

ISSUE TWO

THE

2013

# 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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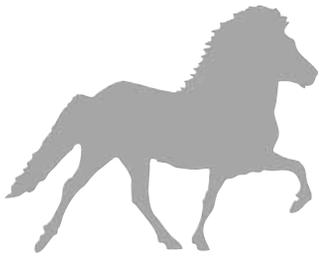
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HORSE  
QUARTERLY  
Issue Two 2013

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# ICELANDIC HORSE

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**On the cover:** Best friends Hrimnir frá Stafholtsveggjum (US200103986), left, and Kommi frá Oddhóli (US2001103161) enjoying a beautiful California summer day in their pasture, where they like to show off their “synchronized trot at liberty.” Photo by Kathy Sierra.



## FEIF AND THE USIHC

FEIF is the international association dedicated to the protection and promotion of Icelandic horses. Comprised of the National Breed Associations of 17 European countries (including Iceland), Canada, and the United States, it governs competition activities and regulates the breeding and registration of Icelandic horses throughout the world outside of Iceland. See [www.feif.org](http://www.feif.org) for more information.

The United States Icelandic Horse Congress was formed in 1987 by representatives of the U.S. Icelandic Horse Federation and the International Icelandic Horse Association to meet the FEIF rule that only one association from each country is allowed to represent the breed. As a FEIF member organization, the Congress maintains the Registry of Icelandic Horses in the United States, sponsors U.S. participation in international competition, and regulates breeding and competition activities in the United States in accordance with FEIF rules. USIHC also sponsors activities, events, and educational programs in the United States which are beneficial to the overall interests of the breed. Yearly membership is \$45 (\$35 for youth members); family membership, \$65; foreign friends, \$70. For more information, see the Congress website at [www.icelandics.org/join](http://www.icelandics.org/join).

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## REGISTRY

The Congress maintains the Registry of Icelandic Horses in the United States in accordance with FEIF rules. The Registry Rules and all forms needed to register an Icelandic Horse in the United States are available on the Congress website at [www.icelandics.org](http://www.icelandics.org). Contact Ásta Covert: P.O. Box 1724, Santa Ynez, CA 93460; 866-929-0009; [registry@icelandics.org](mailto:registry@icelandics.org)

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Visit [www.icelandics.org](http://www.icelandics.org) to update or renew your membership, download the electronic Quarterly, subscribe to RSS feeds for the Events Calendar or web updates, register for WorldFengur, find a Regional Club or USIHC registered horse, join a committee, download USIHC guidelines and forms, and learn more about FEIF and the USIHC.

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## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

In her 2012 annual report, President Anne Elwell writes, "From my particular point of view, which is primarily focused on the functioning of the organization, 2012 was a year of organizational experiment and improvement in efficiency. We revised the definition of a membership year from the old calendar year approach to one which runs from the date of joining. In other words, if you became a member on May 1, 2012 your membership ends on April 30, 2013. We established an automatic renewal through Paypal for those who want the option of automatic renewal. The advantage to the members of the new definition of the membership year is obvious. The advantage to the organization is a tremendous savings in time and labor, always at a premium. There will undoubtedly be a few glitches but so far it has been remarkably effective in achiev-



Anne-Marie Martin on Bragi frá Hólum and Ásta Covert on Dynjandi frá Dalvík compete at the Fall CIA Open in Santa Ynez, CA. Both Anne-Marie and Ásta placed first on the 2012 National Ranking in their disciplines. Photo by Scott Prestine.

ing goals of greater efficiency.

"We experimented in 2012 with a new form of General Meetings, holding two in different parts of the country in conjunction with events that draw substantial participation by members who do not customarily attend the Annual Meeting when scheduled as a single event. What we hoped was that this would bring together portions of the membership who do not usually attend the Annual Meeting with Board members to broaden the discussion about what we had been doing in 2011 and planned to do going forward. While attendance at the meetings was good, the lively exchange of ideas about past activities and future programs that we had anticipated did not occur. For a number of reasons it seems that the old structure, requiring time and travel though it does, provides a much more productive interaction than the experimental structure. It simply may be the case that while everyone can think of a number of things the Congress should be doing instead of what it is actually doing, those who are motivated to focus on its activities and growth are the ones willing to travel and have that dialogue over a couple of days. As a result we will be returning to the old Annual Meeting framework in the future.

"The Board has been working on an extremely interesting proposal for funding creative projects furthering the mission statement of the Congress. Almost every activity within the Congress, from Equine Affair exhibitions to educational clinics to evaluations and sanctioned shows, to the Pleasure Riding Program was the idea of an individual member who got others sufficiently excited to develop the idea into an activity or program. To encourage such brainstorming and new program development on the part of the membership the Board is working on a program which will commit a percentage of income each year to fund ideas that meet criteria indicating reasonable prospects of success. The program will be brought to the membership at some point in 2013 and I encourage all individual members and Regional Clubs to start giving thought to areas of outreach benefitting the breed.



There's now an American on the board of directors of FEIF, the international Icelandic horse association and parent organization of the USIHC. Doug Smith, the USIHC secretary and webmaster, was elected to a two-year term in February.

"The Committee Reports on the website detail the advances made in the Committees in 2012 in numerous areas. All Committees except the Sport Committee (which has certain prerequisites), are open to any member interested in the topic. There is no better way to be involved in Congress activities than to join a Committee and add your thoughts and questions to the general dialogue. Every member is welcome and makes a significant contribution to our understanding of what is going on throughout the country and how best to meet the needs of the horses and their people."

## USIHC ANNUAL REPORTS

The 2012 annual reports from the USIHC officers and committee chairs are available on the website at [http://www.icelandicshorse.org/bod/2012\\_annual\\_reports.pdf](http://www.icelandicshorse.org/bod/2012_annual_reports.pdf). Some highlights are included below. The winners of the Pleasure Riding Awards are featured in an article in this issue.



Rose Terami giving her mare Petra a very big “thank you” hug after a successful Riding Badge test! Photo by Jana Meyer.

## NATIONAL RANKING

Congratulations to the 2012 national champions: Anne-Marie Martin (T2), Ásta Covert (T1, V1), Barbara Chilton (F2), Colleen Monsef (T7, V5), Dominic Ng (T3, T5, V3), Doug Smith (T4), Elizabeth Monsef (T8), Guðmar Pétursson (F1), Jessica Blough (V6), Lucy Nold (V2), and Willy Ma (T6). Six U.S. riders also appear on the FEIF World Ranking list.

## REGISTERED HORSES

In 2012, 153 horses were registered for the first time, including 67 domestic-bred foals under 12 months of age. The total number of Icelandic horses registered with the USIHC, as of December 31, 2012 is 4,611; of these, 2,821 are domestic-bred.

## BREEDING AWARD

This year’s Anne Elwell Breeding award for the highest evaluated U.S. bred horse goes to Sprettur from Destiny Farm. Sprettur was bred by Pamela Ann Merlo in 2005. He received 8.13 for conformation and 8.07 for ridden ability, for an over all total of 8.09.

## RIDING BADGES

According to the Education Committee’s 2012 report, seven members passed the USIHC Riding Badge Level 1 last year: Rose Terami, Margot Frost, Sierra MacDonald, Thea Penner, Scotlyn Davis,

Jenna Watts, and Zoe Johnson. One member, Biven Chapman, passed the Riding Badge Level 2.

## FEIF BOARD

USIHC Secretary Doug Smith was elected as a new member of the Board of FEIF at the FEIF Delegates Assembly in Strasbourg, France, on February 8. Doug was elected to a two-year term, with the expectation that he will take over some of the duties of managing the Sport Department. He will be nominated at the 2014 conference in Reykjavik to take over from Marko Mazeland as Director of the FEIF Sport Department.

## SANCTIONED SHOWS

In 2012 there were a total of seven USIHC-sanctioned shows (vs. 12 in 2011). The 2013 show season began with the Spring CIA Open, held on April 27-28 at Flying C Ranch in Santa Ynez, CA. Two more shows were held in May: the Vorkeppni, on May 11-12 at Winterhorse Park in Eagle, WI; and the Frida Icelandic Horse Show, on May 18-19 at Frying Pan Farm Park in Herndon, VA.

Upcoming shows include: the Sumarnot Icelandic Horse Competition, on



The 2012 Anne Elwell award went to Sprettur from Destiny Farm, ridden here at the New York evaluations by Guðmar Pétursson. Photo by Andrea Barber.



The Knights of Iceland performance team, led by Guðmar Pétursson (left), practice before their performance at Equine Affaire in April, where they were the finale to the evening Fantasia show. Photo by Elizabeth Franklin

July 20-21 at Winterhorse Park in Eagle, WI (contact Barb Riva at winterhorse@centurytel.net for information); the Flugnirkeppni Icelandic Horse Competition on Sept. 7-8 at Winterhorse Park in Eagle, WI (contact Kevin Draeger at toltkid@hotmail.com); the NEIHC Open Sanctioned Show, on Sept. 21-22 at Thor Icelandics in Claverack, NY (contact Thorunn Kristjánsdóttir at thorunn designs@gmail.com); and the Kentucky Show, on Oct. 12-13 at Locust Hill Farm in Prospect, KY (contact Kathryn Love at kathrynlovemd@gmail.com). A fall CIA Open is also expected. See the Events calendar at [www.icelandics.org](http://www.icelandics.org) for more information.

## SPORT RIDER STATS

Congratulations to the riders who have “scored-out” of the novice and/or intermediate competition classes. The Sport Rider list on the USIHC website has been updated to reflect all of the 2012 competitions. Riders and show organizers are encouraged to consult this list to avoid confusion, if scores are not included in the 2013 ranking. See the list at: <http://www.icelandics.org/rules.php>

## SPORT RULES

The USIHC Sport Competition rules were updated in April for the 2013 season. Aside from the routine updating of FIPO version numbers and other bookkeep-

ing, there were three changes for 2013: 1) Shows are now required to pay a flat fee of \$75.00 to support the national awards program. 2) Shows must clearly state in their premiums that riders who enter more than one tölt or gait test at an event will only be ranked in the most advanced test. (The one with the lowest number.) This is not a change in the way the rankings are calculated. This is merely a requirement that this aspect of the ranking rules be clearly published to the riders. 3) 200-meter oval tracks may continue to be used “as-is” for pace (F1 and F2) at all non-World Ranking shows. This supersedes the FIPO requirements that will come into force in 2014. Contact [sport@icelandics.org](mailto:sport@icelandics.org) with any questions.

## WC TRYOUTS

Tryouts for the U.S. team at the 2013 Icelandic Horse World Championships in Berlin in August were scheduled for four locations in late May and early June: Mill Farm (An-cramdale, NY) on May 25, Thor Icelandics (Claverack, NY) on May 26, Creekside Farm (Rutledge, GA) on May 28, and Hunavellir (Santa Ynez, CA) on June 1.

## YOUTH CAMP

The Norwegian Icelandic Horse Federation and Stable Kjersem, Stable SP, and the local club Vestnes will host the FEIF Youth Camp 2013 (for riders 12 to 18

years old) in the western part of Norway, between Ålesund and Molde, from July 22-28. For more information, contact Laurie Prestine (USIHC Youth Chair) at [youth@icelandics.org](mailto:youth@icelandics.org).

## EDUCATION SEMINAR

The 2013 FEIF Education Seminar will take place in Stockholm, Sweden, from September 6-8. A number of well-known instructors, among them Mette Manseth, Stian Pedersen, and Magnus Skulason, will demonstrate their teaching techniques and explain their goals in their work. There will be time for discussions, questions, and other interesting topics, such as the “pace gene” (see the article in Issue 4, 2012 of the *Quarterly*.) For more information, contact Katrin Sheehan (USIHC Education Chair) at [education@icelandics.org](mailto:education@icelandics.org).

## BOARD MEETINGS

Minutes of the USIHC Board of Directors’ meetings held on January 15, March 5, and April 4 are available on the USIHC website ([www.icelandics.org](http://www.icelandics.org) under “The Congress” “Board of Directors.” The March 5 minutes includes the Congress’s 2013 budget. In April, the Board discussed the new FEIF directive that all member associations complete an SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis matrix by September; Sara Lyter was put in charge of the process for the USIHC. As a first step, the Board tabulated the activity on the committees’ email lists. According to the minutes, “The Board had a lengthy discussion about the relative inactivity in the association as a whole. Anne [Elwell] asks all the Board members to consider this situation and suggests we consider the discussions on the Quarterly committee list as a potential model for other areas of our work.” As the USIHC 2012 Annual Report notes, “Members are invited and encouraged to join the committees working in their personal areas of interest. The bulk of the work of supporting the Icelandic horse in the U.S. comes from the dedicated efforts of the volunteers who lead and staff the various working groups of the USIHC.”

## FEIF MEETS IN FRANCE

FEIF, the International Federation of Icelandic Horse Associations, held its annual delegates assembly and leadership conference in Strasbourg, France, over the first weekend in February. This annual event is the official gathering of the FEIF member nations for the purpose of electing the international leadership, updating international rules, and discussing issues facing all member associations with the hope of finding global solutions.

This year's conference was the largest in FEIF's nearly 50-year history, with 112 delegates from 11 member associations. The USIHC was represented by three delegates: Barbara Frische, Will Covert, and Doug Smith.

In addition to the presentations to the entire body of delegates, the various departments (Breeding, Education, Leisure Riding, Sport, and Youth) met independently to address the current work in each area. The United States had representatives in the Breeding and Sport departmental meetings.

## DELEGATES ASSEMBLY

The first order of business for the conference was the official Delegates Assembly of FEIF. During this formal phase of the conference, the member associations are asked to take up final decisions on the business from the past year. This process allows time for the delegations to take the collective thinking from last year's conference back to their home countries and return to represent their national boards' decisions.

The delegates were asked, on behalf of their nations, to re-elect three members of the FEIF board of directors for an additional two-year term. The following directors were unanimously re-elected by the delegates: Jens Iversen (DK) as President of the FEIF Board, Gunnar Sturluson (IS) as Vice President, and Marko Mazeland (NL) as Director of the Sport Department. At the nomination of the Board, an additional candidate, Doug Smith (US), was presented to the assembly for election to a two-year term as a member-at-large. Doug was also elected unanimously, with the expectation that



Delegates at the annual FEIF leadership conference, held in February in Strasbourg, France. This year's conference was the largest in FEIF's nearly 50-year history, with 112 delegates from 11 member associations.

he will take over some of the duties of managing the Sport Department and will be nominated at the 2014 conference in Reykjavik to take over from Marko Mazeland as Director of the Sport Department.

The delegates were asked to approve a series of financial matters regarding the management of the federation, including the audit of last year's finances, the annual contributions made by the member associations, and the budget figures for the next two years. In summary, the assembly unanimously accepted the certified audit; endorsed the annual contributions, which remain unchanged from last year; and approved a budget which includes some additional administrative costs while following, largely, the past figures for a World Championships year. Since FEIF derives its income from two primary sources (member nation contributions and the World Championships), there is a significantly larger income anticipated for 2013. This income will be used to offset a loss shown in 2012 and an anticipated similar loss for 2014.

## LEISURE RIDING

The Delegates Assembly received a presentation on the state of leisure riding in France, our host. Included in the presentation was a description of TREC, Techniques de Randonnée Équestre de Compétition. TREC is an equestrian discipline designed to test horse and rider in three separate events—mounted orienteering, a demonstration of control of the horse's gaits, and an obstacle course—all completed over the course of one or two days. FEIF has decided to advance TREC in the Icelandic horse world through the Leisure Riding department to maintain a clear distinction between TREC and FIPO-style competition.

## SPORT

The Sport Department brought three proposed changes to the international sport competition rules, FIPO, for approval by the Delegates Assembly. Two changes were unanimously approved. Effective April 1, 2013 the fastest horse in a pace race heat will have choice of start



# REGIONAL CLUB UPDATES

## CASCADE CLUB

BY LORI BIRGE

The Cascade Club activities planned for this year include participation at the Northwest Horse Expo, various trail rides, several play days, and a summer meeting with both drill teams performing.

We had so many riders wanting to ride on the drill team this year that we divided it into two teams that we called A and B for lack of a better designation. The “B team” members are new to drill team riding and have had several practices to learn a pattern that hopefully will be performed at the summer meeting. The “A team” practiced monthly all winter long to prepare for riding at the Northwest Horse Expo in Albany, OR. With three members living in Oregon and two in Washington, it is not easy to get the group together for practices. The practices rotated between three locations, but usually at least two members had to drive four hours each way to attend the practice. After the team learned the pattern fairly well, they practiced twice with coaches. All of the hard work paid off though, because the team performed well at Albany, riding to Icelandic folk music with an informative narration about Icelandic horses. Team members were: Lisa Roland riding Vakar,



Lisa Roland on her stallion Vakar greets people after the Cascade Club demo at the NW Horse Expo in Albany, OR. Photo by Diane Graves.

Sasha Roland riding Svartbakur, Linda Eddy riding Lipurta, Karin Daum riding Lukka, Deb Mathieu riding Glasir, and Lori Birge riding Geisli. After our Saturday performance, we had a meet-and-greet outside the arena, where people were able to see the horses up close and ask questions of the riders. The highlight for many of us was the gentleness that Lipurta showed one young lady in a wheel chair, putting her head on the girl’s lap and nuzzling her. In addition to the drill team, the club had a booth next to our stalls in the barn with posters and brochures about our breed. Many club members took turns manning the booth to answer questions from visitors. This is a big event in the Pacific Northwest with clinicians, breed demonstrations, and lots of shopping, so we had many people watch our horses and visit the barn to admire the Icelandics and ask questions. Two of the drill team horses are featured in a video advertising the Furizzy grooming and scratching tool, which was shown at the Furizzy booth at Albany.

As warmer weather hits, many riders in the club plan trail rides with other Icelandic horse owners. One of the favorite rides in

the Portland/Vancouver area that several riders took advantage of during this quarter is at Battleground Lake. Club members in the area regularly meet there to ride.

## FLUGNIR

BY WADE ELMBLAD

The Flugnir Club has an amazing lineup of clinics, competitions, and fun events planned here in the Midwest for 2013. Spring events were kicked off in March when group members enjoyed the hospitality of Thorrablot, hosted by Barb and Dan Riva at Winterhorse Park. Even though the weather was, well, winter, a good number of visiting public stopped by the farm to check out the celebration and remarked on the friendliness of the horses. Steinar Sigurbjörnsson performed a demonstration of gaits for the public with the Riva’s stallion, Fjalar frá Bjargshóli, and discussed the aspects of the Icelandic breed.

In April, Flugnir participated in the Minnesota Horse Expo in St. Paul, MN and the Midwest Horse Fair held in Madison, WI. Members of the group participated in breed demonstrations to show off the capabilities of Icelandic horses.



The Cascade Club booth and stalls at the NW Horse Expo in Albany, OR. Photo by Lori Birge.



Flugnir Club members enjoy a winter ride during their annual Thorrablot, held at Winterhorse Park in Eagle, WI.

Two clinics with renowned judge, clinician, and trainer Barbara Frische are currently on the event calendar for May 17-19 and September 20-22 at Tolthaven Ranch, Pelican Rapids, MN. On June 22-24, vibrant trainer, clinician, and instructor Laura Benson will be at Aslan's Country, Proctor, MN. Our clinic lineup has been restricted to eight riders per event in an effort to personalize the training goals with Barbara and Laura, so be sure to make your reservation early.

Through clinic participation, Flugnir members gain the experience and confidence to participate in four competitions held here in the Midwest area. Barb and Dan Riva started the summer with the May 11-12 USIHC-sanctioned Vorkeppni competition, followed by a breeding evaluation on May 14-15. On July 20-21, the Rivas will host the Sumarmót competition. Information and registration details are posted on the Winterhorse.com and Flugnir.org websites.

Flugnir will sponsor the Flugnirkeppni competition on September 7-8 at Winterhorse Park, with two judges (to be announced). Finishing the 2013 show season is the Kentucky Icelandic show, with Kathy Love reporting that this event has been scheduled for October 12-13.

November 1-3 is our Flugnir fall outing, held at the Woodside Ranch in Mauston, WI. Each fall, this event promises to be full of fun, surprises, and of course awesome trails to enjoy.

## **KATLA CLUB**

*BY ALICE RYAN*

Over the past year a group of Icelandic horse riders in Vermont and New Hampshire have organized a new Regional Club, the Katla Icelandic Horse Club. The group has planned monthly schooling shows to be held on June 9, July 13, August 17, September 14, and October 13 on member Richard Davis's track in Waitsfield, VT. For show information, see the club website at [Katlaicelandichorseclub.com](http://Katlaicelandichorseclub.com). The judge will be Jason Brickner, and trainer Sigrún Brynjarsdóttir will be available beforehand for tune-ups and lessons.

The club is also planning several trail rides to be held in various parts of Vermont and New Hampshire over the summer and fall, to include a 14-mile ride on the equestrian trails of Victory Basin National Wildlife Area in the Northeast Kingdom that several members have enjoyed in the past.

In the winter, the club plans to ride again in the annual Wassail Parade in Woodstock, VT, which was its first club-organized activity in 2012. The Katla Club is actively looking for new members. Contact president Jason Brickner at 802-889-9472 or [thekidbrickner@yahoo.com](mailto:thekidbrickner@yahoo.com)

## **KLETTAFJALLA CLUB**

*BY LINDA MCLAUGHLIN*

In a region of the country where "close" is defined as being less than 250 miles away,

KIHC members had several events in 2012. Last March, Coralie Dunmeade and Florie Miller headed up the group of riders and horses who delighted visitors at the Rocky Mountain Horse Expo in Denver, CO. Eight horses took the trip to Denver to offer Expo visitors a chance to meet Icelandic horses and to learn more about them. These horses and their people took the stage not only in the barn area with breed information, but also with a drill team performance during the Mane Event on both Friday and Saturday evenings. In addition to representing KIHC, they also represented the USIHC in the barn booth.

KIHC members were proud to introduce even more people to our breed than the previous year. They noted that Icelandics are becoming increasingly popular in the Wild West. Many visitors had never heard of our horses just a few years ago. During the course of the Expo, there were more and more comments about how excited people were to finally meet their first Icelandic horse face to face. It helped a lot that several TV stations in the Denver area had just aired specials on Iceland and its horses. Of course, all the horses enjoyed their position as breed ambassadors and, thanks to a special permit, an Icelandic sheepdog was able to go along to represent another very special Icelandic breed. She really brought attention to the booth.

In April 2012, Barbara Braun and the stable in Clarkdale, AZ where she boards



Barbara Frische announces the riding scores of Freydis frá Fitjamyri during a clinic held by the Klettafjalla Club. The rider is Coralie Denmeade. Photo by Didier Simon-Vermot.

her Icelandics hosted a three-day gaited horse clinic with Steinar Sigurbjörns-son. There were seven riders, including KIHIC members from Arizona, Utah, and New Mexico. Six Icelandic horses of varying ages participated, as did one Missouri Foxtrotter and one Arabian who just couldn't be convinced he could tolt. Steinar helped all riders with exercises for suppleness of both rider and horse, both on the ground and in the saddle. The



Members of the Klettafjalla Icelandic Horse Club on the trail to Coulter Lake Ranch. Photo by Linda McLaughlin.

clinic was a great success and another was scheduled for April 2013.

Our third event of 2012 was the annual July horse-and-rider retreat to the high mountain, off-the-grid Coulter Lake Guest Ranch north of Rifle, CO. At that time of the year the weather is wonderful and the scenery is gorgeous. All in all, we had 12 horses and riders and five non-riding spouses. We rode trails each of our three days. The highlight of the trip was our second day, when we rode up into the high country and took a wonderful lunch break for both horses and riders in an aspen grove where the ground was covered with wild lupines. Absolutely gorgeous! On the way back down the mountains, we encountered three Black Angus steers who didn't think they needed to yield the trail to a few horses. Since they were huge, we gracefully yielded. One of the other high points of the trip was the opportunity to swim with our horses in Coulter Lake. Some horses loved it, others were not so certain. The people had fun, though. Trainer Coralie Denmeade came up to offer a day of lessons as well. We were going to work on a drill team routine, but we just ran out of time. So much beauty, so little time.

In September 2012, to close out the year, Coralie Denmeade put on a Form and Function Clinic and Schooling Show in Monument, CO. The clinic featured

two experts: Barbara Frische and Gudmar Pétursson. The first day featured two-person group lessons, which started with Gudmar riding each horse followed by both Barbara and Gudmar offering commentary on each horse and rider. We all learned a lot on this day, and it was only the beginning. On the second day, Barbara offered her learned judgment on each horse's conformation and abilities. It was absolutely fascinating to learn from an expert on conformation as to what each horse was best at and why that was so based on its conformation. This learning session was followed by an afternoon of lessons in preparation for a schooling show.

The third day started with conformation evaluations of young horses, both in hand and at liberty. The best part of this session were the yearlings, who stayed close to their dams and who moved beautifully when encouraged to leave their dams and move freely. That afternoon the emphasis turned to the schooling show itself. Based on their observations, Barbara and Gudmar recommended which classes each horse and rider combination should go into. As the results indicate, they were right on the money.

So 2012 was a very good and fun year for KIHIC. We have several events planned for 2013, including another Steinar clinic, a return to Coulter Lake Ranch, and a Form and Function and Schooling Show with Barbara and Gudmar.

## KRAFTUR

BY KELLY BLOUGH

Kraftur members had a busy winter and spring, taking advantage of unseasonably warm weather to get out and ride on trails in Monte Sereno, at Calero County Park, and in Santa Cruz, CA. In February, Gudmar Pétursson visited the area and conducted two clinics, one at Coast Road Stables and one at Loma Serena. Both clinics were well-attended by youth and adult riders of all levels.

Speaking of youth, thanks in part to the training of Laura Benson (Valkyrie Icelandic) and Heidi Benson-Green (Centaur City Icelandics), Kraftur youth membership has more than doubled over



Kelly Blough on Sandur frá Syðri-Sandhólum at a clinic with Guðmar Pétursson held by the Kraftur Club. Photo by Laurie Prestine.

the last year and a half. The club now boasts over 20 members under the age of 17, bringing up a new generation to love the Icelandic breed. Many of the young riders are participating in regional shows and other activities, and some are even training and preparing for possible future participation in the FEIF Youth Cup.



Kraftur Club youth members (from left) Jamie Blough, Madeline Pollock, and Katherine Monsef work on Hugljúf frá Vatnsholti during a visit to Loma Serena vet clinic. Photo by Kelly Blough.

To support its younger riders and refresh its older ones, Kraftur has begun a series of educational clinics on key aspects of horse care and ownership. Loma Serena hosted the first such clinic in March, with veterinarian Kacie Wells of Edgewater Equine Clinic. Wells generously offered her time to teach 25 Kraftur members the basics of performing a general health examination on their equine companions. Wells and her assistant performed routine exams and deworming on six very well-behaved volunteers, including five Icelandics and one Quarterhorse. Youth members practiced taking temperatures, finding heart and respiratory rates, and checking other important equine vital signs. Future clinics will include wound care and first aid, and hoof care and shoeing. Clinics and lunch are provided free to Kraftur members.

In March, Kraftur members Katherine Monsef, Gabrielle and Madeline Pollock, and Jessica, Jamie, and Kelly Blough took two of their Icelandic horses to a Country Fair to raise money for charity. Hugljúf frá Vatnsholti and Dama frá Ósi patiently offered brief rides to over 50 children at the fair. The proceeds from the rides and other fair activities will help to send 150 people, including the Bloughs, to Tijuana, Mexico, in April to build houses for needy families.



Guðmar Pétursson works with Gabrielle Pollock and Katina from Coldstream during the Kraftur clinic. Photo by Laurie Prestine.

Also in March, Kraftur members were honored by the visit of Eyjólfur Ísolfsson, the chief riding teacher at Hólar University. Eyjólfur held two clinics over a six-day period, one at Coast Road Stables and the other at Mountain Icelandic Farm. Both clinics were sold out well in advance of the program, and several people audited the sessions to hear Eyjólfur's theory lessons on the human-horse partnership. Among other things, Eyjólfur talked extensively about crookedness in horses, why it occurs, how to recognize it, and what steps to take to correct it. According to Eyjólfur, more than 50 percent of Icelandic horses are stiff on the right side. (As an aside, the lecture led Loma Serena riders and trainer Laura Benson to ponder why most of their horses are stiff on the left. A few days later, riders made the realization that the Loma Serena trail runs in a circle to the right, leading to speculation that regular trail rides may be causing the stiffness. Riders are now making an effort to regularly ride the trail in the opposite direction.)

Kraftur members are now in pre-show training for later this month, when an estimated 20-25 members will be

traveling to Santa Ynez, California to participate in the CIA Spring Show at Flying C Ranch. All in all, it was a fun and educational season for Kraftur members and their Icelandics.

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

*BY AMY GODDARD*

If I could choose one word to describe the 2012-2013 winter in the Northeast, it would be: snow! After being spoiled last winter with relatively mild temperatures and less-than-average snowfall, this winter more than made up for it. When riders of other breeds choose not to ride, there's nothing quite like a brisk romp through the snow on our Icelandic "snowmobiles."

The highlight of the last three months was our Eighth Annual Thorrablot on March 2. This year it was hosted by Leslie Chambers at her beautiful home in Ledyard, CT. Thirty members and guests, including several brand-new members, attended the annual meeting and potluck dinner party. A raffle was held to benefit our upcoming NEIHC Youth Day, which raised \$1035 to help support members who choose to open their farms for this special event.

The annual Bunny Hop ride was held at Rockefeller State Park Preserve on March



NEIHC members Leslie Chambers on Herdís (left) and Sarah Wester on Skjóni enjoy a ride through a winter wonderland after storm "Nemo" in February. Photo by Frost White.

30. Nicki Esdorn writes: "Due to spring break, very early Easter, and even a flat tire, there were only three bunny hoppers this year: Charlotte Kooyman and Hreyfing, my student Hannah Huss (age 13) and Fengur, and me and Alfrun. However, even the horses wore bunny ears and made the on-lookers smile and give lots of compliments. It was a gorgeous early spring day."

Jana Meyer writes: "On Easter Sunday, 14 riders came together at Silver Maple Icelandic Horse Farm for a great trail ride followed by a delicious potluck brunch. Everyone enjoyed the good company, fantastic spring weather, and of course all of the

wonderful horses. Thank you to everyone for coming and bringing all the fabulous food and champagne. We are looking forward to many more rides together!"

NEIHC will host World Championship tryouts on Sunday, May 26 at Thor Icelandics in Claverack, NY. Riders are welcome to try out for the U.S. team or ride for scores only.

Several farms will participate in NEIHC Youth Day events to promote the Icelandic horse to young riders. Boulder Ridge Farm in Limington, ME will open their farm on May 18 in conjunction with Open Farm Day in Maine. Silver Maple Farm in Tunbridge, VT and West Winds Farm in Delhi, NY will host their open houses on June 15. Other farms may join in the fun as well. Activities such as games, demos, raffles, lunch, and the opportunity to try an Icelandic horse will be offered at each location.

Upcoming NEIHC events include the NEIHC Open Sanctioned Show on Sept. 21-22. NEIHC members are encouraged to join the NEIHC Yahoo mail group and to check our website ([neihc.com](http://neihc.com)) and our Facebook page for news and upcoming events. Or contact club president Martina Gates: [martinagates@mac.com](mailto:martinagates@mac.com).

## **ST SKUTLA CLUB**

*BY ANDREA BARBER*

Though winter started out fairly mild in the Northeast, it quickly tightened its grip by the time the New Year arrived. This meant that most club members spent



The youngest junior rider at the NEIHC's Silver Maple Farm in Tunbridge, VT: Finja Meyer-Hoyt and Von frá Hjallanesi. Photo by RJ Hoyt.



Fourteen horses and riders gather for the NEIHC's Silver Maple Farm Easter Ride in Tunbridge, VT. Photo by Matt McCarthy.



St Skutla member Scott Wright training his young mare, Frökk frá Ólafsbergi. Photo by Pat Wright.

more time looking at their horses through the widows of their snug homes than riding them. However, some members, like Scott Wright, did spend some time doing groundwork and training youngsters. Others polished tack and eagerly waited for spring. However, a couple of recent events were attended by club members:

On February 23, Cordy Sullivan and fellow Icelandic enthusiast Gail Ingram gave "pony rides" on two of Cordy's Icelandics at the Branchport, NY fundraiser for the planned Finger Lakes Museum. Kids from age 3 to teens enjoyed meeting and being led around on an Icelandic horse. Snerra frá Ketu was an especially good representative of the breed, as she has always liked children. Lýsingur frá Eyjólfstöðum was also a hit, particularly when he demonstrated the slow and fast tolt. The crowd was very interested in the special characteristics of the breed. Most had never heard of an Icelandic horse and were particularly impressed with their

temperament. Cordy and Gail had a wonderful time.

On March 17, Steven and Andrea Barber manned the USIHC booth for the club at the Western NY Equifest. This is the third year for the event and it has grown tremendously, so that now it is really like a

local Equine Affaire. Thousands of visitors came to the event and the Icelandic horses were popular as always. The new "stand up" USIHC booth display was very impressive and well received. Hopefully efforts at this event will bring more members to the club and to the USIHC.



St Skutla member Cordy Sullivan riding her gelding, Lýsingur frá Eyjólfstöðum, at a trail challenge event last fall. Photo by Andrea Barber.

# A GOOD AND HARMONIOUS RIDER

BY CAROL ANDREW

If you've ever looked at the USIHC National Ranking, you've seen the name Ásta Covert: She's been #1 in Tolt (T1) and Four-Gait (V1) since the rankings began in 2007. In 2009, she represented the U.S. at the Icelandic World Championships in Switzerland, taking third in Tolt and fourth in Four-Gait; she scored almost as high in 2011 in Austria, placing in the top 10 in both Tolt and Four-Gait. Last year, Ásta was ranked #1 in Tolt in the world in the FEIF WorldRanking list. She also received several citations for "good and harmonious riding," a new initiative by FEIF in which riders received "green cards" in addition to their number scores.

Ásta Dögg Bjarnadóttir-Covert moved to the United States from Iceland with her husband, Will Covert, in 2000. She has been riding since she was a very young child, as her father was a professional trainer and farrier in Iceland. She went to the first-ever FEIF Youth Cup in Luxembourg in 1995, where she represented Iceland. She was a finalist at Landsmót, the National Horsehow in Iceland, in 1998, when she rode her gelding Eldur frá Hóli in the young adult class.

Ásta kindly took some time to answer our questions and to find some photos of her horse and herself in training.

## ***What was the first World Championship you rode in?***

The first World Championships I rode in was in Sweden in 2005. I placed 12th in T2 and around 20th in Four-Gait. I had been to many championships both as a spectator and as a groom, so I knew what it would be like to participate. I had competed in Iceland at Landsmót many times, as well as at other big competitions. I was a member of the Icelandic team attending the FEIF Youth Cup in 1995, so I felt like I was well prepared to travel and compete. I had known my horse for a couple of years and competed on him in Iceland with good success.

The World Championships experi-



Ásta Covert and Dynjandi frá Dalvík competing in California. In 2012, Ásta and Dynjandi ranked #1 in Tolt in the world in the FEIF WorldRanking list. Photo by Will Covert.

ence as a competitor is different from any other show I had participated in. Even with my husband, Will, being a successful rider at multiple World Championships, it still came to me as a surprise how much bigger it felt to be there as a competitor. It's a normal competition with abnormal circumstances.

## ***What advice would you give another rider who wants to make riding at the World Championships a goal?***

I recommend that anyone interested in competition at any level ride in the World Championships Tryouts for experience. Even if you are not planning to attend the WC as a rider, getting experience at riding under pressure is an important tool for a rider interested in competing. The tryout qualification requirements are very straight-forward and you want to make sure you can achieve the minimum score for the discipline you are interested in riding in. I'm very lucky to have great sup-

port around me that is objective and honest as to what I need to do and change in order to prepare and be at my best at the right time.

Riders planning to go to the World Championships should first think about what their goal is in competing there. Most of the time, the scores from lower-pressure shows are higher than the scores at the World Championships. If your goal is to make it into the finals, then you want to think about your score in that discipline. You should compare your score to the WC scores to see if you would have a chance to make finals with your highest achieved score. You should also see where your lower scores would be. If your score is not high enough to be in the top 10 at the last WC, you might want to re-evaluate your goal. Wait and train hard for the next WC and see if you are closer to reaching your goal at that time. The goal for some riders is to compete and gain from the experience. In that case,



Dynjandi in training at home at Flying C Ranch in Santa Ynez, CA. Photo by Will Covert.

it is important to think of the qualifying scores and make sure you feel that they are achievable.

Anyone interested in riding at the WC in the future should seriously consider attending as a spectator or as a groom and see if it is something you are interested in before investing in going as a rider. You should hire a trainer with competition experience who can help with both the physical and mental aspects of competing. If you have the chance to compete in Iceland or in Europe in a WorldRanking show, that would be great practice for the World Championships.

***How is the World Championship experience different from shows in the U.S.?***

The WC is very different from shows in the U.S. and even different from most shows in Iceland. Most of the shows I have been to in the U.S. are relaxed and fun to attend and it is a very friendly competition. At the WC, the stakes are higher and it is a very serious event that most participants have spent a long time preparing for. Even though everyone is friendly, the competition is tough.

The practice times are assigned so you can't train on your schedule, but instead you must ride at set times. Everything is time-scheduled and the stable areas are secured so only credentialed people are allowed inside. It can be hard to find a place to walk your horse

or go for a trail ride, everything about it is more complicated and restricted. But with enough preparation it is a fun and rewarding experience to compete with the best from each FEIF member nation.

***According to the FEIF WorldRank, in 2012 you scored #1 in Tolt (T1) in the world. But although you've scored really high in the finals at the last two WCs, you haven't yet won that gold. What is the difference?***

For the WorldRanking events I had to travel down the street with my horse. For the WC we had to travel over 6000 miles! That changes a lot for both horse and rider. Also the WorldRanking events are held throughout the year, while at the World Championships all the horses are shown on the same track with the same team of judges on the same day with the same circumstances. Some have traveled far and long to get there. This can have a big effect on the performance of both horse and rider.

Almost all of the horses at the World Championships are also on the World Ranking list, so it comes down to having two or three great rides at the World Championships to be the winner. You can only do your best and prepare for the many scenarios you may face and aim to be the best on the right day. The other riders are doing the same, and the best horse and rider combination that day should win.

***What do you do to prepare yourself and your horse, physically and mentally, for competition? Anything you do specifically for your horse right before you go onto the track?***

The physical aspect is months of training and sometimes years of conditioning for both my horse and myself. On the day of the show, the mental aspect of competing is more important. I want to feel just the right amount of nervousness that I have learned is the best for me leading up to the competition, and usually my nervousness goes away once I'm on my horse.

It is good to know your horse well and to time your warm-up wisely. Some horses need a long warm-up and some horses are better with shorter warm-up. It is important to know when, during a ride, your horse is at his best and then use that knowledge to prepare when you compete. These little things are very important and help you feel more prepared and ready for competing. That is another reason why competing as much as possible is important. You need to know what works best for you and your horse.

Over the two years between World Championships, it is important to make sure you and your horse are fit and have the stamina required to compete in a variety of weather conditions. The warm-up



Ásta and her husband, Will Covert, who is America's only FEIF-certified competition judge.



Ásta training Dynjandi in trot on their home track at Flying C Ranch. Photo by Will Covert.

before entering the track is different for nearly every horse and rider, so you need to know how much or how little you and your horse need to be the best you can be when entering the track for those few minutes that count.

***At one point in 2012, you had received a “green card” for “good and harmonious riding” more times than any other rider in the world. What does it mean to you to be recognized in this way for your riding?***

I work hard on my riding and I am always trying to improve my skills as a rider, so to get this recognition is a great honor. A lot of times, harmonious riding helps you to score higher, especially in individual classes where the gait changes are important. Harmonious riding can often help you achieve a .5 addition. I work hard to receive good marks and positive comments from the judges, but having a good and fair partnership with my horse matters the most to me.

***How can our readers work to achieve “good and harmonious riding?”***

Practice is the best way to achieve good and harmonious riding, and if you have a well-educated and well-trained horse, the horse can really help you and tell you when you are doing well and not so well. My motto is to give a few little signals to your horse instead of one big correction. We all should want to achieve “invisible” signals to our horses that are just as effective or even more effective. I consider it to be “good and harmonious riding” when you wonder what the rider is doing to make the horse look so good.

YouTube has a lot of great Icelandic horse competition videos that are worth watching to get inspiration. Take advantage of every opportunity to ride for FEIF International judges and ask them for as much feedback as possible. Scores are what is announced and published, but the feedback is where you learn what to work on as a rider.

# A LOOK BACK AT PRP 2012

BY ELLEN WILSON

It was another exciting year for the Pleasure Riding Program! The program underwent technical enhancements in 2012, including adding an underlying database to record the participant logs so that results can be reported more quickly and accurately. Doug Smith did a fantastic job with this, and it streamlined the program's administration immensely. In 2012 the Board also waived the registration fee for the PRP and began requiring quarterly logs rather than just twice yearly. It took a while for these changes to catch on, but by the end of the year all the participants were onboard with the improved program.

This year also saw some changes in sponsorship regarding our annual awards. Ásta Covert of Flying C Tack and Eileen Gunipero stepped in to donate prizes to our winners circle. We thank them for their generous support.

Overall 35 participants sent in logs this past year, compared to 33 in 2011. Besides the three regional competitions, two Allstars and a single youth member participated. The Regional Club award was a three-way tie with Klettafjalla, St. Skutla, and Cascade all having equal numbers of participants.

Even for those who are not winners, everyone who rides in the PRP has the opportunity to serve as an ambassador for these wonderful horses. That is what this program is really all about—not only having fun riding our horses but letting people *know* that you are having fun. It is always a great pleasure for me to meet riders and to share tales of their Icelandic horse adventures, so please keep those stories and photos coming. Also consider submitting them for publication in the *Quarterly* or on the USIHC website.

My “photo of the year” is a winter scene taken at Wharton State Forest in the Pine Barrens. I'm riding my trusty steed Julia fra Gimli (aka Freydis) and modeling the safety-orange get-up that I wear during hunting season. Some of my fellow riders joke that astronauts can see me from space!



Ellen Wilson rides Julia frá Gimli in Wharton State Forest in the Pine Barrens of New Jersey.

If you haven't yet participated in the PRP, there is always 2013. It is never too late to join. The log forms can be found on the USIHC website ([www.icelandics.org](http://www.icelandics.org)) in the PRP section under “Ride.” I promise to send out periodic broadcasts to inspire you and to encourage you to dust off your saddle and rack up some trail miles. Here's to another great PRP year!

## THE YEAR'S BEST

This year for our *Quarterly* feature, PRP participants were asked to describe one activity they had the most fun doing with their horse(s) in 2012. The results are as varied as the riders themselves!

## LORI BIRGE

I do a lot with my horses between training at home, drill team practices, performances with the drill team, trail riding, shows (dressage and a breed show), and just riding for fun. Maybe my favorite activity last year was learning. I made a commitment a couple of years ago to put a larger effort into improving both myself as a rider and my horses. I learn by attending Icelandic horse and dressage clinics, reading and watching videos, and taking dressage lessons on both of my horses. The weekly lessons with local dressage trainer Lucy Curley were my favorite activity.



Lori Birge and Geisli practicing dressage.

Lucy is a classical dressage trainer who had never met an Icelandic horse until she agreed to work with me. To Lucy's credit, she has learned a lot about Icelandics in the last 2 ½ years by reading articles, watching videos, sending questions for me to ask at clinics, and experimenting with what does and does not work. Dressage has been an up-and-down journey with my horses, and I have no idea how far we'll progress, but it is definitely worth the effort. Geisli has not always been a cooperative pupil, but persistence on my part has paid off. Mostly

he is with the program these days and usually has a great work ethic, although he has moments when he decides he is going to figure out a way to get out of whatever we are asking him to do. He is learning to bend at the poll for more than a millisecond at a time, he is more balanced at all gaits, he has learned to lunge, he can move laterally at walk, trot, and tolt (not perfectly but it's coming along), and his gaits have improved a lot with the dressage training.

Last year, Geisli struggled off and on with his canter. He cantered, but it was often more of a canter tolt in the back ("tranter"). Any resemblance to a three-beat canter usually involved zooming around the arena, which is not exactly what I had in mind. Lucy suggested that I take a lesson with her dressage instructor, who comes to town once a month or so. He does not know anything about Icelandics, but she thought if we approached the lesson with a definite plan in mind, he could provide some useful ideas to improve the canter and not make me spend 45 minutes riding trot with no stirrups. He's a great trainer, and Geisli is a horse after all. This trainer listened to my soliloquy about our training journey and what my goal was for this lesson—to improve Geisli's canter. With Lucy at his side, he watched me ride in all four gaits and had me do some trot and canter work. Then he suggested trotting and cantering over ground poles, progressing from poles on the ground to poles lifted several inches off the ground. It was a blast—and that one exercise changed Geisli's canter from a four-beat to a three-beat. Every time he



Jackie Alschuler and Leó participated in their first American Competitive Trail Horse Association (ACTHA) event in Motley, MN.

regresses, we get out the ground poles, pop him over a few times, and it usually fixes the problem.

I plan to continue studying dressage with both my horses and to learn as much as we can. My new horse, Glasir, is farther behind in his dressage training, but I am a more educated rider now, and he is catching up rapidly. I look forward to my lessons each week and have to admit that they are the highlight of my riding experiences for the year. Geisli showed at training level last year, riding both gaited and non-gaited tests, and received some good scores. Now we are working toward first level, which I hope will be in our future.

### **NANCY WINES-DEWAN**

Between 1913 and 1940, John D. Rockefeller, Jr., financed and directed the construction of miles of carriage roads for the use of hikers, bikers, horse riders, and horse-drawn carriages on Mt. Desert Island, ME. There are 45 miles of roads within Acadia National Park, a diverse network of woodland "broken-stone" roads free of motor vehicles. I first brought my gelding Máni to Acadia six years ago, as part of a Maine Icelandic Horse Association trail ride. I had long



Nancy Wines-DeWan driving Sinna at Shelburne Farm on Lake Champlain in Vermont.



Kat Payne and Bleiktoppa enjoy trail riding with the “big horses” at the boarding stable.

dreamed of riding the miles and miles of carriage roads—and the reality was as beautiful as the dream! Once I experienced it on horseback, the desire to travel the roads as they were designed—for horse-drawn carriages—grew stronger. I had trained my mare Sinna to drive as a four-year-old, and in June 2012 she turned 9. By that time we had driven (and ridden) many miles together, so I decided we were both prepared.

The carriage roads are utilized by walkers, joggers, and bicyclists, as well as horseback riders and carriages large and small. The weather in June was beautiful—we managed to miss both the heat and the bugs. For three days we drove in the mornings, took a break for lunch, and then saddled up for some afternoon riding. Sinna was well acclimated to people, bikes, and other horses, but I wondered how she would react to the teams of draft horses pulling commercial carriages full of vacationers. I needn't have worried. She wasn't the least bit disturbed. What did disturb her, much to my surprise, was being harnessed and hitched away from her buddy, Máni, who remained in the barn during our morning drives. Note that Máni and Sinna are not exactly inseparable at home, but in Acadia, that became a moot point! She screamed and danced around when I brought her out of

the barn to hitch her up, then put all of her forward energy into a very brisk drive until we were out of sight of the barn. At that point she finally settled down.

Choosing just one event during the year is difficult! Acadia was certainly a highlight for me, but if I could choose just two, my second would be a pleasure driving trip to Shelburne Farm on Lake Champlain in Vermont, which we took in September. Once again we missed the rain and had beautiful weather. The biggest challenge on this drive was not the other carriages, but the pigs we had to pass.



Linda Eddy and Brana participated in the Waldo Hills 10-mile ride sponsored by Oregon Equestrian Trails.

## JACKIE ALSCHULER

In May 2012, I participated in my first American Competitive Trail Horse Association (ACTHA) event in Motley, MN with my Icelandic Horse, Leó. Having not done much competitive riding, I was rather nervous. My friends, who are quite accomplished in the ACTHA world, gave me much needed support and guidance. As Leó and I worked our way through the woods and the six obstacles, our confidence and comfort grew. A fun ending to the beautiful day was the last obstacle, walking your horse into the lake. After everybody was done, we all rode our horses in the water, splashed around, and just enjoyed the moment.

## KAT PAYNE

My mare Bleiktoppa and I had a great time trail riding with the “big horses” at the boarding stable. She’s just shy of 13 hands and I’m 6 feet tall, so we make quite a pair out on the trails. One day, she was toting as fast as the horse cantering next to her, and I saw the other rider look over in utter disbelief. Bleiktoppa has proven time after time that, though small, she has no problem keeping up!

## LINDA EDDY

Wow, it’s hard to choose just one activity! My two mares, Lipurta and Brana, and I participated in so many fun, and often new, activities in 2012. My mares are very different. Lipurta loves to show off in clinics, drill team, and shows, and we did a lot of those in 2012. However, my quieter mare, Brana, gets less of the limelight, so I will talk about an activity she and I participated in. Brana loves to be a trail horse. Last September, several of our



Anne Owen dressed her horses as Samurai warriors for a costume ride.

Cascade Icelandic Horse Club members suggested that a group of us participate in the Waldo Hills 10-mile ride sponsored by Oregon Equestrian Trails. So, a bunch of us loaded up our horses and rode a beautiful, peaceful, but challenging trail that had a number of water crossings and lots of steep, rocky hills. This was a new kind of riding for Brana, although I had done a fair amount of endurance riding in the past. She was a bit suspicious of the creeks at first, but quickly got beyond that and seemed to enjoy the challenge. We had a great time riding through beautiful rural country in Marion County, OR with other Icelandic club member friends and lots of other horses—a total of about 250. Brana and I are planning on attempting some limited distance endurance rides this summer and perhaps some other OET rides. Thank you USIHC Pleasure Riders Program for offering those of us who like to do a wide variety of events with our horses a way to keep track and to gain recognition!

**ANNE VERVAET**

In June 2012, a group of friends and I were invited to a ranch on the Front Range. We had all been there before, and we and the horses love it there: It is paradise. We rode a trail that led up to the top of a mountain, and it had about nine water crossings. At each crossing there were what seemed like hundreds of

butterflies: little blue ones, several monarchs, and everything in between. I was riding my friend's horse, Frosti. He was so happy being out on that trail, the joy just radiated from him and into me. It was so powerful to feel such positive emotions coming from him! It's a ride I will always remember, and cherish, and smile at.



Kathy Haulbrook and Hrimi at the ACTHA trail trial on November 10 at the 3Y Ranch in Crawfordville, FL. Photo by Kimberly Chason.

**ANNE OWEN**

In 2012 our local riding club had a costume ride. There were lots of great costumes, and it was fun riding like that. We wanted our Icelandics to look “over the top” and colorful, so we dressed up as Samurai Warriors and made Samurai armor for the horses. They certainly looked great, and we won the prize for best costume, with me riding Gna and Marilyn Weiner riding Stigandi. Last year was also a good year for winning several hunter paces. Everyone loves seeing the Icelandics at these events, but note that we keep beating them!

**KATHY HAULBROOK**

I joined the American Competitive Trail Horse Association (ACTHA) two years ago because my horse, Hrimi, was young and needed exposure. I continued to do trail trials because all of my horses like the variety of training over obstacles. And, of course, Hrimi developed a fan club—mostly of teenage girls—who gave him lots of attention at events. Our favorite event of 2012 was the ACTHA trail trial on November 10 at the 3Y Ranch in Crawfordville, FL. It followed the usual format of six miles of trail riding with six judged obstacles. Some of the obstacles took advantage of the natural terrain. Hrimi and I jumped over a downed tree and pushed

our way through a vine simulator. Then we scrambled down the side of a massive sink hole and climbed out the far side. Other obstacles tested our finesse. We backed through a L-shaped labyrinth and dragged a log from one point to another. For the final test, we had to perform the barrel pinwheel. We had to move a 10-foot board with its end resting on a barrel in a complete circle, without dropping the board on the ground. Hrimi completed all of the obstacles and finished in the top 10. His fans stopped by his stall all afternoon to give him hugs and scratches. So it was a great day for both of us.

### **JANET BOGGS**

We had a great time at the clinic at Red Feather Icelandics given by Ann Kristin-Kloth. Lots of good direction and exercises to practice at home in the arena and on the trail. This photo by Diane Graves sums up the clinic: fun, learning, goals, and finally, the moment we all wait for: that quiet closeness with our horse that makes it all worthwhile.

### **ALYS CULHANE**

A memorable day: Pete, glancing up at the overcast sky, said that he thought the weather would hold. So the trail ride was on. Five Icelandic horses, two Rocky



Janet Boggs at the clinic at Red Feather Icelandics given by Ann Kristin-Kloth. Photo by Diane Graves.

Mountain Horses, and six Tennessee Walkers were tacked up and ready to go. The plan was to do an afternoon trek in our backyard, which is located in the foothills of Alaska's Talkeetna Range. I voiced my first concern to Pete, saying that I didn't think it would be a wise idea to take four-week-old Hrimmi, adding that we'd then also have to leave her dam Signy behind.

However, Pete had already come up with a plan. He told all that we'd go out in two groups. The big horses would take the lower trail loop, and the little horses would take the upper trail loop. Both rides are five miles long. I was about to interject that the big horse group was unfamiliar with the more circuitous trail system, when Pete said that he and Siggí (his horse) would lead the big horse group. I agreed that this was a good idea, for Hrimmi would be less likely to get hurt.

The first and then the second group departed. This contingent included my neighbor Vicki, who was riding Hunar, her silver dapple Icelandic, and her husband Mike, who was riding our horse Tinni. In addition, it included my friend Fran, who was riding Signy. (I'd been raving about this horse, so she'd come down from Fairbanks to ride her.) I remarked to her that our group was larger than I was used to. Fran, laughing, said that four of the five Icelandic horses were mine. I looked around and realized that she was right. This was the first time that Signy, Hrimmi, Raudi, and Tinni had been out together.

We walked at a very fast clip up the two-mile stretch to the area we call the bench. Once there, we moved on quickly—fresh bear scat was a motivator. Then down we went, on the slick muddy trail. We let the horses, who were familiar with one another and with the trail, choose the order. Our Hobbit-like procession consisted of Signy, Hunar, Tinni, and



Alys Culhane (left) and a friend enjoy trail rides in the foothills of Alaska's Talkeetna Range.

Raudi. Trail-savvy Hrimmi opted to take the more foot-safe brushy terrain. We arrived at the base of the hill, circumvented two boggy areas, crossed three muddy creeks, and then headed home on our lightly trafficked residential road. A squadron of ATVs passed, but the horses paid them no mind.

We pulled into the driveway as the sky opened up. The second group appeared minutes later. Horses were untacked and groomed, and gear was put away. Stories beget stories—the lower trail group’s collective one was that the big horses had a hard time dealing with the slick, muddy, and rutted terrain. I later remarked to Pete that our ride went well because Icelandics have a low center of gravity, making them more sure-footed when on questionable ground. Pete agreed, but added that this was just a small part of it. “Every day, or thereabouts, you get all the horses out. So they’re both in good condition and extremely trail savvy,” he said. Pete was right. We’d done well in choosing the

right breed of horse for what I most like to do—trail ride. But yes, I’d also been diligent in getting them out. And I knew I would continue to do so.

**ALICE RYAN**

Since I am lucky enough to have four Icelandics (now five), it would be difficult to choose only one event that was my favorite. Each of my horses has a different quality that I value particularly. To narrow it down, I would say that the annual Ride for the Cure fundraiser (for breast cancer) is a highlight of my year. For this ride I take my dun gelding Máni, and it is a bittersweet ride because I have known so many women affected by this dreadful disease. On a lighter note, riding my gelding Kostur in the Woodstock, VT Wassail Parade with five of my Icelandic horse friends was definitely a fun and feel-good occasion. I enjoy riding in all the seasons and try to get out there no matter what the Vermont weather brings. The connection with the horses and to nature is what gives me peace and serenity in this often chaotic world.



Alice Ryan rides Máni in the annual Vermont Ride for the Cure to raise money for breast cancer research.

## PRP 2012 WINNERS

**ADULT CENTRAL MOUNTAIN**

1st Place  
David Loftness  
603

2nd Place  
Kat Payne  
276

3rd Place  
Kari Pietsch Wangard  
252

**ADULT EAST**

1st Place  
Alice Ryan  
394

2nd Place  
Kathy Haulbrook  
360

3rd Place  
Ellen Wilson  
316

**ADULT WESTERN PACIFIC**

1st Place  
Alys Culhane  
763

2nd Place  
Lori Birge  
609

3rd Place  
Linda Eddy  
556

**JUNIOR**

1st Place  
Caleigh Anderson  
345

**ALL STARS**

1st Place  
Anne Owen  
1390

2nd Place  
Nancy Wines-Dewan  
1020

**100 HOUR**

Carol Burckhardt

**500 HOUR**

Alice Ryan  
Janet Boggs  
Kathy Haulbrook  
Linda Eddy

**1000 HOUR**

Ellen Wilson

**2500 HOUR**

Alys Culhane  
Ronelle Ingram

**REGIONAL CLUB**

Klettafjalla  
St. Skutla  
Cascade

# MORE ON THE CORNELL PROJECT

BY BETTINA WAGNER

About 20 years ago, I started my career in equine immunology. I got attracted to a project on studying summer eczema. You may say, research hasn't done much for this disease, and it is true, the current challenges are still similar to those 20 years ago. There is no cure for the disease, available treatments only temporarily reduce clinical signs and are often insufficient, and a prophylactic treatment or vaccine to prevent summer eczema does not exist.

Nevertheless, many things have been accomplished during the past 20 years in equine allergy research. For example, several allergens of *Culicoides* midges that cause the disease in horses have been identified. All of them are substances from the saliva of the midges that they inject in the skin during the blood meal on the horse. Horses then make antibodies, called IgE antibodies, against the *Culicoides* saliva allergens. The IgE antibodies bind on inflammatory cells, called mast cells, in the horse's skin. In horses with clinical signs of summer eczema, these mast cells are heavily loaded with IgE against the *Culicoides* allergens. In the summer months, when horses are bitten by the midges, their mast cells release overwhelming amounts of inflammatory mediators. This causes the extreme itchiness, the skin irritations, and hair loss associated with summer eczema. Non-allergic horses usually have much lower levels of IgE to *Culicoides* bound to their mast cells.

At Cornell, we have developed an assay that measures the load of IgE to the allergens on a horse's mast cells. The assay can determine whether a horse has already developed IgE antibodies to *Culicoides* even if it is not yet clinically affected with the disease. The assay evaluates if a horse is at risk for developing summer eczema and also, in affected horses, if the allergy is indeed induced by *Culicoides*.

## THE STUDY'S GOALS

The Icelandic Horses Project currently



Lysa from Cornell is one of the foals in the summer eczema study. Photo by Andrea Barber.

performed at Cornell University has the goal of unraveling some of the mysteries about the immune responses leading to summer eczema and of identifying protective strategies for young horses before they become allergic:

We want to determine when young horses start to make IgE antibodies to *Culicoides* allergens. The time span between the onset of the immune response and the time when summer eczema finally becomes a clinical disease is likely at least one to two years. This time period is important for a successful preventive treatment of young horses.

We also investigate if the dam's preexisting immunity helps to protect the foal from developing summer eczema later in life. This is accomplished with foals that were either born in Iceland or at Cornell. Mares in Iceland have no immunity to *Culicoides* because the midges do not exist. These mares do not pass on any *Culicoides* immunity to their foals. At Cornell, horses live in "*Culicoides* paradise" and have immunity to *Culicoides*. Foals get the immunological experience of their dams right after birth with the colostrum (the mare's first milk). Several epidemiological studies on Icelandic horses have shown that the non-immune imported horses develop summer eczema much more frequently than Icelandic horses born in an environment with *Culicoides* exposure. The reason for this is not yet known,



Researcher Bettina Wagner is studying summer eczema in Icelandic horses with help from Punkturn and other foals born at Cornell University. Photo by Andrea Barber

but we believe that maternal immunity plays a key role. Our goal is to identify the protective maternal component in the colostrum. The initial results from the first two foaling years, one in Iceland and one at Cornell, confirmed that the immune responses in the two foal groups differ. Foals born in the environment with *Culicoides* surprisingly showed a delayed immune response to the allergens.

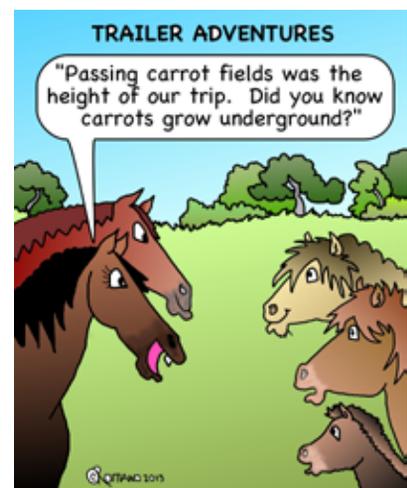
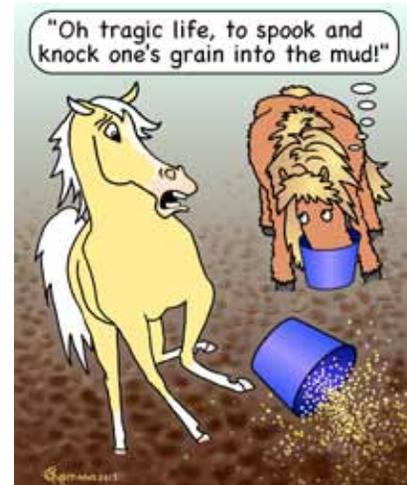
### THE RESEARCH HORSES

The Icelandic Horse Project will go on for another three years to answer all our questions about immunity and summer eczema. However, horses will drop out of the study sequentially. It is very important to all members of the Cornell Icelandic Horse Project Team that these horses find a good home after they are done with their job as research horses. The first brood mares will become available for adoption or sale by the end of 2013. These mares foaled three times in three consecutive years and will be between 7 and 15 years of age in 2014.

The participating foals will drop out of the study when they are three to four years old. This will be as early as fall 2014 and until fall 2016. All horses are regularly vaccinated and dewormed. They are constantly monitored for their health status and for signs of summer eczema by Cornell veterinarians. Horses that develop allergy will likely stay in the project for follow-up treatment and prevention studies. All horses that will be available at the end of the Cornell Icelandic horse allergy study will have a very low risk for allergy development, because they have been constantly monitored for their immune response to *Culicoides*. All horses are frequently handled and very friendly. All horses are or will be registered with the USIHC.

We are currently maintaining a list of people who might be interested in a healthy horse from the Cornell Icelandic Horse research study in the future. Please contact me at Cornell (bw73@cornell.edu) if you would like to be added to the list.

## CARTOONS BY CHRIS ROMANO



# TRAINING IN THE NATURE

BY KATHY SIERRA

Among the many differences between Icelandic horses raised and trained in Iceland vs. in the U.S., the most dramatic is the role of nature. From treacherous terrain to the extreme temperatures, the natural environment of Iceland asks much of a horse, from the moment of their “in the nature” birth.

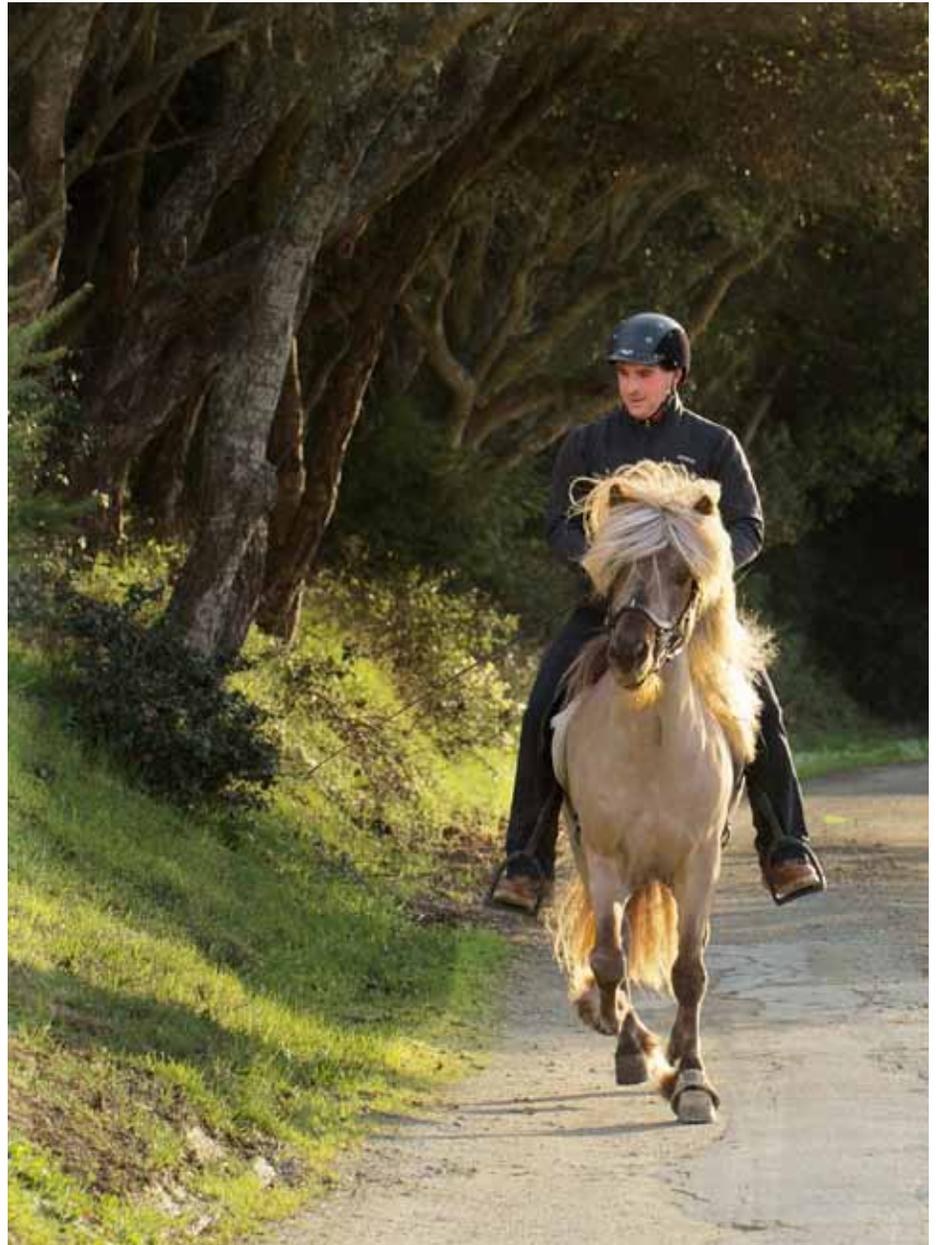
Even in the deepest winter, Icelandic trainers with access to indoor rings still suit-up to work outside, often in near darkness, despite wicked winds and bitter cold. Why do they do it? Why leave the comfort of a covered arena, trading safe, even footing for harsh, rugged nature? Because they believe that to separate a horse from “the nature” is to diminish its spirit. They believe that it is “the nature” itself that plays the key role in the training and development of a horse, both physically and mentally.

In the U.S., we have lost much of that essential element of training in the nature, mainly because we so often lack access to rugged natural environments for working with our horses. But according to my two trainers—one Icelander and one American—we can recapture at least some of the benefits of training in nature with surprisingly simple ideas, regardless of where our horses are kept. Not only is it good for your horse’s spirit, training outside an arena offers a wide range of wonderful opportunities to improve your horse’s strength and suppleness.

## NOT JUST TRAIL RIDING

A word of caution: The idea of “training in the nature” is not synonymous with “trail riding.” According to both my trainers, Icelandic trainer Steinar Sigurbjörnsson and biomechanics expert Jec Ballou, while a trail ride *can* be of good training benefit for the horse, it is too often the opposite: happy for the horse’s attitude, but simultaneously hurting the horse’s progress for the long term.

Training in the nature means using elements of nature to work on your horse’s body and spirit, together, in a way that improves your horse over time. Trail riding, while strongly encouraged for



Trainer Steinar Sigurbjörnsson likes to create a happy mood by going outside and using natural and interesting terrain like this beautiful slightly uphill dirt road. His silver dapple stallion Elfaxi frá Oddhóli responds with a spirited trot. Photo by Kathy Sierra.

Icelandic horses, can create as many problems as it solves.

Trainers feel the frustration of simultaneously wanting their clients to take their horses out, but not to “throw the training away” when on the trail. “I have clients whose horses never improve because I work with the horse once a week,

then three days of the week the horses are ridden on a trail in a way that undoes what I worked on that week,” Jec says. Steinar agrees. Both Steinar and Jec have taken clients on trail rides for the specific purpose of teaching the rider precisely how to “train” on the trail. Many riders (myself included, for the first few years),

resist the idea of training on a trail ride as it seems counter-intuitive to keeping the horse happy. I believed it was in my horses' best interests to ride on the trails in a relaxed, casual way, not "micromanaging" and making what should be a pleasant trail ride into a work/schooling session.

This is the well-intentioned—yet completely wrong—way to view trail riding, say both Jec and Steinar. "Riding every step in correct, healthy posture with the back lifted and the neck long and poll supple and the hind legs engaged," says Steinar, "is what ultimately makes the horse feel good in his body and last much longer as a happy riding horse." He adds, "The horse is only unhappy about this when the 'rules' are inconsistent—when the horse is asked to do certain things in the arena, but is then allowed to move in a somewhat hollow, less engaged way on the trail." They both agree that it takes very little time riding with a "zero-tolerance for hollow and not engaged" on the trail before the horse recognizes that this is just always "how we do it."

## BE CREATIVE

The crucial point: Riding with the same posture and standards of movement on the trail as you would during, say, an arena training session, is what allows the horse to develop and slowly reduce and eliminate bad postural habits, persistent crookedness, and even many behavioral problems including spooking, not listening, running off, being extremely "lazy," etc. But what happens if you don't have regular access to trails? "It just takes a little creativity," says Steinar.

"I can make a training environment anywhere," claims Jec. It means shifting your perspective from "out in the nature" to "using natural elements wherever they are."

Both agree that the secret to training in the nature, when you have very little of it, is to work on bending and suppling and strengthening ... at the walk. "Everything you do at the walk is what builds toward a better tolt," says Steinar.

Jec agrees, "Most novice or intermediate riders are capable of learning to do very precise, high-quality movements in walk, but can fall apart at higher gaits. Working in walk in perfect form, doing very accurate movements and patterns, is one of the best ways to quickly and



Even a rock can be a center of focus. Here Steinar practices doing circles around a rock with Draumur from Destiny Farms. Photo by Kathy Sierra.

permanently improve a horse's overall way of moving, including working towards collection."

Some of their favorite and easy-to-implement natural training tools include:

### TREE CIRCLES

Most stables have a tree somewhere on the property, even if it is not in an area that is considered part of the training areas. Use the tree (or a bush) as the center point of a 10-meter circle. Practice doing a perfect circle, where your horse's hind legs perfectly follow the path of his front legs. Then you can practice a circle where the front legs are on a slightly smaller circle than the hind legs, or ride the circle in a slight leg yield.

The key is to be absolutely accurate

with the size and shape of the circle, using the tree for support. This exercise can be done at the walk even on a slope or over uneven ground. A slight slope can make this an even more effective exercise, where your goal is to have your horse walk in the circle maintaining the same tempo regardless of whether you are going up or down the slope.

Variation: Use two trees to do a figure eight.

### ROCK SERPENTINES

This exercise can be done on a trail or even on a short driveway. Place a few rocks or use large rocks already on the property, and ride serpentine around the rocks as though you were doing pole weaving. Repeat, repeat, repeat, while



Training in the nature means using elements of nature to work on your horse's body and spirit, together. A tree gives Steinar and Dr-aurmur the opportunity to practice leg yields. Photo by Kathy Sierra.

noticing whether your horse moves the same around the rocks to the right side as to the left.

Is one shoulder leaning into the rock, while the other shoulder leans away? Does your horse leave his hind legs behind in one direction and move them too quickly in the other? Make your goal to be riding through the serpentine as evenly as possible by experimenting with different cues, aids, position of your body—whatever it takes until you find something that moves your horse in one direction the same that he moves in the other direction.

Serpentines can be ridden as shallow fractions of a circle, or as leg-yields back and forth. The more you practice serpentines while not on the trail, the easier it is for both horse and rider to get into the rhythm and action while on the trail. Muscle memory works well here for both horse and rider.

Variation: *Imaginary* rock serpentines. One of the best exercises to keep your horse supple on the trail, and a great tool for reducing the chances of your horse suddenly running off, is to practice riding serpentines while on the trail by imagining there are rocks front of you.

## BACKING UP A SLOPE

According to Jec, this should be on everyone's top ten list of exercises, to be done every day, on the ground or ridden. "If everyone backed their horses up a slight slope, every day, 20 steps, they would be amazed at how much their horses would improve."

She cautions that the backing up must be in good posture—not the high-headed back-up some natural horsemanship methods teach, but also not too curled under. Your horse should back up in a relaxed but good posture. A good posture is one where the neck is extended but not high and hollow—basically, your horse should be in a good position for riding on the bit.

Rather than pressing on your horse's nose to ask him to go back (if he is not yet trained to back up easily and correctly), Jec prefers asking his head and neck to come forward while pressing on his chest to indicate he is to move back. If your horse is not backing in a good posture, then the backing-up exercise is not helping the horse and could have the opposite effect.

Any place you can find a slight slope, like a driveway, is enough. "Even if you can only do three steps before you run out of slope, that's okay. Just turn around, walk back, and repeat." She also cautions that your horse should be kept as straight as possible. This can take time. If you can back with something on one side for support, that makes it easier to stay straight.

## WALKING OVER LOGS

According to Jec, "Walking over cavalletti or logs is one of the best ways to loosen a horse's back. This is one of those secrets that so few people realize, but some of the classical masters would do this 20 times as part of a warm-up." As with backing up, she cautions that having the horse step over the log (or poles) in good posture and while staying straight is what matters.

Even just a single log placed on a path will work for this exercise, as long as you have enough space to turn the horse around. If you have multiple poles or logs and can use them as cavalletti, by moving them into a position where they fit the horse's stride, that's great. If not, then it's better to have just a single log you keep walking over or a range of poles at various strangle angles, some higher, some lower,

where your horse has to pay attention to where he is putting his feet, while also loosening his back, hocks, hips, etc.

## NATURE GALLOP

The *ideal* training in the nature for a horse is still a gallop: Across a field. Along a beach. Up a nice open trail. Even twice a month can offer a tremendous benefit to your horse, though not everyone has this opportunity or feels safe galloping on their horse. Personally, I only gallop if I feel the footing is safe and secure, so I'm limited in where I can do this. Fortunately, my trainers are much braver and they find many places to be suitable that I wouldn't.

The Nature Gallop seems to benefit both "lazy" and "a-little-too-willing" horses. It allows the willing and energetic horses to use some of their energy in a relaxed way, while inspiring the less willing horses to become more energetic. Overall, it allows the horse to loosen and stretch out in ways that no other gait provides.

## SEE OPPORTUNITIES

The best way to view training in the nature is to look at everything as an opportunity. Even the smallest weed can become a focal point for a circle or serpentine. Even the smallest tree limb can be an opportunity to practice stepping over and over. Even the slightest incline can be the best place to develop the horse by backing up.

If you cannot take your horse out into the nature, you must find a way to bring "the nature" to your horse. While you might be tempted, as I once was, to view most outside-the-arena riding areas at your stable to be unsuitable, when you realize that you can build the best foundation simply at the walk (including at a really slow walk), suddenly almost everything becomes an opportunity.

As we head into summer, most of us will be in our peak season for getting out of the arena, so think about using your time on the trail to help your horse be the best, healthiest, most supple athlete he can be. And the tools you develop now will be the ones you use when summer ends and your trail riding options shrink. If you have a slightly sloping driveway, a rock, and a broken tree limb, you have a fabulous training gym.

# WHERE ARE THE YOUNG RIDERS?

BY NICKI ESDORN

Where are children and teens riding Icelandic horses in the U.S.? That is a good question. There are always a lot of photos in the *Quarterly* of adults enjoying Icelandic horses. The reports from the Regional Clubs are about what grown up members are up to. So the *Quarterly* decided to take a closer look. The situation is very bleak indeed across most of the United States. There are, however, a few bright spots!

When I contacted the presidents and youth representatives of all the Regional Clubs listed under the USIHC, most replied with regret that they had no children or youth members. Rich Moore of the Frida Icelandic Riding Club (Mid-Atlantic states) wrote, "Unfortunately we do not have any youth riders in the club. I guess we are all getting too old! Therefore, we don't have plans for youths." Karen Olson of Klettafjalla, Deb Callaway of Saint Skutla, Kathryn Lockerbie of West Coast CanAm all replied: No youth members! Some clubs did not reply, so I assume they have no youth members to talk about. Wade Elmblad of the Flugnir Club (Midwest) reports that with member



Two horse-crazy girls sharing a laugh: trainer Alex Pregitzer and Nina Eichelmann on Kraftur. Photo by Andreas Eichelmann, passionforimages.com.

Kevin Draeger now grown up, Wade's daughter Jessica is the last youth member. "We struggle with attracting new youth members. The club is developing an Education Fund to help sponsor young riders, among other goals. I believe the Regional

Clubs should be working together now more than ever to attract young riding talent to the Icelandic horse."

## SOUTHERN CAL

The first nice surprise came from Kimberly Hart of Southern California Icelandic Riders: "I teach kids here full time! We have two Gymkhanas a year!" Some of Kimberly's students come from the local grade school, and their riding and horsemanship lessons count as physical education credits. One of her students came as an eight-year-old, and is now, at 20, going to Iceland to work with horses as her summer job. Word-of-mouth brings in more kids than the dozen Kimberly can accommodate, so she has a waiting list. She has a small barn, corrals, big arenas, and lots of trails. The children ride her horses and the horses of boarders. Her Gymkhanas are the highlights of the year and eagerly anticipated. She needs about 10 club member volunteers who come and help, bring food, donate material, and clean up afterwards. There are fun classes, gait classes and, of course, a



Members of the first Riding Badge clinic at Silver Maple farm (left to right): Becky Hoyt, Sierra McDonald, Margot Frost, Rose Terami, and trainer Jana Meyer.



Sophie, age 5, riding the “Big T” on Odinn, following Kimberly Hart at the Gymkhana. The “Big T” is a game where you have to follow the outlines of a big T made out of tires or cones. Not as easy as it sounds! Photo by Elisabeth Haug.

costume class. She says she is “blessed to be able to work doing her favorite things: playing with children and horses!”

### **KRAFTUR & CIA**

Sisters Laura and Heidi Benson of the Kraftur Club (Northern California) have a wonderful ongoing children’s and youth program, and also camps all summer long. They have a waiting list and would like to teach more kids, but cannot afford to board more suitable horses. They work out of two locations, a smaller one in Los Gatos, and a larger boarding facility in Santa Cruz, with arenas and lots of trail access. The lesson horses belong to Laura and Heidi, some boarders donate their horses, and some are there on consignment and often find a new ecstatic child owner. The Kraftur Club puts on schooling shows and boasted the largest youth classes ever last fall: about 13 young participants!

With the help of club volunteers, Laura and Heidi take young riders and their horses 250 miles to the California Icelandic Association (CIA) club’s big sanctioned show in the Santa Ynez area. There Ásta Covert offers special youth classes and lends her expertise and star power to help the children compete. Ásta also has taken some talented teens under her wing and tutors them for upper level competition riding.

Laura’s students Madison Prestine and Ayla Green participated in the FEIF

Youth Cup. Laura says it took a lot of energy, help, and sacrifice to get the youth program going from 2005 on. She would let child beginners ride her competition horses to keep lessons affordable for the parents. Without the help of club volunteers, who pitch in with food donations, transport, and supervision, and who lend their suitable horses for children, the program would not be sustainable.



Kimberly Hart showing grandson Tristan, age 5, a good time at his first ever canter. Photo by Elisabeth Haug.

### **NEIHC**

The North East Icelandic Horse Club (NEIHC), under the leadership of president Martina Gates and an enthusiastic board, is making a renewed effort to attract and support young riders. In 2006 the club had a few youth members and held a youth camp and schooling show that I, as the youth rep at the time, organized. Laura Benson was the instructor, and Alex Pregitzer the judge. In 2007, Martina and I took a group of girls from the U.S., Germany, and Iceland to Thingeyrar Farm in Iceland for a week-long camp. The teens from 2006 are now in college—and, like at Flugnir, there are no younger ones in the NEIHC pipeline. The club is planning a Youth Day on June 15, and has held a raffle to financially support three farms who are inviting children to come meet and try the Icelandic horse. These three farms are a few more bright spots for youth: Boulder Ridge Icelandics in Maine, Silver Maple Icelandics in Vermont, and West Wind Farm in New York.

Krista Wescott runs the small children’s program at her parents’ Boulder Ridge Farm. She has about five “regulars” and offers five weeks of summer camp for about four children at a time. She has a waiting list. The children ride some of her horses and some donated for lessons by boarders.



Krista Wescott's all-boys class ride a drill routine bareback. Left to right: Kris Fossum on Ára from Boulder Ridge, Erik Fossum on Maistjárna frá Sauðarkróki, Josh Hart on Gýðja frá Sveinsstöðum, and Odan Struck on Hæringur frá Óslandi. Photo by Cindy Wescott.

Heleen Heyning hosts summer camps for children at her West Wind Farm. Elín Hulda Harðarsdóttir, a young instructor from Iceland, ran the program in 2012 with lessons, trail riding, and lots of activities.

Jana Meyer is the current youth rep on the board of the NEIHC and runs the lesson program at Silver Maple Icelandics. She used to teach more than 60 children per week in Germany and has lots of great ideas. Silver Maple has a competition track and many trails. Jana teaches a few children and teens regularly and puts on several camps in the summer, including USIHC Riding Badge programs. Her teen student Quinn Thomashow participated in the FEIF Youth Cup. Silver Maple holds Open Barn Days, a Halloween Ride and party, puts ads in the local paper, and posts flyers in the local tack stores to advertise. They have lesson horses and also use boarders' suitable horses for the children.

That's it for the USIHC Regional Clubs. Fewer than five programs for children and teens in the entire U.S.

## MICHIGAN

Of course, some USIHC members go it alone. Another little bright spot is Alex Pregitzer's small program in Oxford, MI. Alex is a one-woman show; she does not even have the support of a Regional Club, as the nearest one, Flugnir, is just

too far away. Alex boards at a beautiful private stable whose owner supports and sponsors Alex's youth program. The teens and children ride Alex's own horse and one lent to her free of charge by Katrin

Sheehan of Creekside Farm in Georgia. Alex puts on special events in the summer, like camps and workshops. Many of her students come from the local German school, where Alex also teaches German. Their parents are often only in the U.S. for a few years, so they are not inclined to purchase horses. Alex says she would love to teach more kids, but cannot afford to board more suitable horses.

## YOUTH COMMITTEE

Laurie Prestine is the chair of the USIHC youth committee. Laurie and daughter Madison ride with Laura Benson. Laurie is also the youth rep for the Kraftur Club. The current mission statement and members of the USIHC Youth Committee can be looked up on the USIHC website. Programs to be promoted are the Pleasure Rider Program, the Spaejari Award, the FEIF Youth Cup, and the FEIF Youth Camp. Laurie said the Youth Advisory Board, a committee consisting of young riders, is now defunct. The youth participants in the Pleasure Rider Program have diminished, as can be seen in the results for the past years posted on the USIHC website. The last Spaejari Award was given



Laura Benson and her advanced students performing an excellent "four abreast" during drill team practice at a clinic held together with Guðmar Pétursson. Left to right: Laura on Festi, Julia on Skuggsjá, Cameron on Elskan, and Allison on Punktur. Photo by Heidi Benson.

in 2007. The FEIF Youth Cup in Verden, Germany, was attended by three US participants from California and the North East (see the article in Issue 4 2012 of the *Quarterly*). Laurie and committee member Amelie Brewster were able to organize a great experience for the girls. Laurie has already received inquiries about the 2014 Youth Cup in Iceland.

Otherwise, according to the Mission Statement, "Members of the committee are free to organize youth activities for their Regional Clubs, and to share ideas with other Youth Directors as to what they are doing in their regions."

### WHAT'S NEEDED

It becomes apparent that four elements are needed for a successful children's program:

A qualified, dedicated, and enthusiastic instructor who is willing and able to put effort, time, money, and her/his own horse into a youth program.

A good and safe facility with an arena or other enclosed area to teach beginners, a competition track to teach more advanced riders, and access to trails.

Suitable, safe horses, and the means for their upkeep.

Lots of volunteers who are willing to give time, transport, horses, food, and financial support.

If these elements are in place, it seems there is no shortage of children who would love to ride the Icelandic horse, as evidenced by the waiting lists.

Laurie invites all instructors of children to join the Youth Committee and to exchange information over an email list. Laurie will let them know about programs and possible USIHC support, financial and otherwise. Instructors can tell her and each other about their clubs' plans.

Without children and teen riders, the future of the Icelandic horse in this country looks bleak, indeed. A lot of work, not just talk, needs to be done before the few bright spots will become constellations.

To our readers: Please comment on this issue. Tell us if there are youth programs in your area or club that we missed, however small. Email us at [quarterly@icelandics.org](mailto:quarterly@icelandics.org)

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Icelandic horse shows often include fun classes--like this leadline costume class for young riders. Photo by Kathy Sierra.

# YOUTH ESSAYS:

## FIRST

BY BAILEY SODERBERG

I have been riding since I was four years old, when I told my mother that I wanted to be around animals and someone suggested horseback riding. I struggled to ride on Cape Cod, where there is very little opportunity for riders and only a few select barns to ride at if you don't own your own horse. For almost 12 years I worked as much as I could at barns of all riding disciplines, including hunter/jumper, eventing, dressage, and trail barns. I am a student in the International Baccalaureate Curriculum, and balancing rigorous academics with my love of horses is difficult. I never really found my place in the horse world until I rode an Icelandic horse gelding named Geysir at a barn on Cape Cod, and fell in love with the breed. I wanted to explore the breed, but never had an opportunity beyond short bursts of tölt with Geysir.

My dreams of Icelandics came true this year when I met the wonderful people of Silver Maple Icelandic Horse Farm at the 2011 Equine Affaire in Springfield, MA. They allowed me to stay at their farm in Tunbridge, VT and work at a six-week internship, where I learned everything about the Icelandic horse. I schooled horses, ground-worked them, rode them almost four times a day, and even bred them. I made friends in the Icelandic world that will last me a lifetime. It was an experience I will never forget.

About a week into this internship, my friend Caeli was sick and asked me to ground-work a young horse for her. His name was Primus. My first thought when I got him from the field was how his red coat gleamed and the golden-orange tint in his mane and tail caught the sunlight and gave him the appearance of being consumed in flame. He turned his head to me, and I fell in love immediately with the stripe on his face that marked his right nostril and gave him a comical look. As I worked Primus that first day, I



Bailey Soderberg and her first horse, Primus from Silver Maple.

laughed at his spunk and inner fire and marveled at his gentle, sweeter side. He obediently followed my command, but with a little spring in his step and the occasional toss of the head to show his spirit in spite of his cooperation. He had just turned five and was four-gaited, without a developed tölt.

The next day I went to the white-board in the barn and wrote his name under the list I had of horses to exercise, with a little question mark. My trainer, Jana Meyer, agreed to let me try him. I took him out on the trail and could not stop giggling. The next few weeks of my internship I continued to work with Primus. I took him to his first show and rode him for his first time in the outdoor ring. My parents visited in my third week and watched me ride him. I was proud of the horse I had been working with. We continued to grow closer and I looked forward to riding him everyday, helping with his tölt training and feeling his powerful trot, his rocking canter.

When my parents arrived to bring me home, hundreds of miles from the farm

and Primus, I was reluctant but resigned. Planning to ride a mare named Gella for my parents before I left, I started down the path to the mare's pasture. Another intern, Quinn, called to me and told me there was a change in plans. Confused, I walked into the barn. To my surprise, my father stood in the aisle holding Primus, who was in a new black halter with flames and had a red bow tied around his neck. At first I was utterly confused, and then I knew. Bursting into tears, I hugged both my parents and my new horse.

Since then, I have returned to high school as a junior. Primus is still in Vermont for now, in tölt training until I find the right barn here on Cape Cod. I travel almost every weekend to visit him, and we grow closer every week; he grows more talented every day. "Primus," which means "first," is a strangely accurate name: He is Silver Maple's first foal and my first horse.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF LEG AND SEAT

BY JULIA HASENAUER

To me the seat, legs, voice, and hands were all one and the same. The concept was simple: They all work together, with more emphasis on the leg and seat. But putting this into practice—that's a different story. I just couldn't seem to get it.

It made sense in my head, but I couldn't seem to put it into play while riding my horse. As I struggled with keeping my legs on and taking them off at the right times, I would lose my balance and throw off my seat. The majority of the time, my horse was hanging on my hands because she didn't know what I was asking. We began to have bad rides. I would rely on my hands. She would get fed up with all the constant tugging on her mouth and bolt. I didn't come off, but I was scared and frustrated. I didn't know what was wrong. When I put leg on, she'd go faster but not engage her hind end.

She was, and still is, my first horse. I didn't know if all the bolting and bad sessions meant that we just weren't good

together. I was beginning to think maybe she needed someone different. I was not happy and neither was my horse. Then my trainer, Laura Benson, decided to change our lessons a little and work on seat and leg using the neck rope and extensive ground work. I began to feel a difference. Not only with my horse, but with me as well.

As I took a step back and worked slowly, using mainly my seat and legs, my horse responded! The first change I noticed was that she was respecting me more. She used to take off after other horses, and she wouldn't stop until she felt ready. Or she'd pull and pull. She no longer did this. I almost cried that first time. I remember it very clearly. My riding buddies and I were practicing for an upcoming show and, as we all tolled around, I didn't feel her rushing up or pulling on my hands to catch the horses in front of her. It was amazing. She was listening to me, and only me!

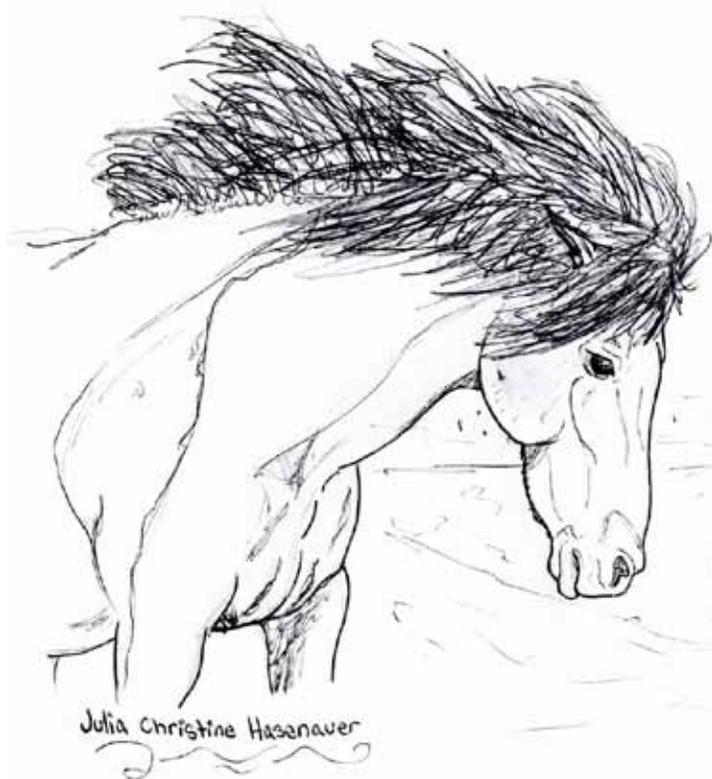
After that, I noticed little changes every now and then. My confidence began to build: My horse was listening to me. I was now the all-formidable Julia, a new person with a new horse. I started to branch out more at school and allowed myself to become more myself with other people. I began to believe in myself. It



Julia Hasenauer and Skuggsjá. Photo by Lidia Hasenauer.

may seem crazy or even stupid to non-horsey people, but the knowledge that I could flow in harmony with a beautiful and majestic animal allowed me to challenge myself socially and in school. I would enjoy my time in and out of the saddle. I'm a shy person by nature, but as my horse and I began to trust and enjoy each other, I found I could do things that were previously closed to me. I could say hi to people, keep conversations, and laugh more. I wasn't enclosed or hiding.

All of this stemmed from the knowledge and ability to use my legs and seat. I still have a long way to go in learning exactly how to use my legs and seat to the best extent, but I certainly am on my way and I am practicing as often as I can. With the guidance and support of my trainer Laura, my mom and dad, and all of my friends, I know I will be able to keep on improving.



# WHY COMPETE?

BY LESLIE CHAMBERS

Like many of you, I fell in love with Icelandic horses because they are just so much fun to ride out on the trails in the woods, on the beach, or on the rural roads of New England. Although I have been riding for about 40 years, I have only been in the Icelandic world for four. I grew up in northeast Ohio and belonged to Congress Lands Pony Club. Through Pony Club I had the chance to participate in competitions which included dressage, cross-country, and stadium jumping. During this time (my junior high and high school years), I owned a wonderful Appaloosa gelding who not only took me through Pony Club but also to the local weekly horse shows. The weekly shows were a community affair, divided into two halves: half the show was devoted to English riding (jumping included), the other half to Western riding (barrel racing included). Friday night shows had the same format, and you had to be under 18 years old to participate. Lucky for me, my horse could do it all. This was the thrill in competing for me as a youth, being there with my friends and peers and yes, at that time in my life, my ribbon collection was a source of great pride.

Now, in my 50s, the ribbon collection isn't quite as important. I am now more focused on my relationship with my horse. Over the last four years, I have been learning the Icelandic seat and how to ride my horse in a way that brings out the best gaits. There are great opportunities for learning out there, through clinics and with private instructors and trainers. But the Icelandic horse world is not quite as easy to navigate as the horse world of my youth. Now I need to travel well over 100 miles to attend clinics or find instruction, as opposed to 10 miles to the Friday night shows. Icelandic horses have also proved to be more of an initial investment than other breeds, but as I see it, they are worth it.

## **BETTER RIDER, BETTER RIDE**

Once I made the commitment to buy an Icelandic horse, I wanted not only to protect my investment, but to improve it. Last



Leslie Chambers and Herdís getting ready to show: It's not about collecting ribbons. Showing is about your relationship with your horse. Photo by Kathy Sierra.

year, I was able to attend three clinics—and what a difference it made. I have no plans to be a “competition rider,” but I do want to be a better rider, because better riders have better rides. I have confidence that my horse understands what I am asking it to do, so that when we are out on the trails, there is nothing much to do except enjoy the day. This is why attending clinics or taking lessons is important: to get some feedback about how you and your horse are communicating with each other.

And this is why I feel that attending schooling shows or USIHC-sanctioned shows is important. It is for the feedback—a report card, if you like the analogy. The beauty of Icelandic horse shows is the scoring system. You will receive a score between 0 and 10 for each gait you ride in a class. Keep a record of your scores and then track your progress over time. You should then know what your homework assignments will be until the next show.

The Icelandic horse show itself is an interesting blend of my past experiences with competitions. In the Open classes you have the track to yourself, like at a dressage test. You need to show the judge(s) each gait and, in some classes, different speeds of tolt or even tolt on a loose rein. First, you choose your rein (go left or right); then as you enter the track, in the middle of the first short side you come to, you bow or salute the judge to let them know you are starting your program. You then choose your gait and perform it for an entire lap of the track. You repeat this until you have shown all the required gaits (with some variations: for example, you only show half a lap of walk, and there's a fixed order in which you have to show different speeds of the same gait in some classes). You stop at the middle of a short side, bow or salute the judge again to signal that you are finished, and leave the track at a walk. It's not nearly as complicated as memorizing a dressage test, but the scoring is similar

and you will get feedback on each of your gaits.

The group classes in an Icelandic horse show are limited to no more than six riders on the track at a time. You discuss with the others in your class which rein you will ride. The group is then told by the judge which gait to show. Once all gaits for that class have been ridden, your group leaves, and the next group enters. When all groups are done, you all reenter the track and receive your feedback, again on the 0-10 scale for each gait performed.

There are also fun classes, such as the Beer Tolt (which reminds me of the old “egg and spoon” class) and the Trail Class, which of course is filled with tasks that benefit us all in our day-to-day riding, such as going over obstacles and opening and closing gates.

Details on exactly what each class is and how it is to be performed can be found on the United States Icelandic Horse Club site (<http://www.icelandics.org/>). Look under the Ride tab

for the compete link; there are several documents here to answer any questions you might have.

### **THE PERSONAL RECORD**

Much time and thought has gone into Icelandic horse competitions. Because we are spread all over the world, but all abide by the same standards, great effort has gone into training judges on absolute scales. (Details on how judges are trained and qualified can also be found on the USIHC website.) In other words, you are judged against an ideal and your scores reflect how you compare to that ideal. This way it doesn't matter that we all don't live 10 miles from the local show to get together and compete, you can compare your scores with anyone in the world.

The bottom line is, “Don't be afraid to participate in these shows because you aren't as good a rider as the next guy.” The next guy doesn't matter, he is not going to have any effect on how much you enjoy your horse on a daily basis. What

will have an effect is your relationship with your horse. Adopt the attitude of going for that Personal Record, the PR. This is what most runners do. Most runners are amateurs, they do it for themselves, they only compete with themselves, they go for the PR. So don't think about the other riders as “competitors”; enjoy them as “community.” This is what sets the Icelandic horse show apart from others: It's more about being together, cheering each other on, and everyone improving. Don't be afraid to participate because you have never competed, there will always be someone nearby to help you, that's how this community works, we are small and spread out geographically, but when we are together we are tight-knit.

For what it's worth, I have participated in one schooling show to date. I had no idea what to do or expect, but there was always someone there to help me. It was a good day and I look forward to the next opportunity. I also look forward to seeing you there.



Riders at a schooling show showing off their medals—and their smiles. Photo by Kathy Sierra.

# ARE YOU READY TO SHOW?

BY JESSICA HAYNSWORTH

In our growing sport, each year brings more new faces to the Icelandic competition track. Unfortunately, there are few resources available to let first-time competitors know what to expect. Even if you have experience in other equestrian sports, Icelandic competition has its own set of expectations. Horse shows can and should be fun at any level, but if you don't come prepared you might find yourself in a stressful situation. This rough guide might help you prepare for and get the most out of your first Icelandic horse competition. For more information, download and read the full set of "Rules for Icelandic Horse Sport Events," or FIPO at <http://www.feiffengur.com/documents/fipo2013.pdf>.

## PRACTICE YOUR PROGRAM

Being judged is a great way to assess the progress you've made with your horse and to get an idea of what you can improve upon. However, it can also be quite nerve-racking—even for those who ride at the professional level. The best way to avoid nerves is to be absolutely certain of what you're doing. Practice, practice, practice... and not the day before the show, either! Begin weeks in advance. Look on the USIHC website ([www.icelandics.org](http://www.icelandics.org)) under "Ride," or download the FIPO rule book (<http://www.feiffengur.com/documents/fipo2013.pdf>), and read about the classes offered at Icelandic horse shows. Choose the ones that sound best for you, and run through your program a few times at home.

If it's a novice four-gait class, for example, you'll want to practice doing exactly what you'll be asked to do at the show. Warm up your horse, then have a friend call your name to enter the track. If you don't have a track, use a paddock, an arena, or just ride in a big open field. You need to get an idea of what it will be like to ride several loops on a big oval, the same way you will be riding at the show. Ask your friend to call out the gaits for you, the way they'll be called out at the show, and get a feel for performing that gait when it's called. Leave nothing up to



Jessica Haynesworth and Thor frá Skorrastad 4 show what a properly dressed horse and rider (in white breeches and tall boots) might look like at a sanctioned show. Here they are showing T2 (loose-rein tolt). Photo by Anne Hyde.

chance the day of the show. When you get off that trailer, all your decisions about how you are going to ride and what you are going to do should already have been made. This way, you and your horse will both be prepared and will feel confident.

## THE FINAL RIDE

Know your horse. If you have a lazy horse, you may want to take a light trail ride the day before the competition, something to loosen up your horse without tiring him out. If you have a more "forward" horse, you may want to take a longer ride and work off some of that energy. In my experience, it is never a good idea to drill your horse the day before a show. You might ride through your program once, but the day before the show is not the day to train or fix any problems. The horse you have the day before the show is the horse you will be showing, so your best bet is to keep him limber, happy, and feeling positive about being ridden.

## KEEPING UP APPEARANCES

When I talk to riders who are considering competing for the first time, one of their first questions is, "What should I wear?" It is easy to understand the confusion. Unlike most competitive equestrian disciplines, the dress code is a little vague for our sport.

On the USIHC website, the section on "Dress Code" reads as follows: "All provisions in FIPO Section 3.3 shall apply. The dress requirements in all FIPO classes at USIHC sanctioned shows shall be those required at international sport competitions. In the event of high heat or humidity, riders may opt to not wear a coat and tie. Regardless of the conditions, riders are encouraged to dress professionally. The dress requirements in all non-FIPO classes shall be those allowed in Pace Race and Pace Tests."

A link takes you to the FIPO rules, but the dress code there is still vague: "Riders should wear a riding jacket, riding

breeches or jodhpurs, and riding boots or jodhpur boots. In pace race and pace test a riding jacket can be replaced by another appropriate garment. Each national team must be uniformly dressed when riding in the competitions or parades.”

While these rules are in place, I have noticed they are not always followed. They also don't offer much guidance as to what kind of jacket to wear (there are many different styles), or how riders should wear their hair, or other fine points of appearance you might be wondering about. Plus, these rules only apply to sanctioned competitions. Your first show is likely to be a schooling show, for which the USIHC website says you should dress as you would for a FIPO pace test—but wait! FIPO doesn't tell you how to dress for a pace test, other than to say that your jacket may be “replaced with another appropriate garment.” Confusion is perfectly understandable, which is why I have made this guide.

## WHAT TO WEAR

Here are some basic tips: The focus should be on your horse, not you. No bright colors or sparkles, unless it's a costume class. You want to look professional: Dark jodhpurs or white breeches, a black or dark-colored show jacket when appropriate, and a light-colored, collared shirt are good competition staples.

If it's a sanctioned show, consider purchasing a full riding habit: a collared shirt, tie, and competition jacket, worn over either breeches with tall boots or flared Icelandic jodhpurs with paddock boots. The combination is important: You must have tall boots with breeches and short boots with flared jodhpurs. There's no rule about what colors to wear, but many riders will have white breeches and a black jacket; Icelandic jodhpurs are usually black, since it's hard to find white ones. The FIPO rules require this outfit for all classes (not just the Open or professional classes), although the USIHC waives the jacket-and-tie rule in cases of extreme heat or humidity. However, if you are at a sanctioned show, you should expect to wear the full habit. It would be very unlikely to see someone in Europe or Iceland competing at a sanctioned competition in anything other than a jacket and tie. In the United States at this time, you would probably get away with dressing more casually, but it shows



Jessica splits Thor's mane before a show to give him a smoother topline. Photo by Emily Goldstein.

respect for yourself, your horse, and the competition when you arrive dressed in a clean and simple riding habit like the one I have described. There is no shame in being the most professionally dressed rider at the show!

Happily, you don't have to break the bank to look clean and professional. White breeches and competition jackets are available in all price ranges, and you may be able to find used jackets. A dressage-style jacket will look best, although if you already have a hunt-seat style jacket that's fine. Dressage jackets will cover your belly, because they are designed for sitting upright in the saddle, not for crouching over jumps. This looks nicer when riding Icelandic horses. The most expensive part of the outfit is the tall boots, but these are also available in various price ranges and might be purchased used.

Your clothes should fit well: not baggy, not too tight. Your outfit reflects how seriously you are taking the competition, so tuck in your shirt! No one is going to penalize you if your shirt isn't tucked in, but it looks very unprofessional to have

your shirttails flapping about as you ride down the track. No tank tops or baggy T-shirts. Even at a schooling show, tank tops and baggy T-shirts look unprofessional. It does get hot in the summer, but choose a polo shirt or fitted top instead.

No stained or dirty breeches. Accidents happen, but try to avoid obvious stains, as they distract from the horse and make you look sloppy. I throw on PJ pants over my breeches the morning of the show, while I spot-clean my horse and tack up.

Shine your boots. Whether you're riding in paddock boots or tall boots, keep them clean and polish them up a bit. Even at a schooling show, it's nice to look professional.

If you have long hair, feel free to wear it down. This is one way in which Icelandic competition is very different from most other horse sports. In Iceland, it is very common to see women riders with their hair flying behind them, and it can be a very dramatic and beautiful look. Of course, no one will penalize you for tying back your hair if that makes you feel more comfortable.

## PRE-SHOW GROOMING

Icelandic horse competitions are judged primarily on the horse's way of going, so it is important for your horse to look his best. Here are some do's and don'ts:

Do bathe your horse, if the weather permits. A clean, shining horse shows respect for the judge and demonstrates that you are taking the competition seriously. You should definitely bathe a white, pinto, or other light-colored horse, and I would encourage you to bathe your dark-colored horse. Think about it this way: There's no shame in having the best-groomed horse at the show!

Don't trim your horse's ears, fetlocks, whiskers, or beard. We like these long hairs! Don't give your horse a “bridle path” (shaving the part of the mane behind the ears, where the bridle sits) for the same reason.

Do wash, condition, and comb out your horse's mane and tail. But don't braid either the mane or the tail. We like to see a free-flowing, beautiful mane and tail.

Do consider “splitting” your horse's mane—parting it down the middle and banding it on the side that it doesn't fall naturally. This helps with the horse's overall balance and gives the horse a cleaner

and more beautiful-looking topline (see Issue 4 2011 of the *Quarterly* for an article on this subject). Elastic bands must be removed prior to judging at a breeding evaluation, but in sport competitions (schooling shows or sanctioned shows), you can leave the bands in.

## YOUR TACK

Clean your tack. There is absolutely no reason to show up with a dirty saddle or bridle. Wash your bits and saddle pads, clean your leather, polish up your brass buckles. Any boots your horse will be wearing should be as white as possible. Some people even spray paint their horse's boots, to get them really white. No, you won't be judged on how clean your tack is, but it shows a basic dedication to the sport.

You might see some "bling," or sparkly rhinestones or crystals, on browbands and nosebands. This is the only area in which flashiness is really acceptable, and many riders like to have a bit of fun with it! It's certainly not required, and not everyone agrees that it's a good look (I think it looks fantastic!), but if you like it, feel free to show your horse in a blinged-out bridle.

About those horse boots... Many people use heel-boots in Icelandic horse competitions. These have two purposes: to protect a horse from hitting himself in the faster gaits and also to enhance his natural movement. These boots will not create lift in a horse that does not already have lift. They aren't heavy at all: Weighted shoes are not allowed, and the heaviest boots you are allowed in sport competition are 240 grams—less than half a pound each. If you don't want to use heel-boots, that's perfectly fine! They are absolutely not required, and some horses don't go well in them. It is nice, however, to have something white on your horse's hooves. You might choose white bell boots, which do not weigh much but will still protect your horse from hitting himself in the faster gaits, or you might choose to put white tape on your horse's hooves, which doesn't weigh anything, and doesn't protect your horse from hitting himself, but still draws attention to the hooves. Or, you might choose to not put anything on your horse's hooves at all. This is also fine.

Make sure all your tack is in compliance with FIPO and USIHC regulations.



Another properly dressed horse and rider at a sanctioned show. Here, Sigrún Brynjarsdóttir rides Parker frá Solheimum wearing black Icelandic jodhpurs and paddock boots. Photo by Nancy Marie Brown.

The last thing you want is to show up at a competition only to be disqualified because your whip is too long or you've used an illegal bit/noseband combination. Do your homework ahead of time, so you won't have any surprises the day of the show!

## LEAVE NOTHING TO CHANCE

Ignorance is not your friend when preparing for a horse show. Find out what the grounds will be like ahead of time. Find out what accommodations, if any, will be provided, and what you will have to pay for. Will there be water for the horses there, or will you have to bring your own? If you're stabling at the show grounds over night, figure out what you will need in terms of bedding and hay. A good rule of thumb is just to bring everything: Buckets, hay, grain, water, grooming tools, a first aid kit, anything your horse might need. Be as prepared as possible, and clean and organize everything the night before.

I have a special "horseshow box," a large plastic tub that I pack for each competition with everything that my horse and I might possibly need. Most impor-

tantly, label everything. Our equipment all looks the same, and things can get mixed up or lost if they don't have your name on them. I keep masking tape and a Sharpie in my horseshow box just in case.

Try your best to remember everything, but if you've forgotten something, don't panic! We've all been there. If you've forgotten your whip, someone will lend you one if you ask. Preparation is key when it comes to having a stress-free competition experience, but everyone makes mistakes, and the Icelandic horse community is a friendly and forgiving place. Good luck, and happy showing!

# PONYING ICELANDIC HORSES

BY ALYS CULHANE

Hrimfara's May 2012 birth meant that Pete and I were the owners of five, count 'em five, Icelandic horses. The question I then had to consider was, How am I going to exercise them all? I wouldn't have the time to take out all the horses individually, that is, if I wanted to continue to make sure that all, including Hrimmi, got a daily outing.

I considered using an ATV to pony my herd, but couldn't afford one. I considered using a bicycle to do the same, but conceded that this was far too dangerous. And I considered purchasing new running shoes and taking two horses out at a time, but knew that I couldn't run fast for upwards of two hours a day.

My one remaining option was to ride one horse and lead another. I initially dismissed this idea. My confidence level as a rider had grown exponentially over the past five years; however, I couldn't envision myself flying over hill and dale with two galloping steeds. But my belief that otherwise the horses would languish away in their enclosure finally prompted me to give ponying a go.

I wasn't a complete stranger to this practice. Pete and I had, on part one of our Toltling the Divide trip (see the article in Issue 4 2011 of the *Quarterly*), respectively ridden Siggí and Raudi and ponied Signy, who in all respects was an ideal pack mare. However, I had not ridden her and ponied the other two. I presumed that this might be more difficult, in part because this would, for all, involve using differing cognitive functions. In other words, Signy would have to take charge and other two would have to comply.

## AN UTTER BUST

I began what eventually became routine—taking two horses out at a time—by first riding Siggí and ponying Signy. The two former trail buddies needed no additional training. The always obedient and somewhat intuitive Signy kept her head by my waist, stopped, and turned left and right when asked. She also stood quietly



Teaching your horse to pony--or to be ponied--takes patience, but it's a great way to make sure each horse is exercised every day. Photo by Pete Praetorius.

when I inadvertently dropped the lead rope. The same held true when I rode Tinni or Raudi and ponied Signy.

There finally came a day when I opted to ride Signy and pony Raudi. There were two reasons for this. First, I believed Signy needed a change in routine. Secondly, I sensed that Signy's fast and consistent trot would benefit Raudi, who was then showing reluctance when asked to pick up the trot. Thus it was with high hopes that I put Raudi's bridle in place, put the lead rope through the left ring on her bridle, slipped it under her chin, and clipped it to the other side.

Our first session was ... dare I say it? Okay, it was an utter bust. Signy sidled away from me when I climbed up on the mounting block, and Raudi began to

tango. I was settling into my seat when Raudi leaped ahead of Signy and turned right, causing me to drop the lead line. I cursed, got off Signy, retrieved both horses, and began anew. The above scene repeated itself more times than I'd like to admit. I finally put Raudi away and went for a solo ride on Signy.

## KINDERGARTEN

I knew that Raudi, in a matter of speaking, needed to go back to kindergarten. So I began daily groundwork exercises in which we reviewed walk on, back, turn on the forehand and haunches, (left and right), and whoa. I also worked with both horses on standing quietly by the mounting block, Signy to the right of Raudi, with Raudi's lead line draped over Signy's back.

My ground training review took approximately two weeks. Then, rather than hop back on Raudi, I had Pete accompany me on several walks, with me riding Signy and ponying Raudi. Pete, holding a dressage whip, would step in front of Raudi when it appeared as though she were going to barge ahead. After six-or-so mile-long daily sessions, I presumed that Signy, Raudi, and I were ready for prime time. I presumed wrong. We were less than five minutes into our ride when Raudi again surged ahead, this time turning right and cutting Signy off. Again I dropped the lead line. Signy and I then both watched as Raudi kicked up her heels and headed back home. Signy's thoughts of course mirrored mine—we were dealing with a fruitcake.

## A TARGET

A few days later, as I was digging through my tack bin in search of my favorite set of reins, my eyes fell upon a long-forgotten training tool: a white fishing buoy. I'd used it when I'd trained Raudi to target. Targeting is a training method associated with clicker training. It works like this: You show a horse a specific object. When the horse touches it, you click a handheld clicker. The click is a bridge signal that in short order tells the animal, Yes, you did the right thing. A reinforcer follows, such as a treat or wither scratch.

I'd previously trained Raudi to touch the target; then, when she understood the verbal command, used it in conjunction with other objects, some of which included ATVs, ice mounds, bicycles, tarps and tent flaps, overturned refrigerators, and spinning wheelbarrow wheels. I also taught her "leave it," which came in handy when we encountered a porcupine.

I made some important equipment changes before setting out again. I grabbed a pair of riding gloves with nubs on them and a shorter lead line (some people thread the reins through the bridle ring; this also can work quite well).

I saddled up Signy, tied the buoy to my saddle ring, and mounted up. Raudi responded to the words, "Raudi, touch," by giving the buoy a push with her nose. The clicker being too cumbersome to carry, I instead made a clicking sound with my tongue, then rewarded Raudi with a scratch on the withers. Off we then went. This time the thin, close-fitting gloves better enabled me to maintain my grip.

## KEEPING PACE

Over the next few weeks Raudi learned that there was a consequence to failing to keep pace with Signy: a tighter line. And keeping pace was no easy feat. Those who know Signy call her The Little Locomotive, and with good reason: When under saddle, she moves in a fast, efficient manner. Raudi, after figuring out that being ponied was as much, if not more fun, than being ridden, began keeping pace with Signy.

Raudi did spook one day when we found ourselves sandwiched between a mother moose and her calf, and another day when two snowmobilers popped over a six-foot roadside berm into our path.

I, who tend to tense up in what I consider to be moments of duress, initially dealt with this by using names and voice commands. For example, Raudi, upon hearing her name and the word "s-l-o-o-w," slowed down. And Signy, upon hearing the words, "Signy, up, up, up!" picked up her speed. When I felt more self-assured, I resumed using body commands. A slight tug on the line caused Raudi to slow down and a slight squeeze with the legs caused Signy to speed up.

## COMBINATIONS

I next decided to ride Signy and pony Siggie. This time I did the required groundwork first. Siggie objected to being the pony horse by hanging back and stopping. I again tied the buoy onto the saddle. Siggie then picked up the pace, every so often touching the object, for which he was reinforced. We were, I knew, on to something.

I continued to play around with various lead and pony combinations. Signy being ponied or ponying any of the others worked just fine. However, other combinations didn't work. Tinni, our older gelding, was okay with being the lead horse, but was flat-out opposed to being ponied by any horse other than Signy. I decided not to push the issue after realizing that I finally had enough workable variations.

And then there's Hrimmi, who from her third day on has enjoyed getting out and running alongside the lead and pony horses. I'm training her in an incremental manner, one that's befitting of a young horse. Like Raudi at that age, Hrimmi is learning the basics of targeting and clicker training. I'm also doing liberty

work with her and teaching her the whoa, stand, go around, and come commands. I am going to wait on ponying her until she's two or three, for then she'll be long-strided enough to keep up with her dam.

## COMPANIONS

I initially took to ponying our horses because I needed a fast and efficient means of exercise. I have found this to be true. But I've also discovered other benefits. Horses are social animals and like having the companionship of herd members while out on the road and trail. In addition, they tend to adhere to the adage of security in numbers. Should something be amiss, Raudi and Siggie seek assurance in Signy, who, by remaining calm, assures them that everything is okay.

## A PONYING CHECKLIST

BY NICKI ESDORN

Do you want to try ponying? Reading about Alys' experiences here will give you an idea what to expect and how much fun it can be. But before you start, here are some prerequisites:

- The riding horse: Must be a good working horse, a "steady eddy," who gets along with the horse to be ponied.
- The rider: Must be comfortable holding the reins in one hand and have good control over the riding horse in a relaxed way (signal riding) so you can focus on the ponied horse.
- The ponied horse: Must be solid when led on a loose rope from the ground, in straight lines, toward and away from the leader, halting, trotting, slowing down, speeding up, turning, and from both sides! It must be solid on voice commands and solid on respect.
- For the first lessons you must have: A helper, or helpers. Correct equipment, including gloves, a well-fitting halter, and a good lead rope. And, if you can, an enclosed space where it is okay to let go of the lead rope without danger.

If you can check off all the above, you're ready for ponying fun!



More horses means more fun! Here Alys ponies Hrimfara (the pinto) and her mother, Signy, while riding Raudi. Photo by Pete Praetorius.

Furthermore, ponying makes horses better balanced and sure-footed, particularly when dealing with trail-related obstacles. The final benefit is the most important: The ponying-related groundwork and saddle training has forged an even stronger connection between me and my horses, making me a more confident rider and horseperson.

Two final notes: First, I would not be doing what I'm doing now if we didn't own Signy. So for those of you who are considering ponying your horses, I'd suggest starting out using a steady eddy riding horse—one who will willingly pony or be ponied. I learned pretty much by trial and error and by reading information posted on a few websites. I also watched Benni Lindal's video on training the young horse. He offers several ponying-related pointers. Watching him pony two Icelandic horses at the same time is truly inspiring.

Second, what I lack is a riding arena. Having one on hand would have been most useful, particularly when teaching

Raudi to be the pony horse. If I could have first ponied Raudi in an enclosed space, she would have had fewer distractions and been more likely to stay by. As it turned out, the little bay mare easily rose to the challenge of assisting me in developing an exercise plan that's still serving owners and herdmates in good stead.



## REFERENCES

### Groundwork:

Linda Tellington Jones, *The Ultimate Horse Behavior and Training Book*

Peggy Cummings, *Connect with your Horse from the Ground Up*

### Clicker Training:

Karen Pryor, *Don't Shoot the Dog, Researching the Animal Mind, Lads Before the Wind*

Shawna Karresh, *You can Teach Your Horse to do Anything*

Alexandra Kurland, *Clicker Training your Horse*

### Ponying:

[www.horsekeeping.com](http://www.horsekeeping.com)

[www.equisearch.com](http://www.equisearch.com)

[www.forequestrians.com](http://www.forequestrians.com)

[www.westernhorseman.com](http://www.westernhorseman.com)

Benni Lindal, *Starting Horses (Video)*



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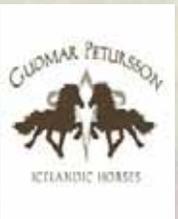
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Photo by: E.Everson

TOP REITER - FÁKUR - BACK ON TRACK - G-BOOTS - HRÍMNIR - ÁSTUND - FEATHER WEIGHT - BURLINGHAM - APPLE PICKER - 66NORTH - TOP REITER - FÁKUR - BACK ON TRACK - G-BOOTS - HRÍMNIR - ÁSTUND - FEATHER WEIGHT - BURLINGHAM - APPLE PICKER - 66NORTH - TOP REITER -



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