, disqualification, reshoeing, late withdrawal, C-finals, reserve youth riders, and many more were accepted by the delegates. Also, the breeding proposals on the naming of horses and on the head judge regulation were accepted. All changes will be included in the FEIF Rules and Regulations but also published as separate documents on the FEIF website.

EDUCATION

The FEIF Education Department meeting was notable for its constructive discussions and extensive exchange of information. Herdís Reynisdóttir (IS) and Margrit Rusterholz (CH) did not stand for reelection after many years as committee members. The Education Department thanked them for their valuable contributions during all those years. The new members of the committee, elected by the participants of the meeting, are Sveinn Ragnarsson (IS) and Bea Rusterholz (CH). Iceland has offered to host the next annual Education Meeting in March 2018 at Hólar. Focus will be on teaching and training. Further information will follow.

SPORT

The FEIF Sport Leaders and Sport Committee met for two days in Helsinki to consider a long agenda of proposals from the committee and member associations. Coen Buijsse, organizer of the World Championships 2017, presented an update on the status of preparations for August. The national Sport Leaders also reelected Einar Ragnarsson, Nicolai Thye, and Florian Schneider to the Sport Committee. The full 18 pages of minutes are published on the FEIF website.

CHAIRPERSONS

The participants of the FEIF Chairpersons Meeting shared news of the latest developments and activities in their respective countries. Major topics of the meeting were rules and guidelines for private event organizers and the challenge of recruiting volunteers for club activities, as well as for the national associations. The membership situations in the different countries were discussed. Upon request, the membership structures in each country were presented and compared in detail. Several other items were discussed, including the current IT situation, how the associations count their members, the use of FEIF procedures in each country, and Tölt in Harmony and Gæðingakeppni as part of FEIF—just to name a few. The minutes can be found on the FEIF website.



BREEDING

The representatives at the annual FEIF Breeding Meeting agreed on preparing a proposal for a clear definition of the guidelines for conflicts of interest at breeding shows, as well as smaller changes in our breeding rules for 2018. During the next months, the FEIF Breeding Committee will update and improve the breeding system. Qualifications and prerequisites for the education of new breeding judges are now equal in all FEIF countries, with one effect of this being that all judges may judge in all FEIF countries including Iceland.

WorldFengur shows that the number of foals born per year is decreasing and that some countries still use a rather small group of breeding judges at their shows, which makes it difficult to compare results.

Porvaldur Kristjánsson was reelected as member of the Breeding Committee for two years, and Frauke Schenzel and Markus Ljungqvist were again elected as breeders' representatives for one year. Heimir Gunnarsson was elected as a new member of the breeding judge committee, and Barbara Frische was reelected for two years.

YOUTH

The FEIF Youth Committee welcomed delegates representing 10 member countries. The discussions included a review of

the 2016 FEIF Youth Cup hosted by the Netherlands and the changes that will be introduced for the next Youth Cup, in Sweden in 2018. Most significantly it was decided, as a trial, to replace the dressage test with Tölt in Harmony Level 1 and to substitute V4 for V5. The committee hopes that it will be possible to organize a get-together for young people during the World Championships 2017. The event will be published in the WC program, and everyone is welcome to join.

LEISURE

The Riding Horse Profile prepared by the FEIF Leisure Riding Committee, in close cooperation with the Breeding and Education Committees, has been finalized. Version 1.0 will be promoted to trainers via member organizations within the coming weeks and will also be available from the FEIF website. The Committee now has five members, as Hlín Jóhannesdóttir (IS), Mia Estermann (CH), and Michaela Haacke (DE) were elected. From the reports of the countries represented at the meeting, it is evident that more activities relating to leisure riding are developing. TREC is getting more popular in Iceland, while in Switzerland Swiss Mot has become a popular event inspired by the German Hestadagar, just to name a few examples. The minutes of the meeting can be found on the FEIF website.

WORLDFENGUR

At this moment the international WorldFengur database of Icelandic horses has 20,923 subscribers in 24 countries. The total number of subscribers has increased by 1,863, which constitutes a 9.7% increase for the year 2016. The number of foals born is still decreasing annually, according to WorldFengur registrations. This is a global trend that affects all horse breeds. However, there was an increase in the number of assessed horses (in breeding assessments) for the first time in four years. There have never been so many visits to WorldFengur: a grand total of 830,084, which is a 7.36% increase in one year. At the same time, the number of visitors/users went up by almost 7% (135,359 according to Google Analytics). For more

information, download the complete 2016 WorldFengur report from the FEIF website: www.feif.org/files/documents/WFAnnualReport2016.pdf.

WorldFengur provides comprehensive information on around 450,000 Icelandic horses all around the world, including pedigree, offspring, assessments, owners, breeders, BLUP, colors, microchips, and pictures. All USIHC members get a free 12-month WorldFengur subscription (a value of 129 Euros) with their membership, however you must activate your subscription each year. To do so, log in to the USIHC website, www.icelandics.org. Select "Membership" > "World Fengur Access" in the drop-down menu and follow the instructions on the page. To learn to use WorldFengur, see the articles in Issues Four 2016 and One 2017 of the *Quarterly*.

WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS

The preparations for the 2017 FEIF World Championships, to be held August 7-13 in Oirschot, the Netherlands, are on track. Marko Mazeland (WC2017 Competition Leader) and Doug Smith (FEIF Director of Sport) visited the grounds during the Dutch Championships in July 2016, which served as the required test tournament for the World Championships. Some improvements have been made based on the 2007 experience. Over 500 volunteers have been registered to work at the World Championships, which is an unprecedented level of volunteer commitment.

ICETEST UPDATE

The IceTest competition software has been updated to include recent changes in the FEIF Sport Rules and Requirements. The first update (version 1.1.735) included a new handling of Elimination of Participants in PP1. The second update (version 1.1.760) includes the introduction of C-Finals (position 11-15), an alert for horses below 7 years old in start lists, re-introduction of random sort of starting order, and bug fixes. The new version has to be installed as an update to a previous version, preferably 1.1.725. When installing, old data will remain (but don't forget to make a back-up).

REGIONAL CLUB UPDATES

There are 14 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.

ALASKA

BY JANET MULDER

We're all impatiently awaiting the arrival of Spring up here. Winter seems determined to stick around, even though the sheer amount of horse hair on everything we own says warmer weather is coming. Riding season will be here soon enough though, and we will start off Memorial Day weekend with a three-day Steinar Sigurbjörnsson clinic. In June, we will be hosting Trausti Guðmundsson for his three-day



Professional rider and trainer Linda Pétursdóttir came from Iceland to perform with the Knights of Iceland. Photo by Charlotte Reilly.



The Knights of Iceland performance team, with friends from the Frida Icelandic Riding Club, at the Pennsylvania Horse Expo in Harrisburg. Photo by Antje Freygang.

clinic. Our youth group, Tölt Alaska, is also gearing up for riding season. They are planning a camp and other fun activities. Bring on the sunshine! Our next update should be filled with happy riders and happy horses.

FRIDA (MID-ATLANTIC)

BY MILLIE ANGELINO

The Frida Icelandic Riding Club (FIRC) spans the eastern U.S. Most of our members are from Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia, but some reside in New York and even as far south as Georgia. FIRC members import talented trainers from throughout the U.S. and abroad for lessons and clinics. We also organize trail rides at beautiful venues and host competitions.

In early March, the professional riders and trainers of The Knights of Iceland traveled to Harrisburg, PA to perform at the Pennsylvania Horse World Expo. The Knights of Iceland do a wonderful job as ambassadors of the breed. Their show is a real crowd-pleaser—which was evident again this year. A cadre of FIRC current and former members supported the Knights' efforts, including babysitting little

Erik, the youngest member of the troupe.

Carrie Lyons Brandt, co-owner with Terral Hill of Taktur Icelandics in Kentucky, reports: "The Knights of Iceland had two fantastic performances in Theatre Equus. Our team included Laura Benson and her horse Stjarni from Valkyrie Icelandics in California; Terral and me riding Aska and Rós; Kevin Draeger of Draeger



Laura Benson leading the Knights of Iceland in drill team practice. Photo by Charlotte Reilly.



Knights of Iceland performers Laura Benson and Stjarni raised money to help cover their transportation costs from California by selling copies of this limited-edition print, “Stjarni Blazing,” by Juan Sebastian Montoya. Photo by Charlotte Reilly.

Icelandics from Minnesota on Gulldís; and Linda Pétursdóttir and Bjarni Sveinsson, both from Iceland, riding Svás and Veigar. We performed a four horse sparkler drill, a fast-paced six horse drill, the flying pace, and a beer salute. We were honored to have our drill, pace, and beer tölt be the final act of the entire show! We believe that these shows play an incredibly important role in putting the Icelandic horse on the map here in the U.S. The shows draw attention to the breed’s athleticism and bravery, so they aren’t just viewed as a ‘cute pony’ but are respected for the amazing creatures they are.

“But it is only through the support of the Icelandic horse community that we can continue to do them. Many people don’t realize that we struggle to break even, and team members spend enormous amounts of their own money. The Knights of Iceland is only possible with dedicated team leaders, generous horse owners, and a competent ground team. The Frida Icelandic Horse Club provided us with the most organized, fun, and committed ground team we have ever had! Club members provided delicious lunches and dinners; helped with barn chores, tacking up, make-up and hair; helped to cover everyone in a healthy amount of

glitter; held horses backstage; and even filled our beer mugs. We could not be more blessed by the show of support that the FIRC members, as well as many others throughout the U.S., have given us. Thank you!”

A number of exciting events are in the works for 2017. On April 1, FIRC’s kick-off party was hosted at ThorpeWood by Sam and Julie Castleman. ThorpeWood is a 155-acre mountain retreat near Thurmont, MD where, among other things, a herd of Icelandic horses is used in a wonderful Equine Assisted Learning program.

Unlike previous years, FIRC did not host a USIHC-sanctioned show this spring. Instead, FIRC member Antje Freygang hosted a schooling show on May 20 at Montaire, a world-class Icelandic riding farm located in Middleburg, VA. It was a real opportunity for the showing enthusiasts among us, as Montaire has a wonderful covered riding arena and a brand new show track that is the only regulation track built exclusively for Icelandic gait competition east of Kentucky. The show included both sanctioned and fun classes to accommodate riders of all levels, and was free to all FIRC members.

A number of training opportunities are in the works, including private lessons, clinics, and trainer visits throughout 2017. Trail rides are being planned at beautiful historic battlefields in Virginia and on the wonderful trails in and around the Brandywine River Valley in Pennsylvania and Maryland. If you have any interest in participating in any of these events, please visit our website and join.

HESTAFOLK (NORTHWEST WASHINGTON)

BY LISA MCKEEN

What a winter in the Pacific Northwest! We had to cancel three meetings due to wind, snow, and ice storms, and set our agenda by email, but we have a full schedule to look forward to. Two clinics with Freya Sturm will add consistency to our learning. A wide variety of riding opportunities have been scheduled, as well as monthly Horse Play Days.



Monica Urritia-Sheehan rides Alys-Skjona from Schmalztopf at the Freya Sturm Clinic organized by the Hestafolk Club. Photo by Judy Skogen.

Over the winter, we met at Kathryn Lockerbie’s Silver Creek Icelandics to play with our horses, work with folks new to Icelandics, and generally have fun. In March we finally got back in business with a Freya Sturm Clinic. We were excited to be joined by Rachel Bangert, Jess and Aar-



“The teacher laughs with us, not at us!” notes photographer Judy Skogen of Hestafolk clinician Freya Sturm.

on Levine, and new Hestafolk member Natira Hardesty from Sequim, WA. We had 10 riders and six observers, including those who came only for the private lessons given before and after the clinic. All saw improvement in their own skills and improvement in their horses, and walked away with homework in preparation for our next clinic with Freya in June.

Several of us are excited to travel to Linda Templeton's Red Feather Icelandics to learn from trainers Guðmar Pétursson in April and Arnar Bjarki Sigurðarson in June. One of the great things we get to do there is meet up with Cascade Club members and new Icelandic horse owners from across the state.

This summer we have planned a trip to Leavenworth, WA to visit Harriet Bullit's Mountain Icelandic Ranch and ride the Icicle Trail and the side roads around the great Sleeping Lady Resort.

Here's a quote from member Linda Wallitner to leave you with: "Like most, I have owned and ridden many breeds of horses over my lifetime. Once I experienced the willingness, personality, smooth gaits, height, curiosity, and very friendly companionship offered by the Icelandic horse, there was no going back to other breeds for me. Not to mention, they're



Roskva from Landwoven, owned by Hestafolk member Monica Urritia-Sheehan, catches the eye of photographer Judy Skogen.



Trainer Freya Sturm riding her namesake, Freya from Extreme Farms, at the Hestafolk clinic. Photo by Judy Skogen.

amazing just to look at, with their solid bone, feathers, all of the different colors available and their bountiful forelock, mane, and tail! I really can't say enough about this sturdy breed of horse. I consider myself fortunate to have learned about them before my riding days are over. I am 65 now, and one of my trusty steeds is 26. I'm confident we will continue to ride over and through whatever the trail puts in front of us for many years to come. Let me know if you'd like to meet up for a ride!"

KLETTAFJALLA (ROCKY MOUNTAINS)

BY KRISTINA BEHRINGER

Tamangur Icelandic Horses hosted a Winter Mini-Clinic with Guðmar Pétursson in Monument, CO on February 18-19. Reports Jeff Rose: "Ten riders and an equal number of auditors benefited from Guðmar's instruction, with lessons focusing on proper collection, increasing carrying power, and suppleness. As always, Guðmar's well-tailored instruction was right on the mark, with noticeable improvements across the board and the sounds of clear-beated tölt emanating from the arena floor. The riders (and to a lesser extent, their horses) enjoyed the unseasonably warm February weather, along with the supportive and encouraging environment found at all Klettafjalla events. Many thanks to Guðmar, Tamangur Icelandic Horses, and Coralie

Denmeade for making the clinic such a success."

Also over the winter the KIHIC held a contest, asking members to answer these three questions: What are your plans



Hestafolk member Willa Mae Herndon-Schepper rides Elsa from Extreme Farms. Photo by Judy Skogen.



Skjoni from Maryland Icelandic Horse Farm, owned and photographed by Klettafjalla member Leia Tilton.

for you and your Icelandic(s) this year? What is the best part about owning an Icelandic horse? What is the best part of being a member of Klettafjalla IHC and the USIHC? Eligible submissions came from KIHHC members who are also USIHC members; the two winners received a gift card to the feed store or tack shop of their choice.

One contest winner was Florie Miller, who wrote: "After a winter break that was a little longer than anticipated, due to some practical reasons, I'm so excited to start really training my two wonderful



Klettafjalla "member in the spotlight" Ulla Hudson on Andi from Fletunni.

Icelandics, Ofeigur and Elding, again. They both can be somewhat stiff and pacey, so arena work and 'gymnastics' are on the to-do list. But mostly I'm looking forward to amazing trail rides in the beautiful mountains in our backyard here in Glenwood Springs, CO! I look forward to seeing bears, deer, elk, and all the other critters that you come across on the trail. I look forward to splashing through cold mountain streams and tölting through peaceful meadows. Another highlight of the year will be our annual gathering at Tamangur Icelandics in September!"

Florie continued, "I love the feeling of riding the smooth and brave Icelandic horse, and I love how no-nonsense these awesome horses are. But most of all, I love sharing the Icelandic horse with my whole family. Romantic sunset rides with my wonderful man, seeing my younger son be assertive and firm when he needs to

be, seeing my tough football playing teenager melt when he sees his 'ponies.' It's truly fantastic how the Icelandic horse is special to everyone. Finally, the Icelandic horse community in America is so warm, welcoming, and supportive it really feels like a family. By being part of the national and local club I feel that we can support that community."

Contest winner Leia Tilton wrote: "This year, Skjoni and I have a lot on our to-do list. Tons of trail rides with friends and by ourselves, pair paces, fox hunting (love this sport), competing in our first Limited Distance endurance ride of 25 miles within the allotted time (which is 6 hours, if I remember correctly), camping, the Klettafjalla Icelandic Mountain Rendezvous and parade, probably a clinic or two, and all this just with my wonderful, little Icelandic horse. (I just got two Quarterhorses and am hoping to do some of these things with them too.) It might sound silly but the best part of being an Icelandic horse owner is owning an Icelandic horse! Without owning one you don't get to fully enjoy their incredible personalities, burying your face and hands in all that fluffy mane any time you want. If you've ever owned a more common riding horse, then you can fully appreciate the difference in cost of shoes, feed, and sometimes even the vet! Don't forget their awesome gait, short height (which provides less brutal falls most times), and all the adoring fans your horse collects everywhere he goes."

Leia continued, "It's funny how simply having the same breed of horse can bring people together so well. The people I've met have almost all become fast



Florie Miller with Prýði from Winterhorse Park and Jeny Feldner with Álfadís from Locust Hill listen while Guðmar Pétursson wraps up the Klettafjalla clinic at Tamangur Icelandic Horses. Photo by Coralie Denmeade.

friends, and we look forward to seeing each other at every club event. Many of us stay in touch through Facebook or phone, and thanks to that we've been able to get together for fun day rides outside of official club events. It's so much fun seeing everyone's horse and finding out what they are learning or struggling with and realizing that you're not the only one who is still working on that same thing."

In this quarter's "Member Spotlight," Julia Anderson shares a little history of the New Mexico region of the club with a profile of Ulla Hudson. Julia writes: "Ulla Hudson bravely introduced the Icelandic horse to New Mexico in the early 1980s, when she moved there with her husband, sans covered wagon. The breed was such a novelty in the Wild West that Channel 7 News broadcast the arrival of the first Icelandic foal born on her farm.

"Born in Germany, Ulla has a lifetime of experience with horses. She holds a Trainer A license from the German National Equestrian Federation and teaches all levels through FEI. She focuses on dressage and Icelandic horses. She has earned the German gold, silver, and bronze medals (Deutsches Reitabzeichen Klasse I, II, and III), as well as the USDF gold, silver, and bronze. She has shown, ridden, and trained horses from Training Level through Grand Prix, and trained students to the USDF gold medal.

"Even though she used warmbloods for high level dressage, she always had two to four Icelandics for fun and relaxation. Her passion for the Icelandic horse was ignited when she was five years old and joined a local vaulting group. They got tired of lifting her up onto the big warmblood vaulting horse and decided it was easier to put her on an Icelandic that was in the stables. So during the class, she just rode around on him while the others vaulted on the warmblood.

"The second time she saw an Icelandic she was 10—and she did not let go. Looking out her living room window, she saw a girl riding an Icelandic in the park across the street. She ran out the door and chased the girl on the horse, until she finally caught up to them, then walked next to them for over a kilometer, pelting the girl with questions. Finally, the girl took pity on little determined Ulla and let her sit on the horse while she led them. Then Ulla had to walk all the way home.



Seven-year-old Liesl Kolbe rides Spönn frá Efri-Raudalæk in a clinic with Spönn's breeder, Baldvin Ari Guðlaugsson in Vermont in April. Spönn is descended from the Kvika frá Brún and Dögg frá Akureyri bloodlines Baddi discussed in his breeding lecture before the NEIHC Annual Meeting and Thorrablot Party. Photo by Tammy Kolbe.

"She continued to harass this family, who would send their oldest son to pick Ulla up in an old rickety WWII Jeep so that she could ride the Icelandic at their farm. The horse was one of the original Icelandics imported to Germany by Walter Feldmann, Sr., who at that time was campaigning to 'save' the Icelandic horse.

"Now at Windsong Icelandics Ulla has 18 Icelandics and no warmbloods. She imports, sells, and trains, and is on the board of the KIHC. She recently acquired approval to use her track for a USIHC-sanctioned show, which will be the first in our region! She is still our pioneer. Contact Ulla at 505-615-5050 or see www.WindsongIcelandics.com."



NEIHC youth member Amelie Maranda rides her horse, Freddie ("the Great"), in a lesson with Baddi Guðlaugsson in Vermont. Photo by Jess Haynsworth.

NEIHC (NORTHEAST)

BY JESS HAYNSWORTH

Spring took its time gracing the Northeast with its presence this year—just when we thought the snow was gone for good, Winter Storm Stella covered most of our region in two feet of snow! Luckily, Icelandic horses make great snowmobiles so spring training is in full swing, snow or shine, as I write this in April.

This winter, we had a major change to our club's board of directors: Kara Noble resigned to accept the position of president of Friends of the Mathieson School, a charity that raises funds for the Mathieson Music School in Kolkata, India. We wish Kara all the best in this incredible endeavor, as much as we will miss her energy on the board. We are all thankful that she will continue as the NEIHC's webmaster. Ebba Meehan was next on the list of votes after the most recent election, and has happily accepted Kara's position on the board. Welcome, Ebba!

The 12th Annual NEIHC Meeting and Thorrablot was held in Vermont this year, at Mad River Valley Icelandic Horses in Warren. Around 40 people gathered at the home of Anne Hyde and Bill Haynsworth on April 8 for the event.

Mad River Valley Icelandic Horses also hosted a clinic with Baldvin ("Baddi") Ari Guðlaugsson from April 6-9, with 16 horse/rider pairs participating, including 6 youth members, 5 of whom were age 11 or younger. Participants came from as far away as New York, and it was very exciting to watch the progress the riders made with their horses. Em Potts's beautiful



Em Potts's young horse, Lotus from Thor Icelandics, took his very first steps of tölt during the NEIHC clinic with Baddi Guðlaugsson in Vermont, first when ridden by Baddi and then by Em herself, as shown in this photo. Em reports that since the clinic, Lotus has been tölting for longer and longer stretches. Photo by Jess Haynsworth.

young horse, Lotus, took his first steps of tölt in this clinic. Em reports that since the clinic she has been having great rides with Lotus, who continues to offer more and more tölt. Eight-year-old Arianna Deforge tried tölting without stirrups for the first time and said that her goal for the year was to “ride faster!” In my own lessons, Baddi helped me pace my mare, Spönn frá Efri-Rauðalæk, for the very first time. I had suspected that Spönn had very good pace, but was somewhat nervous that if I tried to open it up on my own, I might make a mistake. Baddi shattered that fear, and told me that the only thing holding us back from pace competitions was my own self-doubt. Before long, we were flying up and down the dirt roads in clear pace. Baddi helped me outline a training program for Spönn to continue training her pace on my own, and so far since the clinic our “homework” is going very well! While each lesson was tailored to the student’s specific needs and interests, the general take-away message of the clinic was one of self-empowerment. Baddi encouraged students to trust in their own abilities rather than doubting themselves or being afraid to try new things. “Watch each other, and help each other,” he said, encouraging riders to keep up with the progress they began in the clinic and not allow the fear of making mistakes hold them back from success

with their horses.

On April 7, before the annual meeting officially began, Baddi delivered his famous lecture on horse breeding for a group of 25 NEIHC members. This seminar has been toured around Iceland and Europe to tremendous success and popularity, and this was the first time it was offered in the U.S. The inspiration for this seminar came when, in his travels as a clinician and trainer, Baddi realized that there are a lot of people in Iceland and abroad who specialize in teaching others to ride, train, and show Icelandic horses, but no one who teaches people how to breed Icelandic horses successfully. Baddi’s seminar included insights and anecdotes from decades of horse breeding experience, as well as a history of famous bloodlines and breeding farms, strategies for how to choose, improve, and combine bloodlines and breeding stock successfully, and ideal methods for raising and managing breeding stock and young horses. Baddi is well-qualified to speak as an authority on horse breeding. His farm, Efri-Rauðilækur, has won the award for Ræktun Keppnishesta (Best Competition Horse Breeding) in Iceland twice—the only farm to ever be twice nominated. The seminar was very well-received, as was the accompanying Powerpoint with beautiful visuals.

Following the seminar, the NEIHC’s

Annual Meeting officially commenced. Two board members, Caeli Cavanagh and Ebba Meehan, Skyped in from afar. Once the meeting concluded, the real fun began: Between hostess Anne Hyde’s delicious cooking and numerous dishes brought by others for the potluck dinner, we enjoyed a proper feast. There was much laughter and spirited discussion, and even some dancing later on in the evening. Thank you to everyone who made this clinic, annual meeting, and Thorrablot party so successful and fun!

The spring quarter may be one of our club’s busiest and most exciting yet. The season kicked off with the much-anticipated Judging Seminar at Thor Icelandics in Claverack, NY, from April 20-23. Þorgeir Guðlaugsson taught the seminar, and there was an accompanying schooling show on April 22, as well as a “Competition Prep” clinic with Alex Dannenman on April 21 and 23.

In May, Sigrún Brynjarsdóttir of Solheimar Farm in Tunbridge, VT is hosting a schooling show from May 13-14, with Alex Dannenman as the judge. Guðmar Pétursson is teaching a clinic at Echo



NEIHC youth member, eight-year-old Harriet Shipman, who is new to the sport, had a fantastic time tölting on the track at the clinic with Baddi Guðlaugsson in Vermont. Photo by Jess Haynsworth.

Ledge Farm in Woodstock, VT from May 19-21. And Carrie Lyons Brandt is teaching a clinic at Thor Icelandics in Claverack, NY from May 27-29.

From June 2-4, there will be an exciting clinic with Alex Pregitzer called “Improving Tölt in Your Trail Horse.” The clinic is hosted by Catherine Slattery in Granby, CT, with a focus on riding horses outside of the arena.

But the most anticipated event of the year, as always, will be the NEIHC Open Show, held once again at Thor Icelandics in Claverack, NY on June 24-25. Alex Dannenman and Alex Pregitzer will be the two judges for this competition, which will be preceded by a pre-show clinic with Carrie Lyons Brandt, from June 21-23. We hope you will join us!

OVHC (OHIO VALLEY)

BY JULI COLE

The Ohio Valley Icelandic Horse Club is pleased to announce they will be hosting a Trail Horse Clinic July 22-23 at Horizon View Farms in Somerset, PA (www.horizonviewfarms.com/stables).

The clinician is Rick Shaffer, a well-respected trainer and judge with over 30 years of experience, particularly with gaited breeds. Rick is a compassionate and patient trainer who uses consistent training methods to bring out the best in each horse. Rick’s unhurried, individualized instruction is highly valued by owners and makes them feel very comfortable. Rick’s teaching ensures that owners have the skills and confidence to build and maintain the all-important bond with their horses, which will serve them well in all equine pursuits. More about Rick can be found at www.rsaso.com.

The clinic will involve working on common trail obstacles, the lateral movements necessary to negotiate these obstacles, and other important traits for trail horses. Rick has developed an incredible program for trail horses that evaluates the horses on how well they are able to perform under saddle and on the ground. This is somewhat similar to the new FEIF program for leisure horses, however Rick’s program is more detailed and is being utilized by breed associa-



The Toppur club’s Hooves in Harmony Drill Team (left to right): Virginia Lauridsen on Gosi frá Lambastöðum, non-member Calla Whipp on Gnýr frá Morastöðum, Steffi Shryver on Hlér frá Gullberastöðum, and Daniela West on Riddari from Bonaventure Farm. Photo by Nix Lauridsen.

tions and clubs across the country. This program is beneficial to sellers, as it gives a non-biased report to buyers as to what the horse’s level of training is. It is also beneficial to those owners who want to know where their strong areas are and which areas need additional work. There is a matrix available that describes what a horse must demonstrate to be awarded one of the three levels. Copies of the matrix may be requested by contacting Juli Cole at juli2875@yahoo.com or 724-667-4184. Clinic participants who are interested in having their horses tested will have the option to do so on July 23. It is highly recommended that those wishing to take the test review the matrix in advance.

The clinic will be limited to 15 riders, however auditor spots are unlimited. For additional information or to request an application form, please contact Juli.

TOPPUR (IOWA)

BY VIRGINIA LAURIDSEN

The newly formed Toppur Icelandic Horse Club is up and “pacing.” Members met on February 11 to elect our officers Daniela West (president), Dave Ferguson (vice-president), Steffi Shryver (secretary), Kirby Antisdell (treasurer), and me as liaison to the USIHC. Our first project

was the Iowa Horse Fair, held March 31 to April 2 at the Iowa state fairgrounds.

Toppur members were superb breed ambassadors: Icelandics were seen everywhere! Members pitched in to create an information booth complete with copies of the latest *Icelandic Horse Quarterly*, copies of Nancy Marie Brown’s *A Good Horse Has No Color*, videos of Icelandic competitions, information about Toppur, horses and lessons in the arena—and, of course, free chocolates. We ordered polo shirts



Daniela West, president of the new Toppur club, and Riddari from Bonaventure Farm introduced people to the Icelandic horse at this year’s Iowa Horse Fair. Photo by Luke Shryver.



Kirby Antisdal and Vörður frá Hallkelsstaðahlíð exhibited the power of the Icelandic horse in the Very Versatile Icelandic demo at the Iowa State Fair. Photo by Luke Shryver.

and member Ann Ferguson embroidered our new logo (created by member Luke Shryver) on them. We headed to the fairgrounds with five horses, eight riders, three support team members, and lots of family and friends.

The first presentation on Friday was the Hooves in Harmony Drill Team in the main pavilion, featuring Steffi Shryver on Hlér frá Gullberastöðum, Daniela West on Riddari from Bonaventure Farm, non-member Calla Whipp on Gnýr frá Morastöðum, and me on Gosi frá Lambastöðum. The group impressed the spectators with a flashy routine ridden at the tölt and set to music by the Icelandic group Monsters and Men. The Des Moines Register rewarded us with several pictures of the horses in the paper the next day. Three out of their ten images were of Icelandics!

On Saturday morning, we set out to the East Arena to show off the Very Versatile Icelandic. The audience was treated to a fine exhibition of horsemanship: Youth rider Addy Brody deftly guided Gnýr into a beautiful pace, Luke and Hlér showed off some dressage

techniques, Daniela and Riddari demonstrated Icelandics jumping, Kirby Antisdal on Vörður frá Hallkelsstaðahlíð exhibited the power of the Icelandic horse, and Gosi and I rode a competition four gait program. We ended with beer steins in hand for a lemonade tölt.

Next up for Gosi and me was the stallion presentation in the main pavilion. Gosi was stunning, as he displayed the beautiful gaits of the Icelandic horse. Everyone loved his thick mane and tail and calm demeanor. His attitude was especially striking following the other stallions, which were often quite agitated.

At noon on both Saturday and Sunday, the Icelandics were standouts in the Parade of Breeds. I rode Gnýr on Saturday and showed flying pace; Steffi rode Hlér on Sunday and turned heads with his distinctive dun color. We finished up a long day with the gaited horse breed demonstration. Our four horses and riders (Daniela and Riddari, Liz Appel and Hlér, Kirby and Vörður, and me and Gnýr), entered the arena with seven other

gaited breeds. We had several minutes to demonstrate the unique riding characteristics of the Icelandic. All of the horses were at their best, showing off slow and fast tempo tölt and flying pace.

Between riding demonstrations, we walked the grounds with horses in hand and introduced them to attendees. Other club members manned the booth and talked to interested people about riding Icelandics in Iowa. People were always impressed with their mild temperaments, sturdy builds, and, of course, their hair. Riddari from Bonaventure Farm was selected for a massage from the equine massage therapist and tried out the BEMER vascular therapy treatment. He seemed quite content with both! All in all, we generated a good deal of interest and are already making plans for an improved showing in 2018!

Next up for Toppur is a clinic with Guðmundur Margeir Skúlason, "From Ground to Saddle" on April 21-23 at Harmony Icelandics.



Steffi Shryver on Hlér frá Gullberastöðum performed a "lemonade tölt" at the Iowa State Fair. Photo by Luke Shryver.

RIDE FOR JANET

BY ESTHER CASIMIR

Sunday, February 12 was an extraordinary day. There was nothing special in leisure riders all over the world saddling their Icelandic horses for a ride. They do so on any given Sunday. Nor was it special that all those riders logged the kilometers they had ridden. They were used to doing that and had been for a few years as part of the FEIF Virtual Rides program. What made these rides on February 12 special were that they were all in honor of USIHC member Janet Boggs of Seattle, WA, who sadly passed away on January 22.

A few years ago Gundula Sharman, now FEIF Director of Youth, came up with the idea of a virtual ride for leisure riders to either Landsmót or the World Championships for Icelandic Horses. The idea was simple: Each rider calculated the distance from their house to where the event would take place, and then logged their kilometers for each ride. The goal was to virtually reach Landsmót or the World Championships. As the distance was great for some riders, teams were created to reach this goal. A special Facebook group



Carolyn and Reykir, South Island, New Zealand.



Fiona and Jo, Shetland Isles.

was set up, where riders posted pictures of their rides.

This year leisure riders from all over the world set out with the goal of riding “Out to Oirschot” in the Netherlands, where the 2017 World Championships will be held. In former years most teams consisted of riders who knew each other and often rode together, but this year most teams were made up of members of different nationalities. Janet Boggs had participated in all previous virtual rides. Due to health problems, she couldn’t always ride her beloved Reykur, so it soon became a gimmick to take her along virtually on our rides. She was an enthusiastic member of the “Out to Oirschot” Facebook group, commenting on most posts.

When Gundula posted the message of her passing, it came as a shock to all of us. Janet had never let on that her health problems were this serious. Although most of us had not met her in person, we all felt like we had lost a friend. When team member Monique Verhaar invited



Dorothy and Mey, North Berwick, UK

the team Janet was part of to have a special ride in her honor, it wasn't long before all the "Out to Oirschot" teams wanted to join this memorial ride.

Practical as ever, Gundula set the date of February 12 for this special ride, so all riders could ride on their own time. Then suggestions came in of what to wear: purple, as this was Janet's favourite color, and tartan, as Janet loved Scotland. Everyone was asked to take pictures and videos and post them under the hashtag #Janetsride #ridewithJanet. Sytske Casimir offered to make a video of these pictures and videos.

I don't think we went viral that Sunday, but on our "Out to Oirschot" Facebook page there was an outpouring of love. People from all over the world had gone to the effort of dressing in purple (sometimes including the horses) or tartan, and of making the ride a special one. Neither rain nor snow stopped these riders, and those that couldn't join because of sickness were there in spirit. For all of us this felt very special. Besides having a wonderful time with our horses, and celebrating the life of a remarkable woman, we also felt something even more profound: In a world that seems divisive and is putting up borders, there were no borders for us, as people from Australia to the Netherlands, to Switzerland, to Great Britain, and the U.S. were one, remembering one of their team members. We felt united through our love of the Icelandic horse and our grief for losing a strong, loving, and humorous woman. This ride to "Out to Oirschot" is indeed a very special one.

For more information, or to join a FEIF virtual ride, see www.feif.org/LeisureRiding/VirtualRide.aspx



Janet Boggs on a riding trek in Iceland in 2014.



Lena and friends, Switzerland.

THE NATURAL ASYMMETRY OF HORSES

BY GABRIELE MEYER

This article is part two in a series that takes a look at general equestrian concepts and how they relate to riding Icelandic horses. Part one dealt with riding “on the bit,” and we learned that being straight is one of the fundamentals that need to be in place before the horse is able to come onto the bit.

Straightness is one of the steps in the training scale of all horses. With straightness comes the ability to perform equally well on both hands: A straight horse bends easily in both directions, it is equally easy for the horse to take the right or the left lead in canter, and circles to the left will be the same as circles to the right. In short, the horse will feel even on both sides. A horse that does not feel even in both leads is called “crooked” or “asymmetric.”

While perfectly straight horses do exist, they are rare. In the following we will take a look at the natural asymmetry of the horse, why it might have developed, and why we want the horse to be straight.

In the first installment of this series, we encountered Gustav Steinbrecht’s 19th-century instruction to “Ride your horse forward and make it straight.” The old masters knew that horses use their bodies in an asymmetric fashion and that it can lead to training problems and even lameness. Because the horse was their sole means of transportation, his soundness and longevity was consequential for a family’s livelihood, or even a matter of life and death for a soldier.

In our time, too, we want to make our horse straight to avoid health issues and lameness (and vet bills). Another reason is that it is simply more fun to ride a straight horse that moves freely through the shoulders. Finally, our horse must be straight if we want it to reach his full athletic potential as a riding horse.

NATURAL CROOKEDNESS

Horses, as all mammals, belong to the group of animals exhibiting so-called “bilateral symmetry,” which means that the



Gabriele on Askur at the beginning of a ride, before his natural asymmetry has been addressed. Askur is naturally bent to the right. His hind end is coming in and his left shoulder bulges to the outside (bringing Gabriele’s leg dangerously close to the rails). Askur’s left front leg is visible, even though the picture was taken from straight behind. If it wasn’t covered by his tail, his right front leg would be visible between both hind legs. Compare to illustration 1, which shows a similar situation from the front. Photo by Margret Longstreth.

left side of the body is more or less the mirror image of the right side. Examples of asymmetric animals are snails, flounders, and hermit crabs.

So if we talk about asymmetry in the horse, we obviously mean something less obvious than his general body shape: Even the most asymmetric horse still has two left legs and two right legs, two

eyes and two ears and a forelock in the middle.

But just like humans, who are either right or left handed (only a few humans are truly ambidextrous), most horses have one side where things seem to go easier. The horse might pick up the left lead canter easier than the right lead canter, or it tends to make circles bigger

in one direction and smaller in the other. So when we talk about asymmetry in the context of riding, we are talking about asymmetric use of the body rather than actual asymmetric build.

Natural asymmetry differs from species to species. In humans, it mainly manifests in the use of our hands: We write, throw a ball, or hold a tennis racket with either the right or the left hand. Attempts to use the other hand for these activities will be awkward or even impossible for most people.

Horses have other challenges to master. A number of basic principles apply to all four-legged animals: Generally, their hind end is the engine for forward propulsion, while their front legs support the weight of the trunk and are responsible for the upward movement of the ribcage. Each of the four legs can push, pull, or carry to different extents, and movements of all four legs need to be under tight neuronal and muscular control in order to generate a specific gait and speed. That's no small task for the horse, and we need to keep these principles in mind if we want to ride in an educated way.

Natural crookedness occurs in all mammals, as far as we know, with dogs, cats, and mice being the species most frequently studied. Natural asymmetry has also been reported in birds like parrots and chickens.

A possible mechanism has been proposed: Slight differences in the development of the right and left brain hemispheres lead to an ever-so-slight imbalance of the motor neurons, which in turn leads to a favoring of one limb side. This then becomes habitual and eventually leads to a muscular strengthening of that side.

If something consistently occurs in nature, the question arises whether there is an evolutionary advantage to it. Several scenarios have been described by biologists in which, during a critical situation, handedness speeds up reaction time and thus may be advantageous.

In the case of horses, one theory is based on the fact that (wild) foals have to be able to keep up with the herd within a couple of hours after birth and even have to be able to take off in a fast gallop if necessary. Not having to think about if that will be a left or right lead gallop most certainly is of an advantage. And because

his legs are so long, the foal needs to be somewhat crooked so that his hind legs step to one side of the front legs without hitting them.

Horse breeders have speculated that the direction of the foal's natural asymmetry depends on the direction in which the developing embryo was lying in the mare's uterus. This thinking has been supported lately by experiments in chickens.

Whatever the underlying cause might be, we need to be aware that the horse's natural asymmetry is amplified when

the horse is carrying a rider. In fact, ever since humans decided to tame and ride horses, natural asymmetry has been one of the main roadblocks to overcome in the horse's education.

SEEING ASYMMETRY

To see if a horse is crooked or asymmetrical, we can start from the ground. Standing squarely in front of the horse and looking straight at the horse's head and chest, we might already be able to see that the hind end is not perfectly aligned with the front end. (See Illustration 1.)

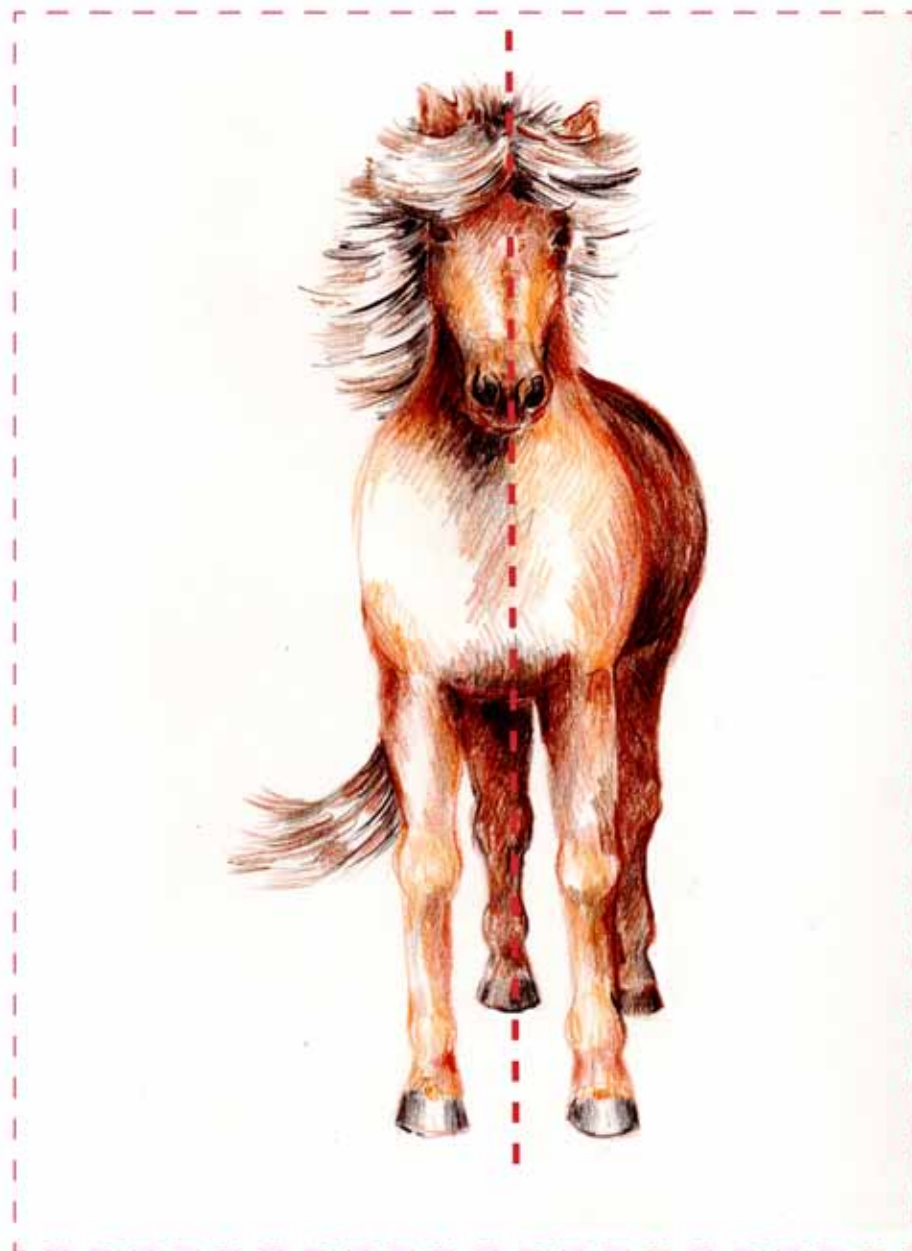


Illustration 1: Natural Asymmetry. A crooked horse, as viewed from the front. The hind end is visible alongside either the right or left shoulder (here the horse is bent to the left and we see his left hip). The hind legs are not positioned exactly behind the front legs, as they would be for a straight horse—if they were we would not be able to see them. Instead we see all four legs and know this is a crooked horse. Illustration by Nancy Wines-Dewan.

We can also look at the horse's foot-fall while it is walking or at his hoof prints in the sand: If the horse is not straight, the hoof prints of the corresponding front and hind feet will not be aligned.

When we are riding, we will feel that the horse has a hollow (or concave) side and a stiff (or convex) side. The theory of natural asymmetry explains that on his hollow side, the horse's muscles and fascia are shortened and tensed up. The horse bends easily to this side, but his shoulders fall out to the other side. The rein contact will be light, but it doesn't feel "filled out." The hind leg of the hollow side steps sideways and away from the body's center of gravity instead of stepping towards it. By contrast, the hind leg of the stiff side steps underneath the horse and is stronger than the other leg. The horse does not like to bend his head, neck, and body to the stiff side and, in contrast to the hollow side, the rein contact is strong and somewhat unyielding. (See illustration 2.)

REASONS FOR CROOKEDNESS

In addition to the horse's naturally occurring crookedness, there are other reasons a horse might go unevenly or develop bodily asymmetries. Some things to consider are:

- Hooves: Is the trim and/or shoeing correct?
- Teeth: Imbalances in the teeth directly affect the temporomandibular joint (TMJ), which in return affects the biomechanics of the horse.
- Past injuries.
- Bridle and bit: Do they fit and are they appropriate?
- Saddle: Does the saddle fit the horse? Are the panels even in shape and stuffing? Are the stirrup leathers of equal length? Keep in mind that it is especially hard to find a correct-fitting saddle for our Icelandics due to their shoulder conformation and the fact that we essentially want to fit a large person onto a relatively small and short-backed horse.
- Rider: How is the rider's seat? Is the rider straight and sitting equally on both seat bones? Is there a tendency to collapse one hip? Is the rider strongly

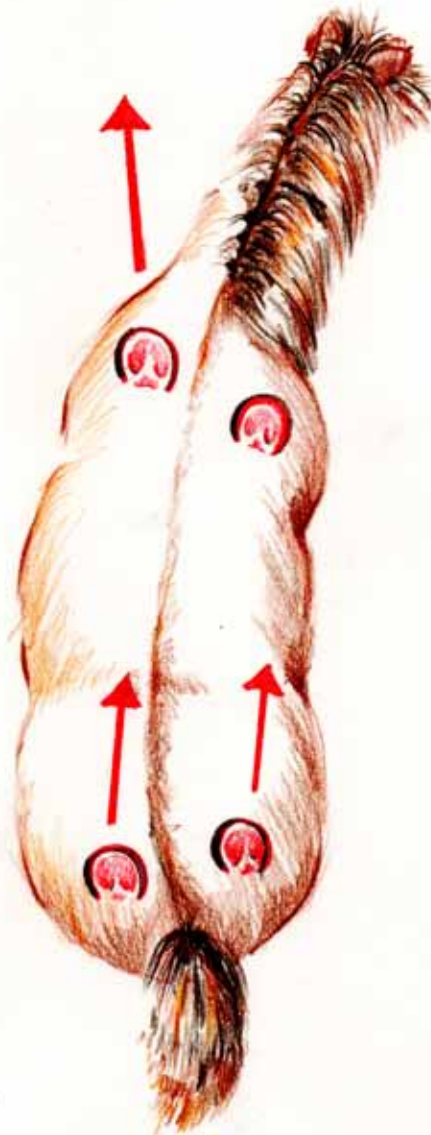


Illustration 2: Horse hollow to the right. The left hind leg steps toward the center of gravity, and the right hind leg steps away from the center of gravity. This uneven action of the hind legs pushes the shoulder to the outside (here, to the left). A horse hollow to the left would simply be the mirror image of this one. Illustration by Nancy Wines-Dewan.

side-biased and therefore having problems keeping the muscular tone even in both body halves? Are the rider's hands equal, or is one hand stronger and possibly less feeling or more rigid? It has been well documented that the handedness of the rider can lead to an unintentional uneven contact on the reins. Ida Thellufsen (wife of Eyjólfur "Jolli" Isólfsson) suggested during one clinic that performing simple tasks, such as picking out your horse's hooves or brushing your own teeth, with your nondominant hand could improve the symmetric feel and use of your hands.

This list is certainly not exhaustive, so be observant of any factors that might affect your horse's balance. It is important to identify and rectify these issues, because the best training will not help if any of them are not being addressed.

HOW IT FEELS TO THE HORSE

Why does an asymmetric use of his body pose a problem for the riding horse? Ideally, both hind legs of a young horse have equal pushing power. This pushing power, over the course of years of training, is gradually converted into the carrying power—the equal carrying power—of both hind legs. The well-trained horse travels straight on two tracks, is straight through the spine, his shoulders are centered, and either front leg supports an equal amount of weight. This horse can exhibit beautiful gaits and can be worked in true collection.

However, in real life both hind legs of a young horse do not exhibit equal strength. One hind leg steps more underneath the horse's body, whereas the other hind leg steps more sideways and away from the horse's center of gravity. The hind leg that does more work (the one that steps underneath the body) subsequently becomes stronger. The rest of the horse's body tries to compensate by placing the shoulders in front of the stronger hind leg (instead of squarely in front of both hind legs), the spine gets bent, and the weight of the front end shifts more onto one shoulder, rather than being equally distributed onto both shoulders.

Asymmetry creates imbalance, imbalance creates tension, and tension creates stress—and all of that can lead to injury in the long run. This chain of events is, in a nutshell, the creed of classical dressage. As Thomas Ritter, a well-known classical dressage trainer in the U.S. and Germany, states, "Every step in imbalance is a step towards lameness."

Balance on the other hand creates relaxation and comfort; it feels good to the horse. In order to illustrate the bodily discomfort a horse might feel when his front end and hind end are not aligned, we can perform a thought experiment with our own body:

Imagine you are pushing an empty wheelbarrow. The wheel corresponds to the front end of the horse, whereas your

body takes on the role of the horse's hind-quarters. The wheel supports most of the load, while you supply the pushing power. Intuitively you will align yourself exactly behind the wheel in order to push with the least effort. Now imagine you must walk 10 inches to one side of the wheel. What would that feel like? Now imagine doing it with a full wheelbarrow, like after mucking out stalls. How does that feel? For how long do you think you could do it before your shoulder and back started hurting?

HOW IT FEELS TO THE RIDER

A straight horse conveys the feeling of evenness to the rider: Both reins have an equal feel, and the rider's two seat bones are at equal height and carry the same amount of weight. You can ride down the centerline in an arena, from A to C, on a straight line without any (or with only minimal) steering of the horse. Riding a figure eight, both loops would be equal in size.

An asymmetric horse feels as if you are constantly riding on a circle, even when you're riding on a straight line: The horse's head is more or less bent toward his hollow side, and there will be a stronger contact with the outside rein. The seat bone of the rider feels higher on the hollow side, with the rider's inside leg lying flat on the ribcage, while the outside leg is being pushed outwards.

Here are some other things you might feel if you have, for example, a horse with a natural bend to the right (a horse bent to the left will behave the opposite way):

Out on a trail, it might prefer to walk on the left side of the trail because it likes to "lean" on the left hand trail boundary. It will try to get back to that side if you attempt to ride him on the right side of the trail.

On a right circle, it comfortably travels on the circle line because the natural bend in his body can easily conform to the bend of that circle. Sometimes it even over-bends his neck to the inside. There might be a tendency to fall toward the outside with the shoulders, thereby increasing the size of the circle.

On a left circle, the horse feels quite different. It has problems staying on the circle line because the natural bend in his body is opposite to the bend of the circle.

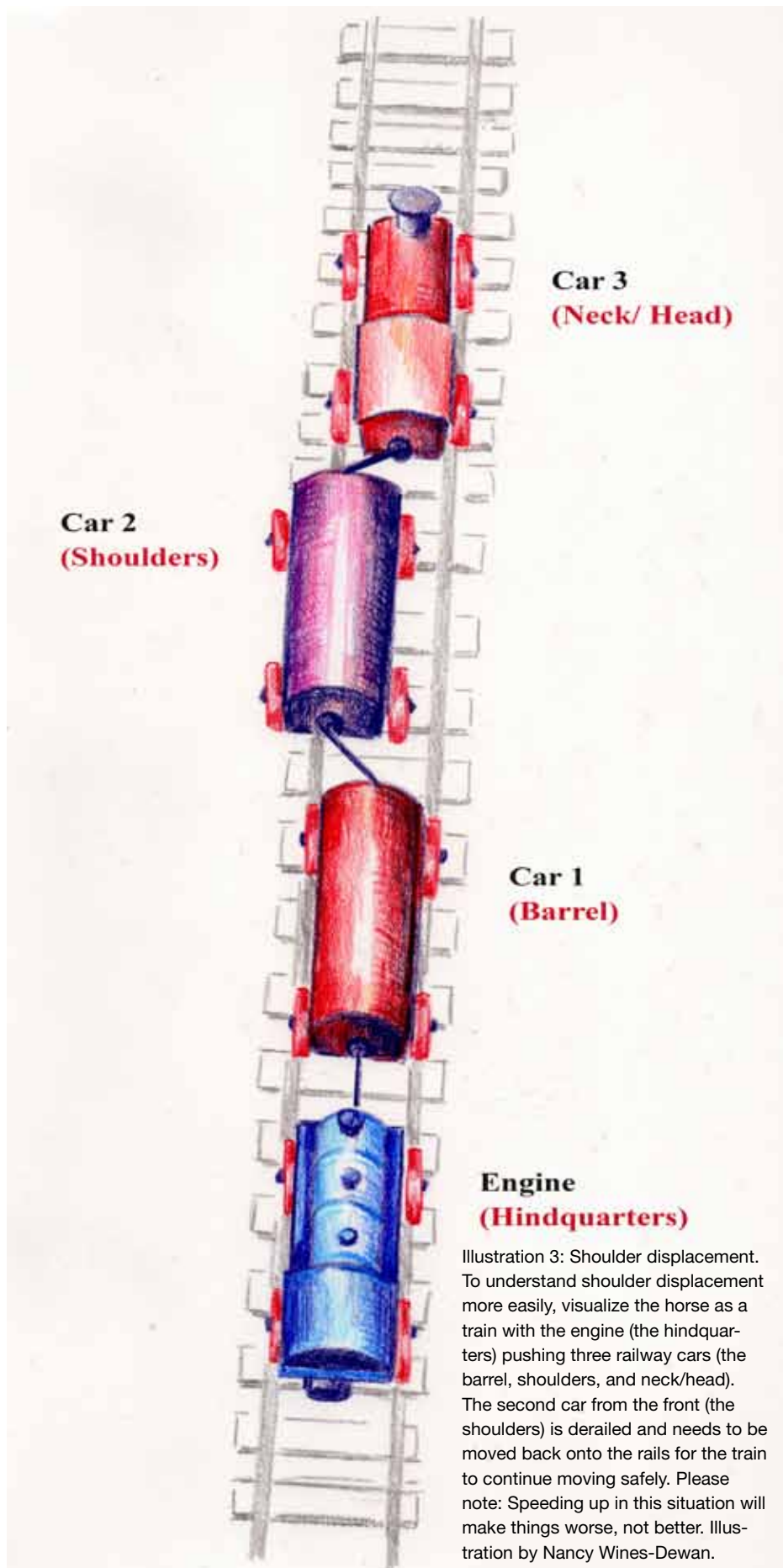


Illustration 3: Shoulder displacement. To understand shoulder displacement more easily, visualize the horse as a train with the engine (the hindquarters) pushing three railway cars (the barrel, shoulders, and neck/head). The second car from the front (the shoulders) is derailed and needs to be moved back onto the rails for the train to continue moving safely. Please note: Speeding up in this situation will make things worse, not better. Illustration by Nancy Wines-Dewan.

His shoulders will likely now fall toward the inside of the circle and the circle has the tendency to become smaller.

It is important to realize that natural asymmetry manifests itself in many different ways, and not all of them show in each horse. Icelandics are no exception to this rule, as every trainer will tell you. As German gaited horse specialist Kaja Stuehrenberg writes in her book *Toelt verstehen und besser reiten* (“Understanding the Tölt and Riding It Better”), “In addition to all the problems we see in non-gaited horses, like uneven rhythm, a tilted head, stiffness, rein lameness, and lack of throughness, gaited horses can also express asymmetry by a so-called ‘canter roll,’ during which one front or one hind leg steps further than its counterpart of the other side, which feels to the rider as if the horse will be performing a canter transition in the very next moment.”

All of this is not as complicated as it might seem. The key is that we, as riders, gain an awareness of straightness (or the lack of it) and are able to feel to which side the shoulders fall out. As Eyjólfur Ísólffsson stated during one of his clinics: “Once you have learned how a crooked horse feels, you will never forget it again.”

ON THE SAME TRACK

One more definition: When riding a straight line, we say the horse moves straight when his hind and front feet move on the same track, and not to its side.

When riding a circle, we say the horse travels “straight on the circle,” when his hind feet move in the same track as his front feet. Depending on the size of the circle, the bend through the horse’s body is more or less distinct: the smaller the circle, the tighter the bend.

While this image is helpful for everyday riding, I should add that there is a lot of discussion among trainers and scientists about the exact way in which the horse’s spine moves in three-dimensions, how it rotates, and how it bends sideways and vertically. The impression of a uniform bend along the horse’s spine is an illusion. Taking a closer look at a picture of a horse skeleton, we can see that the shapes of the individual vertebrae differ along the spine. A vertebra of the thoracic spine looks fundamentally different than that of the lumbar spine or the neck.

The shapes of the vertebrae and their processes, as well as the contact areas between the individual vertebrae, allow for very different types of movement in three dimensions. Therefore, the horse’s spine doesn’t bend in the same way everywhere along its length from head to tail.

EXERCISES

Again, straightness means that front end and hind end are aligned, and both sides of the horse feel even. Practicing for straightness naturally starts out in a walk, but eventually expands to all gaits. Writes Kaja Stuehrenberg, “The principle of making a horse straight applies to the tölt, as much as it applies to the basic gaits.”

In order to make a horse straight, a less experienced rider might try to shorten the rein on the longer side—which is the stiff or convex side—in an attempt to pull the horse’s neck and head straight. This approach does not work, however. The contracted muscles and tight fascia of the hollow side will counteract any attempt to bend the horse toward the opposite side. Faced with this dilemma, the horse will become apprehensive and tense up and might become even stiffer—but it will not become straight.

Instead of asking the horse to shorten his longer, stiff side, the classical course of action is to encourage the muscles and fascia of the shorter, hollow side to relax and become longer. Then, and only then, can the horse shorten the muscles of his stiff side, which subsequently will allow for straightness and a true bend into the formerly stiff direction.

A good riding instructor will be able to teach you exercises to use to straighten your horse and will make sure that you and your horse are performing the exercises correctly. To work toward more straightness, we need to establish contact with the horse’s mouth, but great care must be taken to not create any resistance or tension in the horse.

Classical dressage theory uses two main approaches to work on straightness: riding on bent lines with the horse’s feet moving on two tracks and so-called “lateral work,” where the horse’s feet are moving on three or four tracks.

Examples of exercises on two tracks are: circles in both directions, serpentine, figure eights, and arena figures (see the articles in Issues One and Two 2016

of *The Icelandic Horse Quarterly*). The rider needs to be mindful of riding the exact lines in these exercises, as the horse with asymmetries wants to deviate from the lines. Only riding the correct lines will teach the horse to use his body correctly, in this case more evenly on both sides.

“Leg yield” and “shoulder fore” are beginning lateral movements that can be used to develop a “shoulder-in” on either three or four tracks. Lateral movements should be performed in both directions, and can be done from the ground or under saddle. Once these exercises have become easy to perform, they can be used to place the horse’s shoulders where they need to be.

If you and your horse are not already familiar with these exercises, including the aids involved and their execution, please let your riding instructor help you develop them correctly, as many things can go wrong. If these exercises are done incorrectly or forced upon the horse, they can create more tension instead of helping to straighten the horse.

NEW STRATEGIES

Besides these time-proven classical training approaches, I am aware of two groups who recently have developed alternative strategies based on modern research in neuroscience and kinesiology to address imbalance and asymmetry.

In California, the Intrinzen team centered around Steinar Sigurbjörnsson and Kathy Sierra are currently working on one of these new and different approaches. (For an article about Intrinzen, see Issue Three 2016 of *The Icelandic Horse Quarterly*.) Combining their expertise in horse training, motivational training, and human and equine kinesiology, Steinar and Kathy apply a three-step approach to overcoming asymmetry. They describe these steps as: 1) increasing mobility, 2) increasing stability, and 3) encouraging self-correction. These steps are done with as little cuing by the handler as possible, so that the horse uses his own reflexes to regain symmetry.

Says Kathy, “We don’t try to fix the asymmetry by strengthening the areas that seem weak or by trying to stretch the areas that seem tight. We instead work on making the whole body more mobile and stable through increasing proprioception and motor control. We are treating asym-

metry through the nervous-system, not so much the tissues.”

Over the last five or six years, Michael Geitner in Germany has developed a program he calls “Dual Activation.” It is based on the fact that horses have two separate visual fields (left eye and right eye), which create two separate and independent images in the brain. Visual impulses are processed in the opposite brain hemispheres (left hemisphere for right eye, right hemisphere for left eye). Michael uses yellow and blue poles as guard rails on the ground to stimulate the two brain hemispheres of the horse to better communicate with each other. This is thought to stimulate the horse in such a way that it can better balance itself. A number of well-regarded trainers now use Geitner’s method in addition to the conventional training strategies.

Whatever your approach to asymmetry might be, it is important to realize that natural asymmetry manifests itself in many different ways. Every horse is unique and might benefit from a slightly modified approach. This article only scratches the surface of a very compli-

cated problem. I would like to repeat that it is best to enlist a qualified instructor to identify your and your horse’s specific straightness problems and to help you find the best way to address them.

Lastly, we need to realize that straightness is not something that is achieved some day—and from then on your horse will be magically straight for the rest of his life. The exact opposite is true. Making your horse straight is a life-long endeavor. It requires attention every time you work with your horse.

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Michael Geitner of Germany has developed one technique to address asymmetry, “Dual Activation.” Here he is working a non-Icelandic horse using a corner pattern. Two alleyways with yellow and blue borders are laid out so that they are perpendicular to each other. Walking straight through the first alleyway, the horse sees the blue border to the right and the yellow border to its left. After a corner-type left turn with a good bend, the horse will straighten itself out again entering the second alleyway. Here the colors are inverted: The right border is yellow and the left is blue. This exercise trains the horse in two ways. In addition to the already straightening effect of correct riding (here lungeing) through a corner, the visual perception of the alternating yellow and blue borders connects the horse’s brain hemispheres, which is thought to increase coordination and balance. Photo courtesy Michael Geitner.

CENTERED RIDING

BY CARLA BAUCHMUELLER



Almost 30 years ago I fell in love with Centered Riding. Reading Sally Swift's first book about the riding program she developed, I was in awe: In awe of the beautiful before and after photos, where I at first saw myself much more in the before than in the after; in awe of the wonderful use of imagery that helped me feel my body and my horse.

Growing up in Germany I was yelled at a lot by my riding instructors. Things like "heels down," "look up," "sit straight" were not the most helpful instructions. Yes, I would have loved to bring those heels down, I just had no idea how. I could feel them being pulled up and squeezed into the horse's sides. Little did I know that I had to stop squeezing with my knees to allow my heels to move down.

Sally Swift used to say, "There is a mother to the problem and there is a grandmother to the problem." In my case, heels up was the problem, the squeezing knee was the "mother of the problem," and my tight hip joint was the "grandmother of the problem." Without working on these two, my heels would never find the position my instructor wanted them in.

One of Sally Swift's images—"ride

with your skeleton"—did the trick instantly. And working on a centered position of my pelvis allowed me to let go of the gripping with my knees. It was such a profound and different way to approach the "problem." We were not talking about my heels anymore, we were working on a deep change in my balance and use of myself which resulted in my heels being in the correct position.

Sally Swift's use of imagery and unusual exercises in the saddle and on the ground help to approach the issue from a very different perspective. It's aimed at the rider's "feel."

Many of the classics write about the rider's "feel" and how important it is. Oftentimes it sounds like you either have it or you don't. But through Centered Riding you can achieve it even if you are not a "natural," and you can improve it and make it conscious if you are (a natural).

What is immensely helpful for developing the rider's feel is the practicing of movements unmounted, on the ground, without your horse. Just you and your body, having the time to figure out what you/your body need to do to make your riding work.

Here are three Centered Riding exercises I use with my students that you can

play with. I call them the keys for more fun and confidence in your riding:

CENTERED AND BALANCED

When we talk about the "center" in Centered Riding, we mean the pelvis. Centering means bringing your pelvis into the centered position.

That's so important because the pelvis is not only where all the trouble with balance starts (and ends), it's also our "engine" and our most important communication center with our horse.

The dream of riding your horse without a bridle or halter can come true when you truly communicate through your seat, meaning your pelvis and seat bones.

To find the centered position, here is an easy exercise: Picture your pelvis as a bowl filled with water. When you hollow your back (photo on left), the bowl tips forward and the water will spill out the front. When you round your back (middle photo), the bowl will tip back and the water will spill out the back. Posi-

Imagine your pelvis is a bowl full of water. If it's centered, you won't spill a drop. Don't hollow your back (as on the left) or round it (as in the middle). The centered position, on the right, allows your psoas muscle to be engaged, giving you both stability and flexibility.

tion your pelvis (the bowl) in a way that you won't lose water (photo on right). In this position the psoas muscle, our most important core muscle, is engaged, giving us stability but at the same time allowing the arms and legs to stay relaxed and flexible.

THE RIGHT TIMING

To find the right timing for your aids, you need to feel the horse's movement precisely. For instance, only when you push with your leg when the horse lifts off the hind leg on the same side, will he be able to respond to your aid. If you don't get the timing right, you can push a lot without any effect. The horse cannot respond to your aids if they don't come at the right time.

When you do get the timing right, your aids will be so much more effortless and efficient. Do you know this feeling of pushing and squeezing and nothing happening? Most of the time it's because our aids don't come at the right time, and the horse can't respond. It's as frustrating for the horse as it is for the human.

Start with this exercise: At a walk, allow your pelvis and legs to swing with the movement of the barrel. You will feel your horse's barrel shift from right to left under you, taking your pelvis and legs with it.

This is what's happening under you: As your horse lifts his right hind foot off the ground, his barrel will go down and to the left. The right side of your pelvis and your right leg will follow this movement down and in. Your right leg wants to follow this movement naturally. It would be very easy to now just give a little push with your right leg if you wanted to drive your horse forward.

This is in fact the perfect moment for driving as the horse has just lifted his right hind foot off the ground, and it's very easy for the horse to actually do something with this leg, such as stepping under more or crossing over or whatever you want to ask your horse for next.

Here is an extra tip for those of you who are already familiar with this movement: Be very aware of it when you ask your horse for a leg-yield or another form of lateral work. It makes a big difference in lateral work when you get the timing/rhythm of your driving right. Start being aware of this barrel/leg-movement a

few steps before you actually go into the lateral movement. This way you are prepared and ready with the correct driving mechanism when you go into it.

MENTAL FOCUS

Also called "clear intent" in Centered Riding, mental focus means being totally present with your horse: You have a clear image of what you want to do next and where you want to go, and you are making sure that you are truly leading your horse.

When you lead with clear intent, your horse can trust that you are taking care of your own and the horse's balance. When we don't have a clear intent, our bodies are not organized before the next task.

Let's say you want to ride a circle. You could approach the circle in a centered manner, having a clear image of this circle in your mind, already organizing your body for the bend that will be needed, "sending your horse the thought" of what is coming. Checking in with your horse: Is it in balance? Is it okay to ride the circle now, or should I take a few more steps to organize our balance better before the attempt? Preparing for your circle this way will set both of you up for success. Gaited horses especially need this well-prepared change in their balance to be able to keep in gait.

Here is an unmounted exercise that will help you understand what I mean. Ask a friend to "square dance" with you. Stand side by side, both facing the same direction. Put your left arm around her waist and lightly hold her right hand in your right hand.

First, you as the "rider" take a moment to center yourself and get ready to lead your "horse." You start walking, taking your friend with you, leading her clearly and confidently. You lead your friend in circles, into stops, rein back, fast, slow—even sideways.

In the next step of the exercise, lead your friend instead in an uncentered manner: You just walk off, stop, and turn, as if your friend wasn't there, changing your mind along the way, pulling your friend along with you. It will only take a few minutes for your friend to get frustrated with you and want to "buck you off."

Finally, go back to the centered way of leading, so that both of you can finish the exercise in a centered way.

Now let your friend be the "rider," so that you can experience firsthand how good it feels to be led in a clear, calm way, as opposed to the frustrating push and pull that happens when your "rider" is not centered.

You might be reminded of the times when you were riding your real horse in the arena or on a trail, and you were not centered. You did not see the other horse coming and stopped abruptly, or pulled your horse onto a circle that you just decided to ride without getting both of you ready for it. No more! Next time you are tempted to "just turn here," remember what it felt like, and take a moment to really get ready for your turn. This doesn't mean you have to go slowly. You can make very fast, clear movements, taking your partner/horse with you into the motion like a good dancer would his or her partner.

What I love about this exercise is that it shows us the "other" side of centering. Yes, centering is about a specific position of your pelvis and an overall alignment of your body, but centering is also something that happens inside, in your awareness. It is a gentle, clear focus that allows you to be fully present with your horse.

I find that when people find this way of clear but soft focus, their communication with their horse becomes so much subtler. All these thoughts of "Where do I need to half halt to get this or that result?" will not be needed, as you will know—feel—instantly when your horse's balance changes. You will feel it even before it changes, so that you can catch and correct it early, with much subtler aids than you need to use when things have already fallen apart.

CONTACT

Carla Bauchmueller is a Centered Riding Clinician, holds a Trainer A license in the German system, and is a Yoga and Meditation Instructor. Contact her at cb@cb-riding.com, at www.cb-riding.com, or on Facebook.

To learn more, read Sally Swift's books, *Centered Riding* (1985) and *Centered Riding 2: Further Exploration* (2002), both published by Trafalgar Square Books.

EARN YOUR RIDING BADGE!

BY ALEX PREGITZER

The USIHC Education Committee is proud to announce the publication of the first Riding Badge Program study guide. This 60-page reference book covers all of theory topics taught and tested in Riding Badges 1 and 2. These are the first two Riding Badges—the most basic and the most popular ones, in terms of the number of courses that have been taught in the U.S. since the program was first announced in 2005.

The information in the Riding Badge Program handbook is valuable for—and available to—anyone interested in the Icelandic horse. You can find it at http://www.magcloud.com/browse/issue/1225159?_r=728095 and either use the information online or order a printed copy for \$12 plus shipping. Instructors can order larger volumes at a discounted rate.

Altogether the USIHC Riding Badge Program consists of seven achievement levels. The first two cover general horse knowledge, three are competition badges, and the final two emphasize trail riding. Some are quite easy, and suitable for anyone from age eight up. Others are as challenging as a trainer seminar, with exams asking for a Tölt T1 and Four-gait V1 (or Tölt T2 and Five-gait F1) performance, a dressage test, jumping, ponying,



The Riding Badge Program got its start in Alaska, under the direction of Bernie Willis. Here Janet Mulder presents Amelia (Millie) Carney with her badge and certificate. Photo by Bernie Willis.

and riders switching horses.

The subject areas were selected to provide an overall background in equestrian sport, with a special emphasis on riding Icelandic horses. For each badge, students go through several units of riding instruction or theory classes, followed by an exam. The main difference from a regular riding clinic is the number of instructional units and the intensity of the seminar or lessons.

My personal opinion is that a Riding Badge seminar is like a clinic on steroids: There's more theory, more lessons, more days, more learning, more fun!

A LITTLE HISTORY

I forget exactly how the Riding Badge Program started. All I remember is sitting in the kitchen at Winterhorse Park in Wisconsin with Barb Riva, talking about the conversations she'd had with Bernie Willis in Alaska. They had discussed the need for a U.S. educational program like the German and Icelandic programs I knew from Europe. I volunteered to help, so Barb quickly called Bernie, who had already begun working on developing a program, and we all brainstormed.

We knew that several FEIF countries had similar educational programs in place, and although it was clear we couldn't duplicate those programs exactly, we also did not see any sense in reinventing the wheel. Taking into account the very different circumstances in the U.S. (such as fewer vacation days and longer distances to travel), we came up with a plan that included some Old World ideas and some New World ones.

Our goal was to create an educational program for children, teenagers, and adults alike, serving beginner riders, intermediate riders, and even very advanced riders in their task to learn, improve, and perfect their skills.

As explained on the USIHC web site, in developing the Riding Badge Program we relied heavily upon the German Riding Program, with additional information



The Riding Badge Program is not just for kids! Its seven levels go from beginner to expert. Here, Stefanie Flynn of Alaska practices for the riding portion of an exam. Photo by Bryan Mulder.

from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's 4-H program. Bernie, Barb, and I created the content and practical requirements for the seven badge levels, deciding on the theory topics for the instructors to teach and writing the questions for the examiners to include in their tests—and I then got to answer all those questions! At this point, Will Covert generously offered to double check the content of each and every theory answer—another major project.

After the program was approved by the USIHC board, it was immediately put to use. Instructors taught the courses based on their own knowledge and the theory



Coralie Denmeade led this Riding Badge seminar for kids in 2012 in Colorado. Photo by Florie Miller.

questions we provided, while the students took notes or did their own research.

But we had always intended to produce study guides—and in fact, Bernie got to work on the first one right away, compiling information and writing the text. He recruited veterinarian Gloria Verrecchio to edit his materials. Then, after a brief hiatus, Alexandra Dannemann, as the new USIHC Education Committee chair, took it upon herself to wrap up the project. Cor-

alie Denmeade got involved; she gathered the photos, drawings, and illustrations and designed the book's cool professional look. And finally Coralie and Nicki Esdorn did the final editing and proofreading and the project was done.

Please make all of them happy—as well as the rest of us who have worked on developing and promoting the Riding Badge Program over the years—by taking advantage of this wonderful program!

ARE YOU CURIOUS?

Here is a little taste of what you can expect to learn in a Riding Badge course. For example, the Basic Riding Badge Level 1 takes four days or an equivalent number of instructional units. For the “Horse handling on the ground” unit, you must be able to demonstrate:

- catching
- haltering
- leading
- tacking up in preparation for riding.

For the riding portion of the exam, you have to show simple figures and transitions at the walk, trot, and tölt.

For the theory section, you'll be tested on questions like:

- What is the difference between stall and pasture board?
- Why do you groom a horse?
- What does a horse need to be healthy?
- How do you mount properly?
- What gaits does an Icelandic horse have?

For the Pleasure Riding Badge Level 2, by contrast, you can expect to spend six days or the equivalent number of instructional units, plus take a first aid course. The practical exercises you'll need to demonstrate include:

- showing a horse at different speed levels at tölt



Alex Pregitzer led an early Riding Badge seminar in 2007 for the Flugnir Regional Club in Wisconsin. “We camped out in a local park and had lessons in a self-made ring. Simple but really fun,” Alex recalls. Photo by Deb Cook.



Ayla Green directs Julia Hasenauer on Birta at a Riding Badge Level 2 seminar in California in 2010. The instructor was Heidi Benson and the examiner was Svanhildur Stefánsdóttir. Photo by Heidi Benson.

- showing a horse at any tempo walk, trot, tölt, and canter
- passing an obedience test (backing, stopping, mounting, and dismounting)
- jumping two jumps (maximum height two feet)
- ponying another horse
- showing good behavior when riding on trails.

In the theory section of this badge, you'll be required to answer these sorts of questions:

- What are the normal pulse readings for an Icelandic (beats/min) after strenuous work?
- Describe different ways of incorrect trimming/shoeing.
- What is grass silage, and what do you have to pay attention to when feeding it?
- Describe the causes, symptoms, and treatment of tetanus.
- How do the different nosebands work and how do they influence the horse?
- Name the bones and joints of the front leg.
- Name the different leg aids and when they are used.
- What faulty sequences of steps exist in tölt?

YOU CAN'T FAIL

When the USIHC Riding Badge Program was created, it was very important to all

of us working on the project that it would be a tool for everyone. We wanted it to be extremely inclusive—but also not complicated; it should be accessible and helpful.

Therefore, there are no prerequisites for participating (other than being eight years old or older). There is no certain order in which the seven badge levels have to be taken: You can start with the most challenging badge and go to the easiest one, if you want to. The required lessons for a certain badge level can be taken during a single clinic, or they can

be spread out over a long period of time. Theory and riding lessons can be taught together or separately. The instructor can be anyone who is confident teaching the content, and the exams can be judged by any certified Icelandic horse trainer, any USIHC sport judge, or any FEIF international sport or breeding judge.

And the best part? You can't fail.

Anyone who doesn't pass an exam (either a theory exam or a ridden exam) on the first attempt can try again, repeating the exams as often as they wish. So let's get started and earn your first Riding Badge!

MORE INFO

For general information about the Riding Badge Program, as well as frequently asked questions, see:

https://www.icelandics.org/Education/riding_badge.php

For detailed information about the Riding Badge Program, including requirements for all seven levels, see:

<https://www.icelandics.org/download/USIHCridingRules.pdf>

To get the new study guide for Riding Badges Levels 1 and 2, see:

http://www.magcloud.com/browse/issue/1225159?__r=728095



The Kraftur Regional Club sponsored this Riding Badge seminar at Coast Road Stables in Santa Cruz, CA in 2010. Seven youth riders earned their Level 2 badges. In the foreground, Allison Moerer shows trot on Punktur. Photo by Heidi Benson.

HOW TO RIDE AN ICELANDIC HORSE

BY ARIANNA DEFORGE

I love Icelandic horses. I love to ride horses because the horses are nice. My favorite horse is Spoon. She is reddish brown with a whiteish yellow mane in the winter and brown in the summer.

When I go to ride the first thing I do is groom my horse. You have to get the horse ready before you ride. You use a curry comb and push lightly on the horse to get the dirt loose. Then you use a flick brush to get rid of the dust and dirt you made loose with the curry comb.

Then you use the hoof pick to get all the dirt out of the hooves and make sure there are no rocks so it's comfy for the horse and the rocks don't hurt it.

After that you saddle up the horse. First you put on the pads, then the saddle, then the girth. You tighten the girth and pull the stirrups down. Then you are ready to ride. After you put on your helmet you are ready to get on the horse. You put one foot in the stirrup and pull yourself up onto the horse. But try not to kick your horse getting on.

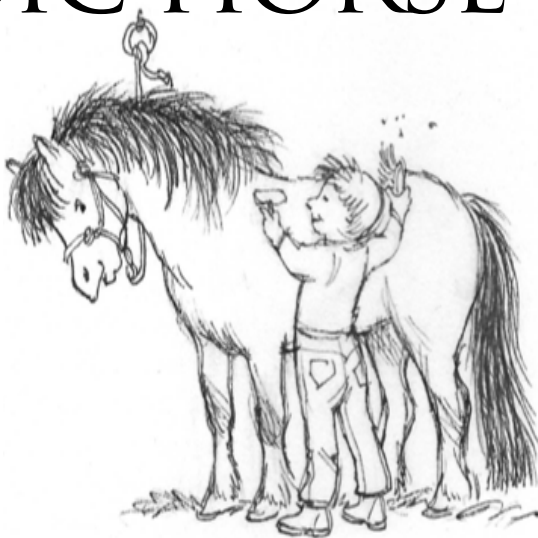
Once you are on your horse you are ready to get her to move. You get the horse to walk by squeezing the horse's tummy, putting your heels down, and saying "fram."

To get the horse to trot you put your heels down and squeeze the horse's tummy and say "brokk!"

To get the horse to tölt you lean back a little bit, you lift the reins a little bit, and you make kissing noises. The difference between trot and tölt is that tölt is really smooth.

I love to tölt in the ring and to go on trail rides.

Arianna Deforge, age 7, won the 2017 Spaeri Youth Award. She lives in Vermont and trains with Jessica Haynsworth. Spaeri is the Icelandic name of the Icelandic endurance horse known as Remington, famous for his determination, passion, and indomitable will. The Spaeri Award is given annually to a youth member who clearly demonstrates commitment to and love for Icelandic horses. The recipient of the award is chosen from USIHC youth who submit articles for publication in the Quarterly during the calendar year. For more information, see <https://www.icelandics.org/youth.php#spaeri>. Illustrations by Margot Apple.



LEARN TO JUDGE

BY NANCY MARIE BROWN

At the 2017 USIHC Annual Meeting in Pittsburgh, FEIF Director of Sport and USIHC Board member Doug Smith gave a short presentation on the FEIF Sport Judges Guidelines and demonstrated the free app he developed to help riders and judges learn how the system works.

Before he began, Doug taught us how to download a copy of the judging app onto our MacBook, iPad, or iPhone. It's simple: Go to the iTunes App Store online and search for "Doug Smith Guidelines." At the moment, the app is only available for Apple devices, but "If somebody wants to do it for Android devices," Doug said, "I'm happy to send them my source code."

Doug opened his talk with some history into how our current international judging rules came to be. "The FEIF Sport Committee took two and a half years to think through how we wanted judges to translate a horse and rider's performance into a mark," he said. "We wanted the judging process to be more clear, more organized, and less subjective."

HARMONY FIRST

The judges' priorities were also slightly shifted. As stated in the FEIF Sport Judges Guidelines, the prime judging criterion for an Icelandic horse show "should be the harmony between horse and rider. The rider must handle the horse with fairness, delicacy, and respect; be its true leader rather than its dominator. At all times the rider must put the horse's welfare paramount and guard its health and safety. The horse should be able



FEIF Director of Sport Doug Smith has developed an app to make learning to judge Icelandic horses easier.

to fulfil its tasks with pleasure; be calm and supple, but also confident, attentive, and keen."

"For a while," said Doug, "in the Icelandic horse world there was not the emphasis on riding skill and connection with the horse that we in the committee felt there should be. That we accomplished this revision of the guidelines is one of the things I'm most proud of during my tenure on the FEIF Sport Committee."

The new guidelines were formalized and have been in place since 2014. They can be downloaded from the FEIF website at www.feif.org/files/documents/sj_guidelines2015.pdf.

The driving force behind the revision process, Doug said, was FEIF International Sport Judge Þorgeir Guðlaugsson, who is

known to USIHC members as the instructor in our Sport Judge Seminars. Þorgeir has judged more Icelandic Horse World Championships than any other judge and will be the chief judge at the 2017 World Championships in the Netherlands.

As the guidelines state, the main judging principle is "to make a well balanced, objective, and fair assessment that does the entire performance justice." Rather than being wowed by how flashy or crowd-pleasing a performance is, the judges must take these key elements into consideration:

- riding skills and connection
- beat and balance
- suppleness and relaxation
- outline and movements
- correctness and precision of the execution.

"Expression is the most subjective factor in Icelandic horse competition," Doug said. "Some horses have that 'wow-factor' when they are standing still." These other elements, the Sport Committee felt, are more important.

FIREWALLS

To underscore the importance of these key elements, and to make judging more objective, the judging guidelines incorporated the idea of "firewalls" into the judging process. This concept is not used in Icelandic horse breeding evaluations or under the gæðingakeppni rules, only in sport competitions. As Doug explained, "When a sport judge sees a firewall, it limits the highest mark the rider can get. It blocks the mark at that level."

According to the written guidelines, "All the key elements must form the basis of the assessment. Therefore good qualities of one element should not compensate for significant shortcomings of other elements. To prevent this happening, firewalls have been placed between the requirements and/or restrictions that have been laid out for each key element. Those firewalls cannot be crossed and will guide the judge when determining the range of possible marks."

At the USIHC Annual Meeting, Doug demonstrated how the firewall system works. When using the app, the firewalls become



Getting comments from the judge at the 2015 Kentucky Spring Show. Using the new judging app can help you better understand why you scored as you did. Photo by Shaila Sigsgaard.

visible colored bars that highlight the range of marks possible. In both the guidelines and on the app, the most important ideas are at the top of the page. Said Doug, "Riding connection is where we start for every test."

In his hypothetical example using fast tölt, he said, "If we say this rider has a generally good riding style, we're in this box"—as defined by the firewalls, "this rider cannot possibly get a final score over 8.0. Now if the horse has occasional beat or balance problems, that pulls the score down to a maximum of 6.5. But, if the horse is too slow in fast tölt sections, then the score is trapped in the 3.0-4.0 range."

A LEARNING TOOL

The point of the app, Doug explained, "is to help people learning to use the guidelines as riders and spectators"—or as potential sport judges.

For competition riders, using the app can "show you what you should work on," Doug added. "You might see in a competition four riders with a final score of 4.8, but they all got there in a different way. The guidelines and the app explain why—what each rider did wrong."

Will Covert, USIHC President and one of two FEIF International Sport Judges in the U.S. (the other is Education Committee chair Alex Dannenmann), explained at the meeting that "good judges use words in their comments that match the words on the app"—and that these are the same words as in the printed guidelines. "They use the same language that is used by all other FEIF judges." After the show, then, riders can easily compare their score sheets to the app and clearly see where their performance met a firewall. Will suggested that USIHC show organizers have an iPad available at the pre-show judge's meeting so that people can play with the app and better understand how the



Alexandra Dannenmann is one of two FEIF International Sport Judges in the U.S. (the other is USIHC President Will Covert).



Do you want to be the one under the tent? At a 2008 schooling show in Vermont, Susan Peters, Alex Pregitzer (now a USIHC Sport Judge B), and Knutur Berndsen (left to right) score Jessica Haynsworth and Thor frá Skorrastad. Photo by Nancy Marie Brown.

judging guidelines work.

For potential sport judges, the app is a training tool. "Memorizing where these firewalls are is a lot of the business of being a sport judge," Doug said. "If you're too far off, you won't pass the test to become a judge. The process of becoming a judge is to translate what you see on the track into one of these text descriptions, and then to assign it a number. You won't see a judge with this app in his or her hand, but you will see a judge-in-training use it. If you're trying

to get familiar with the guidelines, it's a big help in making the leap from performance to number."

For more information about becoming a sport judge in the U.S., including scholarship money available, see the USIHC website at www.icelandics.org/sportJudgeMatrix. To learn when and where Sport Judging Seminars will be offered, watch the USIHC Events calendar or contact the Education Committee at education@icelandics.org.

BECOME A JUDGE

Do you want to become an Icelandic horse sport judge? USIHC Education Committee chair and board member Alexandra Dannenmann passed the exam to become a national sport judge in 2015 and an international sport judge in 2016. We asked her to tell us how she practiced for her judges' exams and also if she had any recommendations for others wanting to follow in her footsteps.

"The best preparation for a judges' exam," said Alex, "is to attend as many competitions as possible, either as a rider or as a spectator. The more horses you see, the better you get at judging their performances correctly.

"I have competed on a variety of horses starting at a very young age. Whenever I was not riding myself, I sat next to the track and watched others ride, cheering on my friends and comparing the judges' scores with my mental notes. Looking back, that was the perfect preparation for my judges' exams—even though at the time, I was not thinking so far ahead.

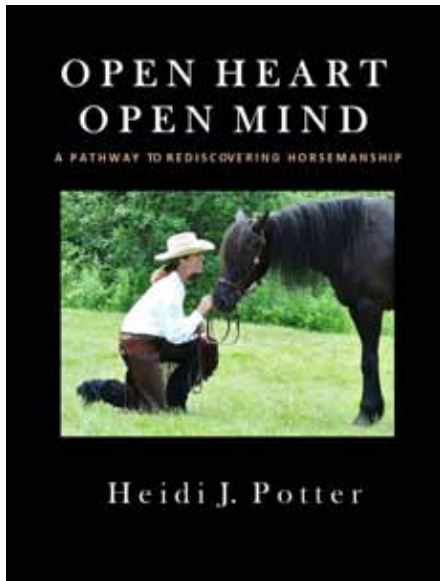
"Training a variety of horses and participating in shows helps you develop the right idea of how a horse has to move and feel in order to obtain a certain score. Training horses has especially helped me develop a feel for each horse, which is essential for any judge to recognize a rider's mistakes and to suggest possible solutions to better the outcome. As judges, we aim ideally to not only judge a performance, but also to answer questions as to how the rider can improve the scores given.

"Nowadays there are lots of videos of Icelandic horse competitions available for you to watch online. They can be a helpful alternative to attending shows in person, and they have helped me prepare for my exams.

"Other than that, I believe the most important quality of a judge is passion. You must live and breathe horses—and be the kind of person who always feels tempted to watch and judge every horse you come across!"

OPEN HEART OPEN MIND

BOOK REVIEW BY NICKI ESDORN



What is horsemanship? According to Google, it is “the art or practice of riding on horseback.” But it is so much more than that! Horsemanship is everything we do with our horses—from raising and caring for them to all aspects of training and, of course, riding. In the past hundred years, the role of horses in the western world has changed completely, and horsemanship with it. Horses have become partners in sport and recreation and are mostly no longer used for field work, in the cavalry, for transportation, or working cattle all day. Today we can find many varieties of evolving horsemanship—classical, traditional, “natural,” and methods based on the science of animal behavior modification.

Heidi Potter is a very accomplished horsewoman, trainer, and instructor. She is a certified Centered Riding clinician, a CHA (Certified Horsemanship Association) master instructor/clinician, and a Horse Agility accredited trainer. She and her husband Rob own and operate the New England Center for Horsemanship in southern Vermont. In her book *Open Heart Open Mind: A Pathway to Rediscovering Horsemanship*, she shares her path to her unique, gentle, and effective philosophy of horsemanship, using her extensive knowledge of various disciplines and train-

ing methods. It is not just a personal story, though, but full of practical advice and exercises for horse and human.

As a horse crazy teenager, Heidi was lucky to live close to the Circle C Ranch in Westmoreland, NH and spent all her free time there riding western style, showing, playing, and working. Later on, she and husband Rob opened a riding, boarding, and training barn in Guilford, VT. They were interested in martial arts and began regular training. When Heidi started to study Centered Riding with instructor Lucile Bump, she realized there were many connections to what she had practiced in Karate and Aikido, both physically and philosophically. In her book she uses concepts from martial arts to explain topics like how to deal with a horse offering resistance, grounding, posture, breathing, and mindfulness in depth, and it is extremely interesting. Heidi also studied natural horsemanship with John Lyons and others and tells how she incorporated those lessons into her training; she also considers their drawbacks.

Soon after Heidi began working with obstacles, she discovered the sport of Horse Agility. She describes well how working correctly with obstacles will improve the horse’s confidence and balance and create a trusting relationship with its rider. The goal in Horse Agility is to run an obstacle course at liberty, with the horse freely choosing to perform. Heidi tells how she began to reflect on the different ways of training she had studied and incorporated into her method. Did her horses want to be with her when the halter was taken off? Heidi learned to incorporate reward-based (clicker) training to solve certain problems, and she explains how and when she chooses this method.

Lastly, she tells us how she embarked on finding the “missing link” for true connection with her horse in a relationship clinic with Piet Nibbelink. She concludes with this observation: “My journey in horsemanship continues to evolve as I hope yours does. I don’t believe there will ever be one set of methods that will work every time, for every horse. Instead

of learning ‘methods’ I encourage you to learn and practice philosophies. Make these philosophies part of who you are, how you live and how you interact with all living beings.”

I met Heidi at Equine Affaire a few years ago, where she gave a talk about Horse Agility. I was very impressed and invited her to teach a combined Centered Riding and Agility Clinic at my farm. (See the article in Issue Three 2014 of the *Quarterly*). Heidi loves working with Icelandic horses, and we had a wonderful time. Even though this book is not specifically about Icelandics, the lessons in it are all applicable to our breed.

It is rare indeed to find a teacher of her caliber who is open-minded enough to study and apply different training methods, evolving them into a coherent philosophy—and then to share her insights and journey in a really good book!

Order from www.heidipotter.com.



Author Heidi Potter teaching a combined Centered Riding and Agility Clinic at Nicki’s farm in 2014.

UNDERSTANDING EMOTIONS

BY NICKI ESDORN



Do you always know how your horse feels? This is a question most horse owners would like to know the answer to.

There are three kinds of feelings: sensory (temperature, light), bodily (hunger, pain), and emotional (anger, joy, loneliness). We would never let our horses freeze or starve, but do we pay enough attention to their emotions? Understanding their emotions is an important part of caring for and training animals, and it can contribute greatly to their welfare.

Last fall, I discovered an excellent online course about animal emotions taught by Karolina Westlund. She is a well-known ethologist and animal behavior consultant whose main concern is animal welfare. Her course on animal core emotions will be repeated later this year, and I highly recommend taking it. Karolina was kind enough to give me permission to write this article for the *Quarterly*. It is meant as an introduction to a very com-

plex topic. You will find sources for more information and further study below.

SEVEN CORE EMOTIONS

Karolina's online course is based on the work of neuroscientist Jaak Panksepp, who discovered that all mammals, and even some birds, share seven core emotions. They are CARE, SEEKING, PLAY, FEAR, GRIEF, RAGE, and LUST. In this context they are spelled in all capital letters. The core emotions are vital for survival and procreation.

Each emotion can be categorized as pleasant or unpleasant, and calm or excited. Panksepp's core emotions fit into four quadrants (see the graph), called "core affect space." When we, the human trainers and owners, add or remove resources (good stuff, rewards) or aversives (bad stuff, punishment), we influence how the animal feels emotionally and where it falls in the four quadrants. Animals have good welfare if they can spend most of their time and mood in the quadrants to the right.



CARE

Picture a mare and her foal, or two equine buddies, scratching each other's neck. Both experience the CARE emotion, which is mostly elicited by welcome touch. The feeling is tender, loving, calm, and safe. It is very important for social herd animals, as it fosters cohesion and acceptance, trust and mutual liking. When horses are kept in single stalls or turnouts and are never allowed to touch each other, they are deprived of feeling CARE. When we scratch, pet, and groom our horses, we feel good as CARE-givers, and the horse, too, enjoys being in this pleasant emotional state.



SEEKING

The SEEKING system promotes exploration, learning, and understanding. The feeling is curious and enthusiastic, and it is intrinsically rewarding—the SEEKING is often even more fun than the getting. A horse that is foraging in a large pasture is in SEEKING mode: It is moving forward, sniffing, looking for good morsels. A bit of SEEKING plays a role in the other emotions, too, such as looking to find a mate or a safe place. In a domestic setting, many opportunities for SEEKING are taken away. We feed automatically, in big portions, so no moving or searching is required. Horses who experience very low levels of SEEKING often look depressed. Hiding bits of food in a paddock, or going on a trail ride and letting the horse explore its surroundings, or a bit of hand grazing will help. When we choose to train with a reward-based method (such as clicker training or Intrinzen) we turn on the SEEKING system in the horse's brain.



PLAY

We have all hopefully seen what "horse-play" looks like: The horses are let out from confinement in a stable; they are running, jumping, bucking, showing off,



Letting a horse explore the surroundings on a trail ride turns on the emotional SEEKING system. My young mare Jenny has been introduced to the river in the company of a confident older horse, and also with positive reinforcement training. She clearly thinks it is a cool place to be! Photo by Charlotte Kooyman.

and frolicking. The feeling is joyful and happy, the energy is often high. PLAY is very important especially for young horses. They develop strength, stamina, and balance, learn social skills, and become confident. We can often see the beautiful movements we strive for in our competition horses performed with gusto by the youngsters at play. It has been shown that horses can distinguish between a laughing, happy human face and a frown even in photographs, and that they will avoid the latter. A playful, happy expression when we come to the stable makes a big difference for the horse—and ourselves. Playing with obstacles, as in Horse Agility, will help the horse become confident. We can teach our horses to stay at a safe distance when playing with us.



FEAR

FEAR is a strong, unpleasant, but life-saving emotion in prey animals and is easily aroused. Foals are born fully able to run and flee, and already have innate triggers for FEAR: pain, perceived predators, sudden movements or noises, new things and places, and being restrained and not in control. FEAR behavior is expressed according to arousal. Low-level FEAR causes the horse to freeze or move away slowly, but the behavior can quickly turn into full-fledged flight. There is a danger of sensitization. The horse can become anxious, causing him to spook and flee from a hair trigger. Unfortunately, most training methods operate in the FEAR system using negative reinforcement, which is based on a constant threat of escalation of pressure, or even punishment.



GRIEF

GRIEF is the most painful emotion, which, at high arousal, is also named PANIC. The feeling is lonely and sad. GRIEF is important for survival, as it is the intense emotion a foal and its mother feel when separated. We have seen the behavior in GRIEF/PANIC: A horse separated from its herd may gallop up and down, sweating and calling, becoming ever more agitated. When GRIEF is not alleviated after a while, it turns into despair, and the animal shuts down. Instead of getting angry we can help our horses by training separation slowly and gradually, keeping calm, and building trust in us.



RAGE

RAGE is a very unpleasant emotion with high arousal. When it is stimulated, subjects feel furious, about to explode, and look for someone to attack. Knowing what triggers RAGE is very useful, so we can avoid it in a training situation. Strong irritation, such as from biting flies, can arouse RAGE. Horses can show RAGE when they experience food deprivation and want to drive another away from a scarce resource. Frustration from thwarted SEEKING can be expressed with RAGE. Intense FEAR, especially combined with physical restraint or painful punishment, can quickly turn into RAGE. Horses are not naturally aggressive, as life in the wild rarely offers the above-mentioned triggers. Aggression is often a learned behavior, if it works and is practiced. Inter-male aggression, interestingly, may be a separate emotional system. It is not unpleasant, like RAGE, but feels good to the “fighting” stallions and is fueled by different chemicals and hormones. Under restraint, or scarce resources, it can probably slip into RAGE, but this is still being studied.



LUST

Without it there would be no babies! Humans report feeling horny when this system is stimulated. The neuroscience of sex is complex, but animals in LUST mode will exhibit the three “C”s: cruising, courting, and copulating. We may encounter problems with LUST when our mare comes into season. How she feels can be very different from mare to mare. Some show barely any signs, some will be very sensitive and unable to concentrate on anything but attracting a mate. It is best to give her a break. Let her decide if she is able to work and be ridden that day. Stallions are usually owned by professional breeders and riders who know how to train impulse control from an early age.

PAY ATTENTION

The discoveries of affective neuroscience are fascinating and enlightening. They give us many answers, but also raise questions on how we should act in order to improve our animals’ welfare. They show that we actually experience the same

	Unpleasant	Pleasant	
Excited	Rage Fear Grief/Panic	Seeking Play Lust	Excited
Calm	Grief	Care	Calm
	Unpleasant	Pleasant	

This graph is helpful in determining where your horse spends most of his time and mood. Locked in a box stall alone? Afraid of the veterinarian? Grazing in a herd? Being groomed? In the quadrants on the right or on the left?

emotions as our animals do. This should not lead to humanizing the animals, since they can only act according to how they feel. But it should encourage a better understanding and more empathy from us.

Understanding a horse’s core emotions is not only important for animal welfare, it enables us to predict behavior, prevent and solve problems, and achieve more precision and better results in our training. It is important to know that the recognition of emotional states goes both ways: Our animals are very good at reading our facial expressions and even notice our body language and breathing rate. We should pay attention to what quadrant we are in when going to the stable!

MORE INFORMATION

Karolina Westlund, ILLIS ABC (Animal Behavior Consulting), online course on “Animal emotions—happier animals, better relationships”: www.illlis.se

Jaak Panksepp’s TEDx Talk: https://youtu.be/65e2qScV_K8

www.connectiontraining.com: click on “Blog” on Core Emotions specifically for horses by Rachel Bedingfield

www.intrinden.horse

Jaak Panksepp and Lucy Biven, *The Archaeology of Mind: Neuroevolutionary Origins of Human Emotions* (W.W. Norton, 2012)

Jennifer Zeligs, *Animal Training 101* (Mill City Press, 2014)

NEWS FROM CORNELL

BY LAUREN ROBERTS

As readers of the *Quarterly* know, USIHC member and veterinarian Bettina Wagner established a herd of Icelandic horses at Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine in 2012. In the five years since, the herd has contributed significantly to scientific and medical understanding of the breed, while also producing some delightful pleasure horses. “It’s incredibly satisfying not only to see our hard work pay off with important scientific discoveries,” says Bettina, “but also in terms of seeing our foals go on to have happy, fulfilling second careers.”

SUMMER ECZEMA

One of the herd’s primary contributions is to research on summer eczema (SE). Bettina’s goal is to identify factors that can predict this allergic disease, as well as to understand non-hereditary influences from the dam, and the influence of exposure to allergens early in life. She and her colleagues have discovered that early-in-life environmental exposure overwrites genetic predisposition for SE. “Even if both parents are allergic, the foal’s immune system can recognize that allergens are not dangerous as long as foals are exposed early in life,” she says.

In collaboration with researchers in Iceland, they are now testing an oral immunotherapy for adult horses with SE. Allergic horses are fed grain containing

small amounts of allergens to increase the immune system’s tolerance and reduce clinical symptoms of the allergy. To allow sufficient contact time with the mucosa of the mouth, Bettina has devised a spiral bit that can hold a small amount of the allergy-laden grain. The horses chew for about 30 minutes on the bit to allow the immune system of the mouth to recognize the allergens. “This is supposed to induce ‘oral tolerance,’ the mechanism the immune system naturally uses to tolerate food,” she says.

BLOOD PROFILE

The herd also contributes to the Icelandic Horse Blood Profile Project, sponsored by the USIHC. Currently, no standard blood profile for the breed exists in the U.S. Thus, when any lab runs tests on blood from Icelandic horses, the resulting values are compared to a standard that has been set by other breeds, which can make it difficult for veterinarians to interpret whether a deviation is symptomatic of illness or simply a breed-specific normal value. With the help of the USIHC, the researchers have compiled results from 121 Icelandic horses across the U.S. The results so far have identified several blood parameters that vary from the currently used “normal” ranges.

FOAL IMMUNITY

Recently, Bettina has looked into developing vaccines that will be effective in newborn foals—current vaccines do not work until horses are typically 4-6 months old. She introduced an EHV-1 vaccine to her newest batch of newborn Icelandic foals and, while the virus did not elicit a measurable response initially, seven months later the weanlings exhibited a strong antibody response. “There was a very clear and dramatic difference between the foals that were vaccinated and the controls. Vaccinated foals had much earlier and higher antibody responses.” She believes that the early vaccination triggered the foal’s innate immune system by creating memory B cells specific to the EHV-1 antibody. These long-lived immune cells do not create antibodies ini-



Lökk frá Laufhóli, one of the horses imported from Iceland to Cornell University for research purposes; Lökk was bought by Steve & Andrea Barber and is now a lesson horse and potential broodmare at their Sand Meadow Farm in New York. Photo by Andrea Barber.

tially, but will do so when challenged later with the same virus. The next step is to further improve this vaccination method so that it provides clinical protection and an antibody response that occurs directly after vaccination.

SECOND CAREERS

What about the horses once they’ve “graduated” from the Cornell program? Nancy Rohlfs, from Ipswich, M.A., bought Perla frá Hvalnesi, one of the original mares brought over from Iceland. Perla is a pleasure-riding horse and “is the barn favorite due to her sweet personality,” Nancy says.

Andrea and Steve Barber purchased three horses from the research herd—Lökk frá Laufhóli and her two colts born in the study. “We were impressed with Lökk’s offspring, as they all had a lot of natural tölt, good size, strong legs, and calm, easy characters,” says Andrea. The Barbers trained Lökk as a riding horse and currently use her for trail rides and lessons. They have also bred her once and may again in the future. “We had her formally evaluated for conformation only and she scored first prize for conformation with a score of 8.03,” says Andrea.



No, this bit is not used for riding! It’s a treatment bit: stuffed with grain that contains an allergen, it excites the horse’s immune system. Photo courtesy Cornell University.

LETTERS

ALTERNATIVE SHOING

BY KATHY SIERRA

I can't believe this actually happened, but the proposal on "alternative shoeing" that USIHC members Amy Goddard, Jess Haynsworth, and I put together some time ago has made its way through the system and, as of now, it's official: Beginning April 2017, Icelandic horse competitions internationally will allow Glove Boots! The only restriction is at the World Championships. All other FEIF sport shows throughout the world will have this rule in effect.

Three specific types of "alternative shoeing" are allowed, including the Easy Boot Gloves, either the glue-on shells (shown in the photo) or the normal glove boots. No other hoof boots are permitted besides the Easy Boot Gloves.

This is a really big deal that FEIF has permitted "alternative shoeing," as the shoeing portion of the FEIF sport rules is complex (and complicated). In our proposal, we documented that there is solid peer-reviewed research showing that the concussive impact of steel shoes on hard surfaces is a serious welfare issue for horses. There is also solid peer-reviewed research showing that non-steel shoes or boots do reduce the concussive impact force significantly. We also showed that the "alternative shoes" are physically lighter than steel shoes, so there is not an issue with the weight restrictions on the horse's feet.

The new FEIF allowance for "alternative shoeing" has some caveats: You must announce before your first ride that you are wearing alternative shoes (and, of course, those shoes must be one of the three allowed types), and the show host must file a report about it. This is because FEIF views this competition season (ending in September 2017) as a trial/experiment period for the "alternative shoeing" rule before deciding to make it permanent. I am optimistic that the rule will become permanent after this test year, and I sincerely hope that many people will take advantage of this trial period and use "alternative shoeing" in the U.S. shows!

I believe not that many Icelandic

competition riders have experienced riding their horses on a hard oval track at high speeds while wearing non-steel shoes. If you try it, you'll find it feels "springy." These plastic shoes have no spring themselves, of course, but with non-steel shoes the horse can better use the built-in tendon stretch-reflex that enables it to "spring" at higher speeds and power. There are world-class dressage horses in training today at Steffan Peters' that are being trained in Glove Boots, which is where I first learned that there is at least one boot that does not interfere with a horse's gaits in even the most sensitive and subtle movements. (I'm sure there are other brands that fit this requirement as well, but as far as I know the only big group testing them in advanced movement performance—not just endurance—was Peters').

I think this new FEIF rule is a really great thing for the welfare of competition horses that live in areas with harder tracks, or that may be a little older, keeping in mind the high incidence of spavin in Icelandic horses, etc. This "alternative shoeing" rule opens the possibility for competition to people who may not have

wanted to put steel shoes on their horses for a wide range of reasons—and now they have a different option.

The fact that FEIF permits bitless bridles and now Glove Boots makes FEIF and the Icelandic sport horse world extremely progressive—and the envy of many in the competition dressage world. After submitting our proposal to the USIHC Sport Committee, we were asked to submit documentation on the state of USEF competitions and the use of "alternative shoes." At the time, last year, the number of USEF disciplines that allowed some form of boot in competition was about 50% and growing.

I do hope we see continued research into horse "athletic footwear," and I'm sure that if more competition and other high performance riders were interested, more companies would be researching and developing alternatives to steel shoes.

Thanks so much to my USIHC co-conspirators Amy and Jess. Thanks to the USIHC Sport Committee for sending our proposal on to the FEIF Sport Committee. And thank-you, FEIF, for approving it!



One of the photos submitted with the proposal, this one was taken at the 2016 Kraftur Show, a USIHC-Sanctioned Show. The horse competed only in the pleasure class, since boots were not then permitted in ranked classes. "The judge did not even notice there was anything unusual on his feet, from the distance of the judging booth," Kathy notes. Photo by Kathy Sierra.



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A brown horse with a light-colored mane is running through a snowy field. The horse is captured in profile, moving from left to right. The background is a bright, overcast sky.

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F A R M L I S T

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TRAIL HORSE CLINIC ★ July 22-23

Hosted by



Join Us
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Rick Shaffer ★ Trainer & Judge 30 years of experience with gaited breeds

The clinic will involve working on common trail obstacles, the lateral movements necessary to negotiate these obstacles & other important traits for trail horses.

Rick has developed an incredible program for trail horses that evaluates the horses on how well they are able to perform under saddle & on the ground. This is somewhat similar to the new FEIF program for leisure horses, however Rick's program is far more detailed & is being utilized by breed associations & clubs across the country. This program is beneficial to sellers as it gives a non-biased report to buyers as to the horse's level of training. It is also beneficial to those owners who want to know where their strong areas are & which areas need additional work.

A matrix is available that describes what a horse must demonstrate to be awarded one of the three levels. Copies of the matrix may be requested by contacting Juli Cole at juli2875@yahoo.com or calling 724-667-4184. Clinic participants who are interested in having their horses tested will have the option to do so on Sunday, July 23, 2017.

INDIVIDUALIZED
INSTRUCTION

★★★★★

BUILD SKILLS
& CONFIDENCE

LIMITED TO
15 RIDERS
Auditors are
UNLIMITED

CONTACT

Juli Cole

juli2875@yahoo.com

724-667-4184



Did you know?

If you are promoting the USIHC or the Icelandic horse, you can request free copies of **The Icelandic Horse Quarterly** to give away. Quantities are first-come, first-served, as they are available.

Send your name & address, the name of your business or event, and the number you'd like to request to:

Quarterly@icelandics.org



Will you come play with us?

We like to write stories about Icelandic horses and their people. There are so many stories waiting to be written and photos to be taken! We have fun putting colorful issue after issue together, but we could really use YOUR help! Please join us!

Nancy Marie Brown, Nicki Esdorn, and the
Quarterly committee
quarterly@icelandics.org



Chris Pennington

ChrisPenningtonGallery.com • Chris@xltshirt.com

A lifelong creative soul, Chris Pennington has been a professional artist for more than three decades. Chris implements a variety of methods to produce high-quality and desirable art. With her major focus on stylized natural scenery and animals, she has become an award winning internationally collected painter. Chris is available for custom portraits and commissions. You know you want one!



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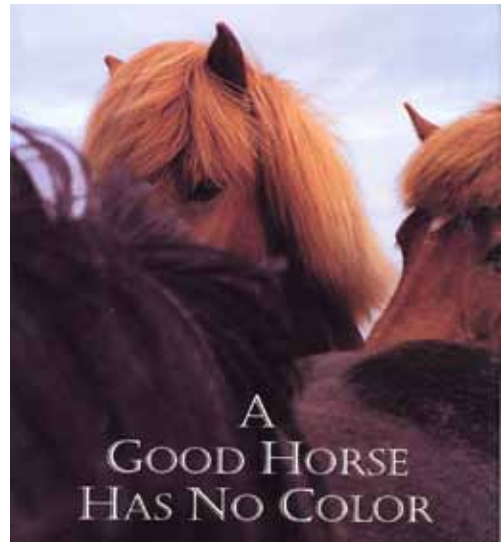
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