

Issue Three

THE

2019

# ICELANDIC HORSE

Q U A R T E R L Y



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



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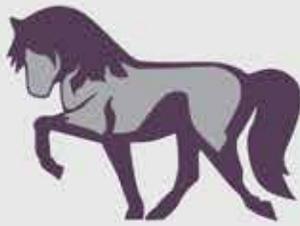
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# THE USIHC MISSION

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

*The U.S. Icelandic Horse Congress is a member of FEIF ([www.feif.org](http://www.feif.org)), the International Federation of Icelandic Horse Associations, representing the national Icelandic horse associations of 21 countries. FEIF governs competition activities and regulates the breeding and registration of Icelandic horses throughout the world outside of Iceland.*

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

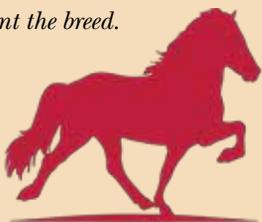


Photo by Ona Kwiatkowski

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

As the owner or rider of an Icelandic horse, you chose a very special breed with its own culture and history. It is important to learn about the breed's unique traits, capabilities, and needs, so that you and your Icelandic horse will have a happy relationship and it will live a healthy and long life. By joining the USIHC, you connect to a worldwide network of experts to help you care for, ride, train, breed, and learn more about your horse.

The USIHC is the umbrella organization of 16 affiliated clubs: 14 regional clubs and two activity clubs (for breeders and professional trainers). Our Registry links to WorldFengur, the worldwide database of all registered Icelandic horses (USIHC members have free access to WorldFengur), and we publish *The Icelandic Horse Quarterly*, maintaining an online archive of all issues since 2008.

The USIHC sponsors scientific research on the Icelandic horse, helps promote the Icelandic horse at expos and through social media, supports educational seminars and events like the American Youth Cup, organizes leisure activities like the Sea 2 Shining Sea virtual ride, creates teaching tools like the Riding Badge Program, and offers practical and monetary

support to organizers of shows and clinics.

The Icelandic horse has international competition rules: You can compete in the same classes and receive comparable scores in any FEIF member country. Likewise, the Icelandic horse is one of few breeds with international evaluation standards, so that breeding horses from all over the world are judged on the same 10 points of conformation and 10 ridden abilities. The USIHC sanctions sport and breeding shows that conform to FEIF rules.

The USIHC is responsible for the U.S. teams at the FEIF Icelandic Horse World Championships, the FEIF Youth Cup, and the FEIF Youth Camp. Through FEIF, the USIHC votes on rules and policies that affect the welfare of the Icelandic horse worldwide.

As a member of the USIHC, your dues and registration fees make all this possible. Our board members and committee chairs are all volunteers. As a member-driven organization, the USIHC grows stronger the more active and involved our members become. Please join us so that the USIHC can, as FEIF's mission states, "bring people together in their passion for the Icelandic horse."



# ICELANDIC HORSE

Q U A R T E R L Y

## THE ICELANDIC HORSE QUARTERLY

Issue Three 2019

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

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Deadlines are January 1 (for the March issue), April 1, July 1, and October 1. We reserve the right to edit submissions. All articles represent the opinions of their authors alone; publication in the *Quarterly* does not imply an endorsement of any kind by the USIHC. Ads are accepted with the understanding that the advertiser is authorized to publish their contents and agrees to indemnify the USIHC and the *Quarterly* against any loss or expense resulting from their publication. The USIHC reserves the right to reject any ad.

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**On the cover:** Leia Tilton and Skjóni from Maryland Horse Farm (US2009104974) joined the Klettafjalla Club for a ride in Utah's Moab Desert. "How to sum up a dream-like weekend, tölting through winding riverbeds with your adventurous Icelandic, great friends, and breathtaking scenery? You can't!" Photo by Lee Ann Ott.

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# USIHC NEWS

## CONSTITUTION CHANGES

The purpose of the USIHC General Meeting on May 3 was to call members together to discuss and vote on two proposed amendments to the USIHC Constitution. Through the years it has become apparent that the “old” way of amending our Constitution and voting on our membership fees did not result in all of our members being able to cast a vote. The typical USIHC General Meeting (the Annual Meeting) has had on average 20 to 30 members attending. This system certainly did not allow the majority of our membership to have a voice in the voting process.

For our annual Board of Directors elections, the USIHC has in the past few years had success with a voting method that uses an electronic email ballot system. By changing to an electronic mail voting process for amendments to Articles of our Constitution, all eligible voting members would have the same opportunity to vote.

How could the USIHC update the voting method for revising Constitutional Articles and allow all eligible members to vote? We had to use the old method, following the rules set down in our current Constitution, in order to introduce and vote on an amendment to the relevant Articles. The members present at the General Meeting on May 3 read and discussed the proposed amendments to the Articles of our Constitution. They voted 23 YES votes and 0 NO votes to accept the changes to the Constitution, as shown below. Thank



Carrie Brandt on Ásapór from Krakua leads the demo team, as the Flugnir Club wows the crowd at the Minnesota Horse Expo. Photo by Susy Oliver.

you to the members who attended the May 3rd General Meeting. You have now made it possible for all eligible members to have a voice in the USIHC voting process.

The updated Constitutional Articles as posted on the USIHC website are:

### Article XI—Amendments

The Constitution may be amended by the affirmative electronic mail vote of two-thirds of the members voting on the amendment. Notice of all proposed amendments shall be in the possession of the Secretary at least thirty (30) days in advance of a called electronic mail vote. The voting period of an electronic mail vote shall be 30 days.



Everyone on this trail ride wore a safety vest. Is it a result of the article in the last *Quarterly* or just a happy trend? Right to left, Christine Vowles, R.J. West, Judy Skogen, and the article's author, Lisa McKeen. Photo by Judy Pratt.

### Article XII—Membership Fees

Membership fees shall be established by the Board of Directors and approved by consent of a simple majority of eligible members participating in an electronic mail vote. The voting period of an electronic mail vote shall be 30 days.

## ANNUAL MEETING

The Northwest Icelandic Horse Club will host the USIHC Annual Meeting in Portland, OR on Sunday, January 19, 2020. The venue will be the Radisson Hotel Portland Airport, with a room rate of \$113/night for one king or two queen beds, including breakfast. For more information, watch the USIHC website and Facebook page.

## JUDGING SEMINAR

The USIHC Sport Judging Seminar, to be held in Woodstock, VT on September 12-15, is “a comprehensive guide to the sport of Icelandic horses.” It includes theoretical lectures, practical live judging (of a schooling show), video judging, discussion of judging ethics and etiquette, and a test of knowledge of the rules. The seminar offers the opportunity to become a USIHC-certified sport judge.

The instructor, Þorgeir Guðlaugsson, is a highly qualified FEIF international Sport Judge who has judged more World Championships than any other judge. Þorgeir is an enthusiastic and caring instructor. He is extraordinarily ambitious and has a great range of professional knowledge. His enthusiasm about the subject makes him easy to listen to and enables participants of all levels to acquire or improve their knowledge. The seminar is open to everyone interested in Icelandic horses and their special gaits. Pleasure riders or non-riders who want to learn more about the different gaits, to recognize beat or balance problems, and gather ideas on how to solve those problems are equally welcome as competition riders, who are interested in the assessment of gaits and how to judge horse shows. For more information, contact Leslie Chambers at [lchambers17@comcast.net](mailto:lchambers17@comcast.net).

## VIRTUAL RIDE

In June, the USIHC Leisure Committee

changed some of the rules of its Sea 2 Shining Sea Ride. The current virtual ride, following the Pony Express and Butterfield Overland Mail routes, will continue until December 31, 2019. (See Issue Three 2018 of the *Quarterly* for details on the route.)

"Extending the ride will allow more participants to complete the mileage," explains committee chair Janet Mulder.

The committee also reduced the number of patches, and will now award entry and finisher patches only. Finisher patches will be presented to all finishers after completion of the ride, sometime in January 2020. Teams were also permitted to change members during the week of July 1-8. If you have any questions, please direct them to Janet at [S2SS@icelandics.org](mailto:S2SS@icelandics.org).

### AMERICAN YOUTH CUP

The Third North American Youth Cup, which includes a week-long horse camp for riders aged 12-17 and a USIHC-sanctioned show, was held July 14-21 at Red Feather Icelandics in Trout Lake, WA. Participants enjoyed a week of riding, with lessons from top trainers and team-driven competition, and made lifelong friendships and memories.

The USIHC Youth Fund supported the event at the rate of \$100 per qualified participant (not to exceed \$2,000). Qualified participants, for purposes of this funding, are U.S. citizens and USIHC members at the time of application through the end of the event. For more information, contact Caeli Cavanagh at [caeli.cavanagh@gmail.com](mailto:caeli.cavanagh@gmail.com).

### KNAPI KIDS

The USIHC Youth Committee is working on Knapi Kids, a new standardized informal curriculum for young riders. Kristina Behringer, the new Youth Committee chair, is leading the effort. Contact her at [youth@icelandics.org](mailto:youth@icelandics.org).

### COMPETITION

The 2019 show season is in full swing, with ten USIHC-sanctioned shows having taken place and eight more scheduled for fall. Show results are posted online at <https://www.icelandics.org/showresults/>.

Spring and summer saw the Sæstaðir

Spring Classic (March 23-24) at Coast Road Stables in Santa Cruz, CA; the CIA Open Spring Sanctioned Show (May 4-5) at Flying C Ranch in Santa Ynez, CA; the Locust Hill Gamankeppni (May 11-12) at Taktur Icelandics in Prospect, KY; the Léttleiki Icelandics Sanctioned Show (May 25-26) in Shelbyville, KY; the Flugnirgæðinga (June 8-9) at Tolthaven Icelandics in Pelican Rapids, MN; the NEIHC Open (June 22-23) at Thor Icelandics in Hudson, NY; the NWIHC Sanctioned Show (June 29-30) at Red Feather Icelandics in Trout Lake, WA; the North American Youth Cup (July 20-21) also at Red Feather Icelandics; the Solheimar Summer Sanctioned Show (July 20-21) at Solheimar Icelandics in Tunbridge, VT; and the Flugnirkeppni Show (August 24-25) at Tolthaven Icelandics in Pelican Rapids, MN.

These shows are planned for the fall: the AIHA Sanctioned Show (September 14-15) at Arctic Arrow Farm in Wasilla, AK; the Toppur Sanctioned Show (September 14-15) at Harmony Icelandics in Peru, IA; the Solheimar Fall Sanctioned Show (September 21-22) at Solheimar Icelandics in Tunbridge, VT; the KYIHS Triple World Ranking Show (October 4-6), including three separate World Ranking Events, at Léttleiki Icelandics in Shelbyville, KY; the CIA Open Fall Sanctioned Show (October 12-13), at Flying C Ranch in Santa Ynez, CA; and the Frida Icelandic Show (October 26-27) at Montaire in Middleburg, VA.

For more information on these shows and additional fun shows or schooling shows, see the USIHC events calendar online at [www.icelandics.org](http://www.icelandics.org).

### WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP TEAM

Selection of the US team for the Icelandic Horse World Championships was completed by video tryout in May. Six riders tried out. Congratulations to Coralie Denmeade, Isabella Gneist, and Jennifer Melville, who qualified for the US team. The USIHC Sport Leader, Ásta Covert, made the formal team selection based solely on the scores given by FEIF judge Ása William, who was hired by the USIHC to evaluate the videos. The championships were held in Berlin, Germany from August 4-14, while this issue was at press.



Joy Erickson and Sólbjört from Nordurstjarna won a medal at the Flugnirgæðinga Sanctioned Show. Photo by Susy Oliver.

### CLINIC & SCHOOLING SHOW SUPPORT

USIHC Policy #31 has budgeted \$3500 for 2019 to support clinics or schooling shows held by USIHC regional clubs. Funds are distributed up to \$250 per club. So far, five clubs have taken advantage of this program. The Glitfæxa Club held a Tölt Clinic with Laura Benson, the NEIHC held a Show Prep clinic with Carrie Brandt and Terral Hill, the NWIHC held a schooling show, the Saint Skutla IHC held a clinic with Carrie Brandt, and the Toppur IHC held a clinic with Caeli Cavanagh.

### EDUCATION

In May, USIHC Education Committee co-chairs Will Covert and Kari Pietsch-Wangard reported on their Skype meeting with representatives of FEIF and the English-speaking FEIF countries regarding the development of an educational program for instructor certification. FEIF would like to see the instructor examination standardized across the participating English-speaking countries. The goal would be that the instructor examination would also be recognized by each country. The countries will start the process by sharing their current educational materials. The discussion continued at the June

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"I'm tired and sunburned, but my heart is full," said Em Potts (second from right) as she thanked the Track Team of 13 that helped make the NEIHC Open a success.

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meeting of the FEIF Education Committee.

Meanwhile, the USIHC committee is concentrating on its Trainers Certification program. Carrie Brandt and Caeli Cavanaugh are developing a new framework, called the Trainers Certification Creation Structure.

### BREEDING EVALUATIONS

Two USIHC-sanctioned breeding horse evaluations are scheduled for September. The first, including a young horse evaluation, will be held September 1-2 at the Cobleskill Fairgrounds in Cobleskill, NY. For more information, contact Sigrún Brynjarsdóttir at [Sigrunbry@gmail.com](mailto:Sigrunbry@gmail.com).

The second will be held at Harmony Icelandics in Peru, IA on September 12-13. It will also include a young horse evaluation. For information, contact Virginia Lauridsen at [Virginia@HarmonyIcelandics.com](mailto:Virginia@HarmonyIcelandics.com).

### BOARD MEETINGS

The USIHC board of directors met by conference call on April 16, May 14, and June 11. Complete minutes, including the monthly Treasurer's and Secretary's reports, can be found online at [www.icelandics.org/bod/minutes](http://www.icelandics.org/bod/minutes). USIHC members are encouraged to listen in on the board meetings. The agenda and information on how to call in are posted on the USIHC website the weekend before.

### CORRECTION

The Flugnirgæðinga show, held June 8-9 at Tolthaven Icelandics in Pelican Rapids, MN, was not, as we said in the last issue, a gæðingakeppni (following special Icelandic rules), but a standard USIHC-sanctioned show. Its sanctioning was approved after we went to press.



### SEA 2 SHINING SEA

This virtual trail ride is organized by the USIHC Leisure Riding Committee. The current ride, following the Pony Express and Butterfield Overland Mail routes, has been extended to the end of December 2019. You can join by emailing [leisure@icelandics.org](mailto:leisure@icelandics.org). Check the USIHC website for the rules.

S2SS has an active Facebook page, where participants share photos and stories of their experiences riding Icelandic horses in the U.S. Each month a rider is chosen as Rider of the Month.

The April Rider, Chris Feldner, lives in Yoder, CO with eight Icelandic horses: Perla from Windsong, Arða frá Hófi, Álfadís from Locust Hill, Rán from Lough Arrow, Leiðsögn frá Fossi, Andi from Aslan's Country, Hvatur from Windy Acres, and Glódís from Windy Acres.

His goal is to ride "as many different trails in Colorado as possible"; he's also set his sights on the John Wayne trail in Washington. "I enjoy being with my horse and overcoming different challenges and obstacles together," he notes. In addition to trail riding, he takes his Icelandics horse camping and archery hunting for elk.

The May Rider is Rachel Miller of Peshastin, WA. Her two Icelandic horses, Adam from Extreme Farms and Skeifa from Iiffs, "are yin and yang, personality wise," she says.

Rachel has met Chris's goal of riding the John Wayne trail from Easton, WA, to Tekoa, on the Idaho border. She finished

the 18-day, 230-mile endurance ride two years ago on Skeifa and planned to ride it in 2019 with Adam. "On Day One, he reminded me that he has a mystery past. We had been working through things," she says, "but he mentally checked out and left me. This is where I say I'm a believer in Point Two air vests and helmets. I bounced up from my fall and watched the chaos. It was rainy, and there were many people in cowboy hats and trench coats. Since he had been standing quietly, I failed to realize he was in a nightmare. The first day is hard even for the most seasoned horses—so much energy and excitement in the air! Eventually Adam was caught, but though I could ride on, his mouth was torn from stepping on the reins." (It has since healed.)

Rachel took Adam home and returned with Skeifa. "Most people walk the trail; Skeifa and I kept pace with a blue wagon pulled by two Tennessee Walking horses. This allowed us to get into camp before the heat of the day or, in many cases, before the rainstorm hit. Other than Day One, most of the ride was perfect. It's not always about the trail with this ride, but the community of us that travel together."

The day after arriving in Tekoa, when most people headed for home, Rachel rode instead to the Idaho border. "The trail ahead promises more unique scenery and adventures. Someday I will ride past this point, as far as I can go."



## WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS

The 2019 World Championships were held in Berlin from August 4 to 11, while this issue of the *Quarterly* was at press. Coralie Denmeade, Isabella Gneist, and Jennifer Melville qualified to represent the U.S. To find out more and to see results, please go to [www.feif.org](http://www.feif.org).

## RELAY RIDE TO BERLIN

On June 15 the 2019 Relay Ride started in Oirschot, Netherlands with the goal to reach Berlin before the start of the World Championships. The idea for the Relay Ride was born in the 1980s, when some of the riders rode on their Icelandic horses from the previous venue to the new one. In the baton that accompanies the riders, there is not only a greeting message for international understanding, but also a message from the old to the future host of the World Championships.

The relay baton was handed over by four Icelandic horse riders from the Netherlands to the riders of the German IPZV on June 28 at the border near Straelen. From there the riders were on their way to Reken and then Warendorf; further stages lead through the Münsterland, and through Saxony-Anhalt to Brandenburg. The final stage through Berlin, with about 100 participants, leads from the Brandenburg Gate to the World Championship grounds in Karlshorst.

For leisure riders, the Relay Ride compares to the World Championships



for sport riders and breeding enthusiasts—a lot of training and planning, as well as a lot of organization, is necessary for both!

## BACK TO BERLIN, VIRTUALLY

This year's FEIF Virtual Ride entered its final phase in July, when with a few weeks still to go many riders had already "arrived": Over the last 12 months, by hacking out, they have ridden the total distance from their home to Berlin. Those of us who live too far from Berlin to go it alone, came together in teams, and thus increased our ridden mileage. Friends from the US, NZ and AU all banded together and easily rode the distance from Berlin to New Zealand—and back again. So far about 60 riders have covered 35,000 km. To learn more about the FEIF virtual ride, visit [www.feif.org/relay](http://www.feif.org/relay). The next one, to the Icelandic National Horse Show, Landsmót, in Hella, will start on August 12. For that ride, we will also be introducing some extra challenges.

## FEIF YOUTH CAMP

The FEIF Youth Camp was held this year at Hestheimar, literally "World of Horses," within view of Hekla and Eyjafjallajökull volcanoes. Thirty-one young people, ages 14-17, from 11 member countries traveled to the south of Iceland on July 7 for a week of horse-related fun, including sight-seeing trips and farm visits, and to get to know each other across national, cultural,



and language borders. Some of them had been fundraising for this trip for months on end. The FEIF Youth Camp is held in alternate years. For information on future camps, contact [youth@icelandics.org](mailto:youth@icelandics.org) and check out their Facebook and Instagram pages.

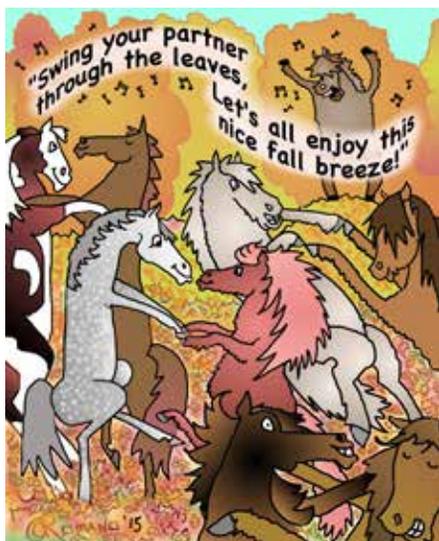
## LEISURE RIDING AND FEIF

The Icelandic horse is ideal for leisure riding, thanks to its physical and mental characteristics and the culture of the Icelandic horse world. To FEIF's leaders, securing a continued interest in leisure riding among a broad base of riders is of paramount importance for the future of both breeding and competing at professional level.

At the FEIF conference in Malmö 2012, Sigurbjörn Bárðarson expressed this point precisely. Professional horse people, he said, should be careful not to make riding too complicated. The fact that riding is a source of joy and fun should be remembered and respected.

In the future work of the FEIF Leisure Committee, the harmonious companionship between horse and rider should be stressed. More emphasis should be put on the benefits of riding for riders, including for people with special needs. We should stress that riding is joyful for all genders, races, ages, and abilities—but also, that good and harmonious riding is essential.

All humans enjoy being accepted as



members of a community, feeling liked and being appreciated or honored for their contributions. The Icelandic horse community offers all of this. The flower drawing on this page illustrates the areas we believe are attractive to riders:

**Me & My Horse:** This is the center of it all, the joyful hours of freedom with your horse. The happiness of developing together with your horse. The little breaks during the week, where you can focus on your horse and yourself. The FEIF Riding Horse Profile comes into the picture here: to help riders, from the very beginning, to get the horse most suitable for their skills.

**Meet & Compete:** Participation in any kind of competition, from T8 Sport classes, to TREC, Tölt in Harmony, Hestadagar ("Horse Days"), etc.

**Meet & Learn:** Any educational activity for horses and riders, ranging from horse yoga to riding clinics and ordinary lessons. It may also include TREC or similar competitions for beginners.

**Meet & Achieve:** Sharing information, experiences, and solving difficulties; securing access to Nature; legislative achievements securing rider's rights; safety issues; etc.

**Meet & Tölt:** Meeting for a joyful group ride, whether it is long distance riding, Relay Rides, shorter tours, virtual rides, etc.

**Meet & Contribute:** The joy of being part of something big; for example, assist-



ing as a volunteer at the World Championships or just being a spectator, having paid for the ticket! Any contribution belongs here.

The illustration on this page will be the future working plan for the FEIF Leisure Committee. One or several areas can be selected for a year or more, and the whole illustration will be worked through over the years in a systematic way. The member countries of FEIF already offer all of these programs, but they need to be shared in a structured way and made available to a broader range of riders or fans of the Icelandic horse.

What has the FEIF Leisure Committee done so far? Over recent years, more and more member countries of FEIF have begun to focus on leisure riding. Surveys conducted within FEIF reveal that, outside Iceland (more than 3000 respondents on a survey), the majority of Icelandic horse riders are female and that almost all riders enjoy riding in Nature, either alone or in groups. The surveys also reveal that the character of the Icelandic horse is conceived as being of utmost importance: A controllable and cooperative spirit, as well as one that is safe when interacting with children, mountain bikers, hikers, and traffic in general, are very important factors when choosing the right horse.

In 2017 the FEIF Leisure Committee launched the Riding Horse Profile, which is a description of the character of any



horse on any given day. The Horse Profile was developed on the basis of material from a large group of member countries, together with educational institutions in Iceland. The FEIF Breeding Committee, the FEIF Education Committee, and the FEIF trainers were also involved.

At the same time, member countries have increased their focus on securing access to riding in Nature. It is clear that active work is required to continuously preserve and protect riders' access to Nature. The opportunity to enjoy wildlife, changing landscapes, and the turn of the seasons from horseback is not a given. However, these opportunities are of paramount importance, for they attract interest in riding. Rules and regulations are extremely different from country to country. The information collected by FEIF is meant to serve as inspiration for countries and individuals on how things may be done. Each country is encouraged to place information relevant to leisure riders on the FEIF website, under Leisure Riding.



# CLUB UPDATES

There are two Activity Clubs and 14 Regional Clubs affiliated with the U.S. Icelandic Horse Congress. To find the Regional Club nearest you, see the USIHC website at [www.icelandics.org](http://www.icelandics.org). Contact information for the Activity Clubs can also be found there. The following clubs filed updates on their activities this quarter.

## ALASKA

By Jane Wehrheim

Our spring started off slow and then, just like the flip of a switch, we're full on into summer. Which means, busy, busy, busy for all. The Alaska Icelandic Horse Club (AIHA) has members statewide that do a variety of activities with their horses, and it's always fun to see their diversity of interests. Clinics, dressage, driving, competitions, mounted archery, and trail riding, both competitive and pleasure, are just a sampling of what our group does during the long days of summer.

Our summer riding season began over the Memorial Day weekend with a three-day Tölt in Harmony clinic. Trausti Guðmundsson lectured and gave riding instruction to a full clinic of ten riders. The following weekend, we held a young horse education day. Eight horses, ranging in age from three weeks to three years, were observed for gait distribution, conformation, and spirit. All were domestic breedings, and all but one were born in Alaska. It is so much fun to see all these young foals around!

As I write this, Mat Su Mounted Archers and AIHA member Frank Sihler



Alaska Icelandic Horse Club member Frank Sihler on Katla at a Mounted Archery event.

are hosting a three-day competition, with eight Icelandics competing—the most Icelandic horses at an archery event in the world! Icelandics do well in this sport and have been attracting positive attention to the breed for their versatility. For more information, and to see pictures and videos, go to the Mat-Su Mounted Archers Page on Facebook.

In mid-July, there will be a three-day Steinar Sigurbjörnsson clinic. Steinar is popular with our riders and auditors, and the clinic is expected to be full with 12 riders. Our youth group, Tölt Alaska, will have a camp in July, and we have three young riders attending the North American Youth Cup.

August will bring a schooling show in preparation for our AIHA Sanctioned Show, with judge Peter Jökull Hákonarson returning for the third year. See [alaska.icelandics.org](http://alaska.icelandics.org) for information on this and other events.



Lucy Nold showing Stáli from Fitjamyri at the CIA Spring Open. Photo by Heidi Benson.

## CIA

By Ásta Covert

The California Icelandic Association held their CIA Open Spring Sanctioned Show on May 4-5 at Flying C Ranch in Santa Ynez, CA. The judge was Valdimar Auðunsson, and 35 horse-and-rider combinations competed.

Among the highlights of the show, Ayla Green on Mári frá Kolgerði (with a score of 6.64) beat her mother, Heidi Benson, on Strokur frá Syðri-Gegnishólum (5.93) in the Five Gait finals—although Heidi returned to beat Ayla in the P2 100-meter Pace Race, with



Ásta Covert and Dynjandi frá Dalvík at the CIA Spring Open. Photo by Heidi Benson.

a time of 8.90 seconds. Ayla also had an excellent showing on Brynjar from Dalalif in both T2 Loose Rein Tölt (6.90) and V1 Four Gait, in which she tied with Lucy Nold on Vindur from Dalalif, both scoring 6.60. Eden Hendricks and Sylgja frá Ketilsstöðum turned in a beautiful performance in T6 Tölt, earning a score of 6.50. Laura Benson won the V2 Four gait on Geysir frá Kvistum (6.80), while Ásta Covert won the V6 Pleasure Four Gait on Hrói frá Skardi (7.63) and the T1 Tölt on Dynjandi frá Dalvík (8.00).

The CIA Open Fall Sanctioned Show will be held October 12-13, again at Flying C Ranch in Santa Ynez, CA. For information, contact Ásta Covert at [acovert@mac.com](mailto:acovert@mac.com).

## FLUGNIR

By Jackie Alschuler

Tolthaven Icelandics in Pelican Rapids, MN hosted their first USIHC-sanctioned show for the Flugnir Club on June 8-9. Named "Flugnirgæðinga," the show offered a full slate of sanctioned classes, as well as a simple but quite technical obstacle course in the indoor arena (which was won by Terral Hill riding bareback!). For several participants, this was their first taste of showing their Icelandic horses. The classes were explained and patiently judged by Andre Böhme of Germany. Riders joined us from Iowa, Kentucky, Minnesota, North Dakota, and Wisconsin. For the most part the weather cooperated, but riders and show crew braved a rather wet and windy Sunday morning. The owners

of Tolthaven, the Oliver family, did an outstanding job of caring for the show crew all weekend, with tasty homemade meals by Cindy Oliver. A big thank you, also, to Deb Cook for expertly running the Ice Test software.

Tolthaven will host another USIHC-sanctioned show this year: The annual Flugnirkeppni will be held there on August 24-25, with judge Marlise Grimm of Germany.

Earlier this year, Flugnir again showcased the Icelandic horse at the annual Minnesota Horse Expo at the Minnesota State Fairgrounds. We were very fortunate that two professional Icelandic horse trainers and clinicians, Carrie Lyons-Brandt and Laura Benson, were featured at this



Ayla Green (left) on Brynjar from Dalalif and Lucy Nold on Vindur from Dalalif in perfect step at the CIA Spring Open. Photo by Will Covert.



Alicia Flanigan on Keli from Tolthaven and Stephanie Surbey on Ljómi from Nordurstjarna perform for the Flugnir Club at the Minnesota Horse Expo. Photo by Susy Oliver.



Terral Hill and Ari frá Blesastöðum 1A in the 100 meter Pace Race (P2) at the Flugnirgæðinga Sanctioned Show. Photo by Susy Oliver.

year's Expo. It was a groundbreaking year for our Icelandic horses, and well attended. With the help of Carrie and Laura, we showed the Icelandic horse at its very best in the parade of breeds and in drill team performances, demonstrations, and other equine learning sessions.

For more information on Flugnir activities, please visit our website at [www.flugnir.org](http://www.flugnir.org).

## FRIDA

*By Marilyn Tully*

The Frida Icelandic Riding Club (FIRC) held a Liberty Clinic June 1-2 at the Ardara indoor arena in Chester County, PA. Caeli Cavanagh was our clinician. Caeli is currently head trainer at Red Feather Icelandics in Trout Lake, WA and has performed with the Knights of Iceland as well as with Apassionata, a North American traveling horse performance group. If you've ever seen Caeli work her magic with horses, you'll know how much we looked forward to this clinic.

Caeli began with a demonstration and slide presentation. She then put us in pairs and had us pretend that one was the horse, and one the owner. She showed us how to communicate without using words, just cues. She then showed us how to teach our horses

to bow and twirl and sidestep. Most horses love to play. It's fun! Having them walking with us (not in front or behind) and seeing their response to a smile are just a few other expressions of liberty we experienced with our horses that weekend. When the clinic ended, all of the participants said they were looking forward to returning home to continue liberty training with their horses.

You may wonder how liberty work translates to riding. For one thing, your horse will enjoy being with you. For another, your horse will learn to really focus on you. Your gestures and motions will mean something, and you will begin to be more aware of how your every move says something to your horse. There will be more positive communication and partnership between horse and rider.

### **GLITFAXA**

*By Nicki Esdorn*

On June 2, Glitfaxes held a clinic with Laura Benson at the excellent Novato Horsemen's facility about 30 miles north of San Francisco. Eight riders, about half the membership of our very small club,



Caeli Cavanagh introduced the Frida Icelandic Riding Club to liberty training at a clinic in June. Here, Nancy Adler encourages Etna to bow.



Glitfaxes Club members love riding the trails in their very beautiful area, which extends from the hills of Sonoma to the plains of Davis and all the way to the Pacific Ocean. Here, Lisa Herbert and Nicki Esdorn enjoy the coast. Photo by Nicki Esdorn.



Laura Benson tries out a horse at the clinic she gave for the Glitfaxes Club. Photo by Nicki Esdorn.

attended, and several more auditors, among them even a guest from NEIHC, Martina Gates! Laura helped each rider individually and gave a lecture on tölt during lunch.

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## HESTAFOLK

By Lisa McKeen

What a busy spring and summer, with new horses, new foals, and new members. We have been getting out on the trails again, returning to our favorites—Sunset Farm Park and Berthusen—but also trying out some new trails, Twin Rivers Park and Thousand Puddles. When our horses are conditioned by changing terrain, they move better. Horses also like challenges for their brains. I'm not a treadmill exerciser and neither are my horses.

The Hestafolk 4-H club was able to have an entry in the Memorial Day Parade once again. This is our fifth year of taking our Viking horses to the parade.

Another spring highlight was a small group ride on the Peninsula. This area of Washington State is rich with developed trails, trees, and scenery. Our hosts, Dave



Above, Hestafolk member Mark Anderson teaching Freya to drive. Photo by Dianna Anderson.



At left, Hestafolk member Ashley Perigo, on *Elska* from Extreme Farms, ponies her daughter Serenity Perigo, on *Bjarki* from Extreme Farms, through the river. Photo by Lisa McKeen.

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Pratt and Judy Skogen, put up horsewomen and their horses, and we all had a blast. We can't wait to go back.

We are cooking up a camping trail ride with Freya Sturm and Ben Sizemore, to be held near Stevenson, WA, where the trails are spectacular. Some of us will be heading to the breed evaluations in Vernon, BC in September, and others will be working at the VikingFest out in Darrington, WA. We are taking Icelandics to the festival to introduce them to the crowds of Viking enthusiasts who may have never seen or touched a Viking horse.

We have a team working hard in the USIHC Sea 2 Shining Sea competition, but Alys Culhane and RJ West have blown us out of the water!

Enjoy your horses and horse friends this fall. Each is priceless!

## KLETTAFJALLA

By Kristina Stelter

Klettafjalla is continuing strong with our team, the Rocky Mountain High Tolters, in the lead for the Sea 2 Shining Sea ride! Come catch our full and luxurious tails—if you can! We have also had the honor of sponsoring the KIHC riders in the North American Youth Cup: Shout outs to Payton and Jilian!

We have had some wonderful club events this spring, including a club ride in Moab, UT and a meet-and-greet at the Pony Club, where about 40 people showed up to meet our wonderful Icelandics.

Klettafjalla has a fun-packed summer schedule: We'll have a clinic with Ulla Hudson at Windsong in Edgewood, NM on July 12. Our annual meeting, the KIHC 2019 Mountain Icelandic Rendezvous, will take place July 25-28 in Fairplay, CO, where we will have activities, a parade, and an exhibition promoting the breed. We'll have a clinic at Gyetorp, in Cheyenne, WY on August 10. And finally a clinic/schooling show at Tamangur, in Larkspur, CO with Guðmar Pétursson and Coralie Denmeade on September 19. See our website ([klettafjalla.com](http://klettafjalla.com)) for more information.



Klettafjalla members introduced 40 members of a local Pony Club to the Icelandic Horse.

## KRAFTUR

By Heidi Benson

Kraftur Club members have been busy competing this spring and summer. The California Icelandic Horse Association (CIA) held its annual spring show at Flying C Ranch in Santa Ynez, CA on May 4-5. There was good participation from both Kraftur members, as well as from members

of the Northwest Icelandic Horse Club (NWIHC), who came all the way from Oregon to ride. It was great to see some new horse and rider combinations showing for the first time from both clubs.

In an effort to try and help connect more Icelandic horse events on the west coast, eight Kraftur members then participated in the First Annual NWIHC show,



Kraftur members were busy showing this spring and summer: At left, Ayla Green and Brynjar from Dalalif in loose rein tölt at the NWIHC show; photo by Heidi Benson. At right, Laura Benson and Lygna frá Syðri-Gegnishólum in flying pace at the CIA Spring Open; photo by Ben Demeter.



Heidi Benson shows Strokkur frá Syðri-Gegnishólum in Five Gait (F1) at the NWIHC show at Red Feather Farm in Washington. Photo by Laura Benson.

held at Red Feather Icelandics in Trout Lake, WA on June 29-30. It was a long haul from our homes in California's San Francisco Bay Area, but it was a fun adventure and really great to try something new. The show was well attended and it was good to see old friends and to make new ones. Along with the NWIHC and Kraftur members, a group of riders from Canada also participated. All around, it was a fun and successful show held at a beautiful facility.

### NEIHC

*By Jess Haynsworth*

Happy solstice! The days are as long as our horses' manes, and our club's busiest season of the year is in full swing.

Summer kicked off with a "Firmakeppni" fun show on June 1 at Solheimar farm in Tunbridge, VT. Riders dressed up however they liked (glitter and costumes for some—even the first-prize stallion Parker frá Solheimum sported a rainbow unicorn horn!), while NEIHC board members Em Potts and

Leslie Chambers judged, based on the most memorable performance in each division. Riders were sponsored by local businesses (the "firms" in "Firmakeppni"), and in addition to trophies for the riders, the business that sponsored each winning rider also got a special trophy. The competition was fun and relaxed, a super start to show season.

The 7th Annual NEIHC Open Sanctioned Competition took place on June 22-23, with a pre-show clinic from June 19-21 with Taktur Icelandics, and a Dressage schooling show on June 21 as well, judged by Jana Meyer and Alex Pregitzer. Thor Icelandics in Claverack, NY hosted the show, and the judges were Þorgeir Guðlaugsson, Siggí Ævarsson, and Alex Pregitzer. Forty-four horse and rider combinations competed in the USIHC-sanctioned show, with 127 class entries total. The show continues to profit, thanks to our dedicated sponsors and volunteers, and to the success of our silent auction each year. Carrie Lyons Brandt and Mirra frá Kambi won the T1 trophy offered by Thor Icelandics in honor of Einar Oder. This was particularly fitting, as Mirra is the only offspring of Einar's breeding here in the US.

Several more exciting events filled out our summer. On July 8-12, Merrimack Valley Icelandics hosted a summer camp for kids in Boxford, MA. On July 12-14, Carrie Lyons Brandt taught a clinic at Thor Icelandics. On July 20-21, Solheimar Farm hosted a



Merrimack Valley Icelandic Horses, run by trainer Ebba Meehan, had a great showing at the NEIHC Open at Thor Icelandics in New York. From left, Anat Stemmer, Nancy Rohlf, Erika Tighe, Phebe Kiryk, Charity Simard, Annamaria Wallstrom, Alexis Mitchell, Jennifer Bergantino, Andrea Smith, Ebba Meehan, and Brynja Meehan. Photo by Ona Kwiatkowski.

USIHC-sanctioned show judged by Þorgeir Guðlaugsson. And on August 19-25, Mad River Valley Icelandic Horses hosted a horsemanship camp for kids, concluding with USIHC Riding Badge Testing by Jana Meyer.

Our fall season starts September 1-2 with a breeding evaluation at Cobbleskill Fairgrounds in NY. This is a FEIF International breeding show for all registered Icelandic horses; mares, stallions, and geldings shown for ridden abilities must be ages 4 and up. Horses can also be judged for conformation only.

September 3-5, there will be a three-day Knappamerki Levels 1 & 2 clinic and testing at West Winds Farm in Delhi, NY. The clinic will be taught by Holar graduate Helga Una Björnsdóttir. Knappamerki books will be available for purchase for participants.

From September 12-15, a Sport Judging Seminar will be held in Woodstock, VT with instructor, Þorgeir Guðlaugsson. The seminar includes lectures, video presentations, and practical judging. If requested, a voluntary test at the end of the seminar will be offered in order to qualify as a U.S. intern judge.

On September 21-22, Solheimar Farm



Show organizer Leslie Chambers enjoying her victory lap on Thokki from Four Winds Farm. Photo by Ona Kwiatkowski.



Brynja Meehan and Alexis Mitchell, students at Merrimack Valley Icelandics, ready to show at the NEIHC Open. Photo by Ebba Meehan.

will host a USIHC-sanctioned show, to be judged by Alex Dannenman.

November 7-10 brings us to Equine Affaire in Springfield, MA. This is one of our club's biggest promotional opportunities of the year, and we always need volunteers—so it is never too early to start planning! Contact Emily Potts (epotts3@gmail.com) if you would like to help out.

## SAINT SKUTLA

*By Andrea Barber*

Our club had two exciting events in the span of less than a week: Our clinic with Carrie Lyons Brandt of Taktur Icelandics, and the arrival of a new stallion, Strákur frá Vatnsleysu.

Every year Steve and I try to host one clinic for the club at our farm, Sand Meadow, in Honeoye Falls, NY. Also,



Carrie Lyons Brandt and Mirra frá Kambi won the Tölt T1 trophy offered by Thor Icelandics in honor of the great Icelandic horseman Einar Oder—a fitting tribute, since Mirra is the only horse of Einar's breeding in the U.S. Photo by Ona Kwiatkowski.



The St Skutla Club enjoyed a clinic with Carrie Lyons Brandt, who here is instructing with the help of Forsjá frá Oddhóli. Photo by Andrea Barber.

every year while we are working like dogs trying to get everything organized we wonder why we do this. But then everyone arrives, and it's always a great time with so much learning and fun. This year was no different.

This year's topic was "changing gears"—riding transitions. Who among us can't use some work on that? The perfect transition is something we all endlessly chase no matter our level of experience. Carrie did a terrific job with all the diverse horses and riders thrown at her. We had people who had never ridden an Icelandic horse before on experienced horses. We also had an experienced rider riding a green six-year-old. Even in the group lesson format, Carrie did a great job giving everyone individual attention to address their particular needs.

I rode my "new" horse, Vífill frá Glæsibæ. I've had him about a year and a half, and we are still building our relationship. He is a large (14.1h), sensitive, and well-trained horse with a lot of energy. He is a tölt machine with endless go, but he can easily get tense. When he does, the "flow" through his body gets blocked, and he can feel quite cramped—even to the point of getting pacy. He also has trouble bending to the left.

I liked that while Carrie respected the fact that I have no interest in showing

anymore, it didn't mean that I wasn't a "serious" rider and didn't want to get good performance from my horse. The goal for me is a light horse in a healthy posture. At first that seemed a lofty dream, since Vífill was quite ramped up and extra tense. But Carrie's guidance was great and we ended the first lesson on a good note.

As the lessons progressed, Vífill relaxed more and I was able to better follow Carrie's instructions. Using the counter bend exercise with him was key, especially as I could keep doing it on the right (or going straight) and it became a way for me to better work into his stiff left side. I also learned to not let goey Vífill train me! I needed to keep my legs on him—and use them! Especially on a circle, riding more with my legs and less with the reins was a real breakthrough. By the end of the clinic we had some really great moments of lightness, both in tölt and trot, and I have a good plan to work on going forward.

Speaking of trot, a real highlight for me was actually working on trot in a clinic. I enjoy riding trot (don't worry, I tölt plenty, too). I have attended countless clinics over the years and never have we really worked on trot. Even when I have asked to do so, the clinician usually



In June, St Skutla members Andrea and Steven Barber welcomed their new stallion, Strákur frá Vatnsleysu, ridden here in wintery Iceland by Heiða Heiler. Photo by Arndís Brynjólfssdóttir.



The St Skutla clinic ended with a little drill team practice. From left to right, Andrea Barber and Hergill frá Oddhóli, Deb Callaway and Káinn frá Keldum, Debby Morris and Jódís frá Úlfsey, Debbi Noto and Óðinn frá Miðási, Susan Crowe and Kleópatra from Sand Meadow, and Judy Brandzel and Kolskeggur frá Miðási. Photo by Steven Barber.

looks at me like I have ten heads. So I was thrilled that Carrie (even with the more novice riders) had us all working on the transition to trot and riding the trot. I think it's so important to work on all our horses' gaits.

One thing that Carrie pointed out that made Steve and me extra proud was that all the horses in the clinic were either owned by us, or sold by us (and many had been trained by Carrie and her partner Terral Hill). It's so great to see how the breed has grown here and that we have happy people and horses. Overall it was a great group of participants and auditors. Everyone was so supportive of one another and so interested in learning. Many thanks to Carrie Lyons Brandt for an awesome clinic, and to the USIHC for offering support. We hope to have Carrie back again in the future!

After the clinic Steve and I had little time to rest before we welcomed our new stallion Strákur frá Vatsleysu (IS2007158508) from Iceland. For years since our beloved Kalman frá Lækjamóti passed away, we have had our eye out for a new herd sire, but none ever seemed the right fit. That is until we found Strákur. Though 12-year-old Strákur was never formally evaluated (his former owners don't evaluate their horses), his

value as a breeding sire was obvious to us. Strákur is a son of the famous Glampi frá Vatsleysu and has inherited many of his sire's talents. Glampi is a first-prize stallion with an amazing 8.68 for rideability. Known as "The People's Horse," he was a very successful competition horse with the high and flashy movement that the Vatsleysa line is known for. As a breeding horse, Glampi has received a first prize for the quality of his offspring. Strákur's dam is the first prize mare, Sonata frá Vatsleysu. Sonata has had two other offspring with Glampi (full brothers to Strákur) that have achieved first prize evaluations.

Strákur is a naturally tolted five-gaiter. He is large (14h), with great bone and substance—a horse that immediately gets noticed! But the strongest reason we chose Strákur was for his very special character. He is so gentle and easygoing, with almost a human-like quality to him. Even when out with his mares, he will run up to you in the field for attention. The mares also find him polite and well-mannered, while his offspring in Iceland are proving to be easy to start, train, and ride, even by novice riders. Exactly what we need here in North America.

Of course the icing on the cake is Strákur's color: splashed white, with its

unusual "dipped in white" appearance and blue eyes. This is one of the rarest colors in Icelandic horses. Because Strákur is a full splash, he will always pass on one copy of the gene to his offspring. No matter the color of the mare Strákur should produce some very interesting markings. We are excited to introduce him into North American breeding.

## SIRIUS

*By Sherry Hoover*

Due to a very wet spring and early summer, both of our riding treks at two different state parks in Ohio were cancelled. Everyone is looking forward to summer sunshine and riding in better weather. Our fall riding trek will be on October 19 at Brecksville Cuyahoga Valley National Park near Brecksville, OH.

On September 28-29, we will hold our first ever Sirius Club sponsored clinic. We are excited to have Carrie Brandt and Terral Hill as the clinicians for an Ultimate Obstacle Clinic. A variety of obstacles will be met and conquered, both on the ground and riding. The clinic also includes gait training and learning how to ride as a drill team. Both days will be filled with learning and fun. Look for our ad in this issue for more details.

During the final months of 2019 we



Caeli Cavanagh gave a clinic for the Toppur Club in May. Here, she instructs Teresa Herold and Svarta Sunna frá Hallkelsstaðahlíð. Photo by Virginia Lauridsen.

will be looking ahead to 2020, with our election of officers, and planning treks and events for next year.

## TOPPUR

*By Lisa Blumhagen & Virginia Lauridsen*

Toppur had a very busy spring! We began with our annual circle of horse fairs. Unfortunately, due to a confirmed case of EIA near the Iowa fairgrounds, we opted not to attend the Iowa Horse Fair. It was a disappointment, as we were planning to take 12 horses and had rehearsed a new drill team routine. Oh well, better to be safe.

We did represent the breed at the International Omaha and the Midwest Horse Fair in Madison, WI. Omaha was a blast. Members Kingzlee Osborne with her mare Henna frá Eystra-Froðholti and Virginia Lauridsen with her stallion Gosi frá Lambastöðum performed three demos and introduced the breed to over 2,000 school children. They were a big hit! The next weekend Virginia and Gosi, along with Cindy Niebuhr and her Baron from Creekside Farms, Liz Clemens and Hlér frá Gullberastöðum, Dave Ferguson and Lyfting frá Hallkelsstaðahlíð, and Lori Cretney and Pia from Winterhorse Park made the trip to Madison. Wow, it is quite an event. Over 60,000 visitors attended the Midwest Horse Fair! Toppur performed two breed demos, highlighting the special characteristics of the breed. Toppur members Cindy Niebuhr and Roxanne Antisdal cre-

ated booth and stall decorations to educate the public about the history of the Icelandic horse. We completed our presentation with a video and promotional materials from the Horses of Iceland marketing team. Visitors were anxious to learn more. It was exhausting, but well worth the effort.

On May 18-19, Toppur hosted a clinic at Harmony Icelandics in Truro, IA. Caeli Cavanagh of Red Feather Icelandics began the clinic on Saturday morning with a lecture, outlining the horse (and human) psychology behind the work we would do with our horses. Her educational background fully qualified her to teach us about how horses think and how we can guide them by “utilizing their strengths to build confidence and creatively approach weaknesses.” Caeli has a bachelor’s degree in psychology from Dartmouth College and then went to Hólar University in Iceland, completing their Horsemanship and Instruction Program. The 10 participants in our clinic each had a liberty lesson on Saturday and were able to learn from watching each other’s lessons. We did a lot of ground work that included dressage moves, circles, spins, leg yields, bows, and more, all at liberty (without lead ropes). The point of this work was to better establish our connection with our horse and to give them the opportunity to do “horse yoga” (stretching), so that they can be even better athletes when we are riding them.

On Sunday we returned for the riding portion of the clinic. Caeli helped each of

us with the specific areas we requested, and more! Her careful eye caught our areas of needed improvement, and we welcomed her well-timed advice as we rode. At the end of the clinic we all left with many things to practice, both on the ground and in the saddle. Caeli was a charming, intelligent, and gifted teacher, and we were all happy to have her here in Iowa with us for the weekend!

In June, a few of us journeyed to Pelican Rapids, MN to participate in the Flugnir sanctioned show. Cindy Niebuhr, Lisa Blumhagen, and Virginia Lauridsen loaded up five horses and set off in high spirits. After tire and truck issues, and an emergency stop at Deb Cook’s farm, we rolled into Pelican Rapids on Friday afternoon. A great time was had by all. It is always helpful to have the opportunity to get comments from an international sport judge, and André Böhme was terrific. Cindy thought being a scribe was a unique learning experience. As show hosts, the Oliver family outdid themselves, inviting us all into their home for wonderful food and warm camaraderie. Fortunately, the transportation gods guided us safely home without adventure!



The Toppur Club’s booth at the Midwest Horse Fair in Madison, WI. Over 60,000 visitors attended the fair. Photo by Virginia Lauridsen.

# MIXED COMPANY?

By KARA L. NOBLE

“You can’t keep an Icelandic horse in a herd with other kinds of horses.”

That advice was given to me by an experienced Icelandic horse owner when I bought my first Icelandic. Her comment floored me. Mixed-breed herds were the norm at most of the barns where I grew up in rural New England. Belgians and Percherons mingled in pastures with Quarter horses, Morgans, Appaloosas, ponies of assorted sizes, mules, Tennessee Walkers, Thoroughbreds—just about any breed you can name. Some local farmers even turned their horses out with the cows. It had never occurred to me that there might be a “right” kind of herd for my new Icelandic horse—or a “wrong” one.

By 2011, when I bought 10-year-old, 13.2-hand Kolbrá frá Brávöllum (IS1999225194), data from scientific studies had verified what Icelandic horse people had known for centuries: keeping horses in groups, allowing them to move freely and socialize with one another, is good for their wellbeing. Data from numerous studies has demonstrated that living in a group for at least part of each day contributes to maintaining an equine’s physical and mental health.

A friend’s boarding barn offered a herd-living option I thought would be ideal for my new Icelandic. During the day, my mare would share a 20-acre silvo-pasture (an intentional combination of open grazing areas and shady tree-filled glens) with two Quarter horse geldings (one in his mid-teens, the other a seven-year-old), a Standardbred broodmare and her two-year-old filly, a mid-twenties Thoroughbred gelding, an athletic teenaged Morgan mare, five donkeys, and one cranky Shetland pony. At night, the oldest horses were stalled inside the barn; everyone else bedded down in adjacent paddocks with run-in sheds. Morning and evening feeds happened in the stalls and separate paddocks.

We introduced Kolbrá to her new herd over a fence for a couple of days, then put her in with just the mares and the filly. There was a little squealing, but otherwise no drama. We added the older Quarter horse gelding and the Thor-



Javier the Quarter horse, pasture-mate of Kolbrá the Icelandic. Photo by Kara Noble.

oughbred. No problem. Kolbrá and the donkeys fell in love at first sight. She and the Shetland pony agreed to ignore each other.

Eventually, we reached a point where there was just one new herd-mate left for Kolbrá to meet. Javier was the barn owner’s seven-year-old Quarter horse gelding. He was a handsome, athletic blood-bay, 15.3 hands tall, with tons of energy but little training or confidence. He had a reputation as the herd bully.

On introduction day, the barn owner and I turned out all of the other horses first. Once everybody was in their favorite daytime spot, we let Javier join the herd.

He knew immediately that Kolbrá was there. He spotted her from half-an-acre away and danced wide circles around her. He chased the donkeys away, then hid behind the older Quarter horse gelding to sidle closer until he stood nervously about 300 feet from where she was grazing.

“I told you they’d be fine,” said Kelly,

the barn owner. At the sound of her voice, Javier jumped, then raced over and bit Kolbrá on the butt.

My mare spun, caught the gelding by the hock, and body slammed him to the ground.

Javier scrambled to his feet screaming and took off. Kolbrá sniffed, shook herself, and returned to grazing as if nothing had happened.

The only serious injury was to Javier’s pride. “They’ll work it out,” Kelly assured me as she walked away.

She was right. Within days, Javier was following Kolbrá around the pasture like a devoted puppy. There was never another incident between them.

Even so, the warning I was given about keeping Icelandics with other breeds rang in my ears. Maybe it really was a bad idea.

## HERD BENEFITS?

The opinion that Icelandics should be only kept with other Icelandics is prevalent enough to have earned inclusion in *The Complete Guide to The Icelandic Horse*, a comprehensive handbook by Dutch authors Lex Van Keulen and Vanda Oosterhuis (reviewed in *Quarterly* Issue Four 2018). They write: “It is preferable to keep your Icelandic horse together with other Icelandics in a herd.... In a herd with different breeds, horses seem to prefer hanging out with the same breed or type.”

But what if you live in the U.S., where there are very few Icelandic horses and options for housing in an all-Icelandic herd are limited? Are you better off keeping your Icelandic alone rather than putting your horse in a mixed breed herd?

The more I thought about the issue, the more questions I had. Could a horse recognize differences between itself and horses of other breeds? If so, would those perceived differences be enough to make a horse “breedist”—wanting to live only with horses of its own kind?

I wondered if there was a scientific way to prove whether Icelandics should not be kept in herds with other breeds. The United States offers an excellent environment in which to explore those ques-

tions. According to the American Horse Council, there were more than seven million horses living in the U.S. in 2018, including dozens of breeds. According to the USIHC Registry, only 5,143 (about 0.07%) of the horses in this country that year were registered Icelandics.

In the U.S., about 85% of domestic horses are kept alone in stalls or paddocks rather than in herds. Individual housing in stalls has long been seen as a way to keep horses healthy and safe, to regulate and monitor their feed and exercise, and to ensure adequate levels of veterinary and farrier care. There's no denying that keeping horses in individual stalls and turnouts simplifies care and handling and minimizes costs. But research conducted over the past 10 years has demonstrated that there's a downside to keeping horses individually. Study after study has shown that horses kept without regular access to social interaction with other equines are likely to:

- develop stereotypical “vices,” (e.g., wood chewing, wall kicking, weaving),
- experience stress-related physical problems (e.g., ulcers, or inhibited musculo-skeletal development),
- display more aggression (toward humans and other horses),
- possess less confidence and curiosity,
- demonstrate reduced cognitive function (which can make them more difficult to train).

Icelandic horse owners, guided by a



Kolbrá's new “mixed herd” includes two donkeys, Buttercup and Angel. Photo by Kara Noble.

strong herd-keeping tradition in Iceland, have long understood the benefits horses gain by living in herds. Around the world, Icelandic horses are far more likely to be housed in herds than are horses of other breeds.

Take a quick look at the websites of USIHC members' farms, and you will see from the photos that the practice of keeping Icelandic horses in herds (that is, groups of two or more horses) is widespread.

#### **HERD DANGERS?**

An informal survey I conducted among members of the Facebook group “Icelandic

Horses for Fun in America” supports the idea that American Icelandic owners embrace herd living. My survey asked: “How do you keep your Icelandic horse? Mainly in a herd or alone? Outdoors or in? Entirely with other Icelandics or with other breeds?” Of the 44 Icelandic horse owners who responded, 39 (nearly 89%) kept their Icelandics in a herd for at least half the day. Two of the horses kept alone were stallions; the other isolated horses were at boarding barns where group housing or turnout was not available. Thirteen respondents kept their horses in Icelandic-only herds. Thirty-one kept their Icelandics in mixed-breed herds.

Even people who favor keeping horses in herds (whether Icelandic-only or mixed-breed herds) worry about what might happen when horses live together. Five primary concerns about herd life worry U.S. horse owners:

- risk of injury to the horse.
- risk of injury to humans handling horses in a herd environment (especially at feeding time or when bringing a horse in or out to the herd),
- horses learning bad habits or vices from other horses,
- stress to a horse caused by other horses being added to or removed from the herd,
- difficulties addressing unique feeding needs or schedules in a herd situation.



These three Icelandics are showing normal herd behavior: Hervir, Sumri (the nipper), and Sprengja were all bred at Lough Arrow II in Colorado. Photo by Andrea Brodie.

Scientific studies have found that at

least one of the worries on this list may not be as much of a concern as most horse owners think.

Multiple studies led by Elke Hartmann, a faculty member in the Department of Veterinary Medicine and Animal Science at the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences at Uppsala, reveal that it's common for people to overestimate the chance that a horse will be seriously injured in a herd. Injuries do sometimes occur during the routine play and disagreements of herd living, but Hartmann's findings indicate that the majority of the in-herd injuries are superficial, involving nothing more than the loss of a little hair. In well-established, well-managed herds, serious injuries are relatively rare.

As Kolbrá and Javier demonstrated, injuries are most likely to occur when a new horse is introduced to a herd. The chance of injury decreases significantly as herd roles and interactions are defined over time.

Several studies have verified that overcrowded paddocks or pastures and lack of equal and adequate access to hay, grain, water, and shelter are the factors most likely to provoke injuries serious enough to require veterinary care.

The skirmish between Javier and Kolbrá made me wonder if the risk of injury really is higher when Icelandics are incorporated into herds with other breeds. Then Icelandic trainer Sigrún Brynarsdóttir told me about an experience she had when she introduced an Icelandic gelding who grew up in California to one of her older, "been-there-done-that" brood mares.

"He was four years old, a skinny, young guy. My mare was a big girl," Sigrún said. "I don't know what he was thinking when I put them in together. He ran over and started pouncing on her. She was pissed, but he would not stop bugging her no matter what she did. Finally, she had enough. She grabbed him by the neck, threw him on the ground, and stomped on him.

"He scrambled up and ran into a corner. Every time he tried to come out of the corner, she pinned her ears at him and he ran back. Eventually, she let him out. He learned a valuable lesson. He didn't mess around with her again (but he does still try that with others some-

times)."

A young, cocky gelding trying to push around an older, more experienced mare—and learning the hard way that it was a bad idea. The story sounded remarkably familiar. Except this time, the incident involved only Icelandics.

Clearly, creating and managing a safe, successful herd is more complicated than simply dividing horses by breed and turning them out together.

In my next article, I will explore some of the issues involved in putting horses together in herds and keeping them safe and happy living in a herd environment.

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The "young cocky" Icelandic gelding (now not so young) never did learn how to get along in a herd, though the oldest mare will tolerate his company for a few hours of grazing and mutual grooming each day. Photo by Rose Breen.

# ROPE HALTER HOW-TO

BY ALEX PREGITZER, NICKI ESDORN, AND ALYS CULHANE

**N**ylon rope halters are very popular for a variety of reasons. The halters are light, they are affordable, easy to wash, and come in all kinds of colors. They last a long time and can be easily adjusted to fit different-sized horses.

Their indestructibility also poses some potential problems. In case of emergency, this type of halter will not break and it will be difficult to cut if you need to free a horse quickly from a dangerous situation. The same is true, however, for any kind of halter, unless it is made of leather or has a so-called breakaway leather piece.

For this reason, it is best to follow a few safety rules when using nylon rope halters or other kinds of non-breakaway halters:

- Do not tie your horse in a rope or other nylon halter.
- Do not haul your horse in a rope or other nylon halter.
- Do not turn out your horse in a rope or other nylon halter.

## HALTER BASICS

BY ALEX PREGITZER

Make sure any halter you use fits your horse well and is neither too tight nor too loose. A halter, just like any piece of tack, should be fitted properly. It should not be so tight as to cause discomfort, rub marks, lesions, or pressure to the sensitive tissue on the horse's head. If the halter is too loose, it can twist and turn. It can get into the horse's eyes. A horse scratching, pawing, or grazing can get a hoof caught in it. The horse could also potentially get hooked onto or trapped under an object.

Ideally, horses should be turned out in a pasture without any halter. They should be tied with a leather halter or one that has a breakaway leather piece. These short pieces of leather, incorporated into a plain nylon halter, are designed to break if the horse gets a foot caught, is trapped under or hooked onto something, or panics. They may be a crown piece or a side piece of the halter.

There are situations, however, in which it is safer to risk the horse getting trapped or caught in its own halter than it is to risk the horse getting loose. Some examples are

when you are camping in a remote area, tying close to the highway, etc. But in most cases, it is safer for the horse to break loose rather than to be trapped and to panic. A horse that gets hooked onto an object with a rope or other nylon halter can sustain severe injuries.

Simple day-to-day use of a rope halter also has some potential for injuries, and some of these may go unnoticed. When using any kind of equipment, it's good to keep in mind that horses have a variety of facial nerves and that the tissue on and around their heads is very sensitive. Any kind of pressure may potentially cause pain, discomfort, tissue or nerve damage, bursitis, or other forms of injury. This is true for any ill-fitting bridle, noseband, bit, halter, or combination of the above, so it is important to make sure that all of your horse's tack fits properly.

However, it is especially crucial for a rope halter to be well-fitting because of its material and design. The relatively thin ropes distribute pressure onto a smaller area than a wider, flat or padded piece of leather or nylon would.

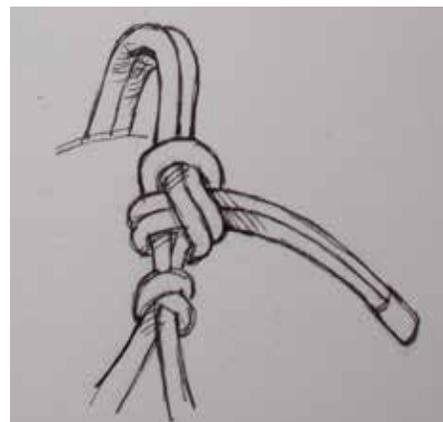
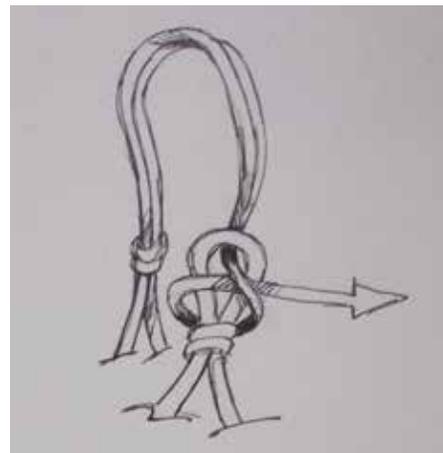
Some rope halters have extra knots on the noseband and are advertised as putting pressure on to so-called pressure points and, in this way, getting the horse to respond more willingly to lighter cues. There is no scientific evidence for any such pressure points on the horse's nose. But it is known that there are sensitive facial nerves in that area and that the extra knots create a different level of pressure on a smaller area than a plain halter or noseband would. Even with gentle handling, just the weight of the lead rope may already put pressure onto those areas—and the lead ropes usually used with rope halters are longer and heavier than classical lead ropes.

As with most pieces of horse-training equipment, proper use of a nylon rope halter depends on the situation at hand and on the skill set and experience of the person using the equipment.

## TRAINING WITH A ROPE HALTER

BY NICKI ESDORN

As Alex explained above, a horse should never be tied to anything in a nylon rope halter.



It is important to tie a rope halter safely. This sheet bend knot will not slip and is easy to undo. Practice before you put the halter on the horse! Illustration by Margot Apple.

The thin rope transmits pressure strongly and does not give or break. It can easily cause a horse to panic and get seriously hurt.

I look at a rope halter as a training tool, and I only use it when I am on the other end of the lead rope! I like to use a relatively thick, soft rope halter with only two knots on the side of the nose. I no longer use a metal snap to connect the lead rope, as it adds quite a bit of weight right onto the nosepiece (and knots) of the halter—and it also adds “jangle.” Instead, I use a lead rope with a noose on one end and just pull the end of the rope through that. This makes for a secure, quiet connection.

Natural horsemanship trains a horse to “give to the feel” and also expects the horse to learn to take responsibility to continue to follow a cue on his own until the next signal

is given. That cue could be “go at this speed, in this gait, in this direction” or “stand still and wait.” This concept is very important for the safety of both horse and rider. The rider or trainer gives a signal to the horse as lightly as possible until the horse responds. The pressure is then immediately released, and it is the horse’s responsibility to keep it that way and to continue on a nice loose rope. The trainer does not pull the horse around. If the horse pulls, he learns very quickly both that it is uncomfortable and that he can take control over his own comfort by keeping the rope loose.

I like using this natural horsemanship principle generally, and a rope halter in particular, when first teaching a horse to lead. I use mostly body language and verbal signals. Once the horse has good leading skills and knows to move forward, yield the forehand or hindquarters, back up, go around me, stop, and stand quietly, I can teach it to pony. The horse is in the same position next to me, and follows the same signals and verbal instructions. It knows it is responsible for keeping the lead rope slack!

Of course, a regular, well-fitting halter can be used for leading and ponying, especially with a trained horse. Using a rope halter just gives the trainer extra control when



This illustration by Margot Apple shows the facial nerves just under the skin of a horse’s head. Note the many nerve endings just where the noseband or halter sits.

needed in an emergency, or in situations that can get dangerous quickly, like riding in traffic.

**A CAUTIONARY NOTE**

BY ALYS CULHANE

It’s been said that rope halters are now an “industry standard.” Indeed, they now seem to be a mainstay in the horse community.

The question that many people may not consider (and should) is, Does this particular restraining device complement my training methodology? If it doesn’t, you could be doing your horse a disservice and unknowingly subjecting him to pain and/or training-related confusion.

Rope halters are synonymous with the use of the pressure/release techniques which complement natural horsemanship practices. Contemporary natural horsemanship trainers, including Clinton Anderson, Pat Parelli, Buck Branaman, and John Lyons, have popularized the use of this device, their belief being that this aid ensures that the horse will comply when pressure is applied to the sensitive areas of his face and poll. Furthermore, they contend that the person applying the pressure is acting as the herd leader, whom the horse then instinctively obeys.

However, there are some trainers, such as Karen Pryor, who take a more cognitively based approach. They eschew the use of pressure, which they see as a negative reinforcer. “Negative,” in operant conditioning, is not the opposite of “positive.” Rather, it’s an aversion stimulus. Here’s an apt comparison: You’re sitting in your car when the buzzer goes off. You’re momentarily irritated and for this reason act accordingly, by buckling your seatbelt. The analogy is this: Like the annoying buzzer, the pressure that corresponds with the use of rope halter is a negative reinforcer. The horse deals with the aversion stimulus by complying with the handler.

In horse training, use of an aversion



Fengur, at 27 years old, enjoys being ponied on a trail ride without the weight of a rider. Nicki uses a rope halter for extra safety because she has to ride along a busy road to get to the trails.

stimuli works in the short but not the long term, Pryor and others contend. It's far better, they feel, to use a positive stimulus, their reasoning being that the effects of the latter will be longer lasting. The use of positive reinforcement acts upon the sympathetic nervous system, while the use of negative reinforcement acts upon the parasympathetic nervous system. The former is equated with arousal, and the latter with rest and relaxation.

I eschew the use of rope halters because of my belief in the use of positive reinforcement. I began reading extensively on this subject when, many years ago, my Icelandic horse Raudhetta (aka Raudi) balked at the use of pressure/release. Like many Icelandic horses, she just didn't get it. A well-known Icelandic horse trainer had shown me the correct way to use a rope halter—and was as astonished as I was when Raudi pitched a fit. "I think your horse is an exception to the rule," he said, meaning that I needed to find other ways of educating her.

I ended up taking positive reinforcement training to extremes, and fortunately had good results. I read up on clicker training and targeting and attended several clinics. I began with teaching Raudi to touch a bucket lid, then transitioned to having her come to my outstretched hand. I also taught her to follow me off-lead and, when doing agility and Intrinzen training, to go in the direction I was pointing.

I next began making horse/human body awareness connections. I had started out using a regular nylon halter, went to the use of a TTeam Zephyr lead, and finally abandoned the use of halters altogether when schooling Raudi and my other three Icelandics. A caveat: I do use a halter when Raudi or any of the others needs to be secured, if there are any on-site distractions, and when we are traveling.

Yes, I agree that the use of pressure/release has its place, but I'm always seeking alternatives. It's pretty easy now for me to flip the switch and figure out a non-aversive way of doing things. No halter on hand? Horse needs to go into a pen? Out goes my outstretched hand, in goes the horse. It's now that simple.

I have often wondered if the amount of time and the degree of dedication I have put into positive reinforcement training has been worth it. One day a few weeks ago, as the horses—upon request—went into the trailer, I came to the conclusion that for me,



Nicki Esdorn teaching a young horse to pony using a rope halter: Jenny has learned to keep her position next to Fengur with a nice loose rope and to listen to Nicki's voice signals. A helper, Hannah Huss, rides behind to encourage her to keep up. Photo by Erika Reptschik.

trust trumped compliance. Use of a rope halter now would contradict what I've been attempting to do for the past 16 years, which is to forge a relationship with Raudi based on trust.

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A well-fitting and safely tied rope halter. The ends of the knot point toward the horse's hindquarters, away from the eye. Illustration by Margot Apple.

# HORSES OF THE DEAD

By Kristina Stelter

While much is known about the Icelandic horse and its place within Viking society, I believe it benefits both heritage conservation efforts and Icelandic horse programs to learn even more. At the 2018 USIHC Annual Meeting, I spoke about “The Horse and the Norse: Reconstructing the Equine in Viking Iceland,” the thesis I wrote for my master’s degree in Celtic and Viking Archaeology at the University of Glasgow. There, I discussed how the Icelanders in the Viking Age selectively bred for gaitedness and color, and how the horse became the glue that held together the new nation. Since then, I’ve been investigating the ritual inclusion of the Icelandic horse in funerary practices, that is, how and why horses were buried with people in the Viking Age.

During the Viking Age, it was common for people to be buried with an array of things, what archaeologists call “grave goods.” The most famous of these grave goods is certainly the boat—the glamorous Viking ship burials are famous throughout the world. However, this sea-faring culture also included sacrificed horses in their burials. Whether these grave goods were included to accompany the dead into the afterlife, or as a sacrifice of communal wealth to honor the dead is unknown. Nonetheless, we can certainly discern a lot of other information from these burials.

In Scandinavia, the Vikings included horses only in wealthy burials. Such burials also included a host of other grave goods, and commonly other animals. Because of the casual way in which the horse was included in these graves, it is likely that the animal was considered a regular farm animal, with no special status among the rest of the livestock that was sacrificed. This is further supported by the transportation difficulties within Scandinavia. Traveling between fjords or between what is now Norway and Denmark is admittedly much easier by water than by land. Traveling overland in Norway, by foot or horseback, consisted of following switchbacks up and over the steep mountains and cliffsides, which made the journey more dangerous and more time-consuming than traveling by water. It was far more economical to



Horses were prized by Iceland’s Viking settlers. Photo by Julie Daily and Kristina Stelter.

travel by boat. Indeed, we associate the Vikings with their longboats, and rightly so! The boat connected society, facilitated trade, and, as we all know, allowed the famous Viking raids to be successful.

The rate of inclusion of sacrificed horses within Scandinavian burials suggests that the animal was a part of society, but not necessarily important. Instead, the boat was the focus of many of these burials. Because the boat was so important, longboats were included in the burials of the influential, smaller boats were customary for regular people, and those who could not have a boat for their burial (either for cost, status, or another reason) had rocks outline their grave in the shape of a boat.

## THE HORSE IN ICELAND

This cultural burial trend noticeably shifts once the settlement of Iceland began. There is no single reason for this shift, instead there are a whole host of reasons that the Icelandic settlers had to change their culture. Navigable rivers are rare on the island, making travel by boat essentially useless for travel from one farm to another. Deforestation cleared Iceland of its trees within a generation, limiting the creation of ships, the construction of

traditional houses, and the use of wood for fuel and heat. Such deforestation led to land degradation, which led the settlers to decide between using the landscape for grains or for livestock fodder. The lack of a central town or city led to an intensely rurally populated island, which made trade, communication, and the general cohesion of society difficult. The island also lacked precious metals that the Vikings had placed such importance on. So how did these new Icelanders survive when their new home put such restrictions on their lifestyle? They adapted, and they adapted quickly.

Such issues opened a cultural power vacuum that was filled in less than a generation. Archaeological evidence from middens (essentially, trash piles) shows that the early Icelanders started to consume more seafood and less grains and terrestrial mammals. A shift from terrestrial food to seafood, coupled with a boom in the horse population, suggests that Icelanders decided that the land was best utilized for livestock fodder—specifically horse fodder. Why horses? Traveling by boat or foot was impractical and time-consuming, so horses quickly filled this niche. However, the volcanic landscape was also not easy on wheeled vehicles, so riding horses became exponentially valuable. Careful importation and breeding developed a breed with uniquely smooth and comfortable gaits—but more importantly, horses with exquisite breeding took the place of precious metals in society.

As the horse grew in importance, the boat decreased. As of 2013, out of over 300 known pagan graves in Iceland, there were fewer than 10 boat burials—compared to roughly 125 burials that include at least one horse. Roughly 40% of Icelandic Viking burials have horses—an increase of over 30% from their Scandinavian homeland culture.

Both men and women have horses in their burials, suggesting that the horse was not associated with a certain sex at death. But what makes these burials truly unique in the Viking cultural landscape is the existence of horse burials without a human accompanying it. Such graves have no associated human, but still have grave



Remains of a horse were found buried with a Viking in his boat in Uppsala, Sweden in July. Photo by The Archaeologists, National Historical Museums, Sweden.

goods, suggesting that some horses were treated with the same funerary respect as humans themselves.

#### **HORSE OF THE GODS?**

What kind of horses were interred with Icelanders? A new study by Heidi Nistelberger and her colleagues shows that the overwhelming majority of horses were male. But why? I think it is unlikely that the horses were chosen because of their “male-ness” or symbolic “male-ness” of aggression and virility, as some news reports of the study have claimed. Instead, there is likely a more practical, less-romanticized reason. Mares provide milk, foals, farm labor, transportation, and, when past their prime, food and leather. Geldings would have provided food, leather, farm labor, or transportation—but those colts that exhibited excellent gaits would not have been gelded in the first place. Stallions provided transportation and breeding services, but they also participated in sanctioned horse fights, were great gifts for political and religious benefit, and were often dedicated to the gods. In one saga, for example, riding a stallion dedicated to the god Freyr was punishable by death. (See “Horses in the Sagas,” in this issue.)

To me, Nistelberger’s study showing that most of the horses within Icelandic graves are male suggests two probable scenarios: 1) either the sacrificed horses within the graves are stallions dedicated to the gods and were not riding horses, or 2)

the sacrificed horses were riding horses, likely the deceased’s personal horse, and Icelanders preferred to ride stallions or geldings. As an archaeologist who studies bones, I can design a research project to learn if one (or both) of these scenarios is true. If the first, then the skeletal remains should not exhibit any osteological wear from being ridden. If the second, then the skeletal remains should exhibit osteological wear from being ridden. But what kind of wear would the bones of an Icelanders’

riding horse show?

Because of Iceland’s lack of precious metals and its poor supply of quality iron, bits became thinner and thinner over time. While trade across the sea was possible, it declined in regularity throughout the Medieval period. Trade was usually restricted to the export of vadmál (tightly woven wool cloth) from Iceland and the import of food and everyday supplies from abroad. Horse tack could be made on the island and thus wasn’t high on the list of priorities for imports. Iron snaffles became thinner and thinner, with the O-rings becoming smaller and smaller. Such thin bits are sharp in the horse’s mouth and can easily cut through the gum layers to the underlying bone. Poorly fitted bridles with such bits allow the bit to slide up the mandible and make contact with the horse’s first molars, which wears away the dentin over time. So, a horse mandible recovered from a burial that shows damage to these areas lets archaeologists discern that these horses were ridden.

Trauma is also found along the spine of a riding horse. The withers and the vertebrae that hold the saddle will show wear over time. While Icelandic horses have short and sturdy backs, they are still susceptible to sway-back or kissing-spine conditions. Over time, the weight of the rider can damage the spine by pressing the vertebrae together, causing bone to rub



Close-up of the horse bones recovered from a Viking Age burial. Photo by Kristina Stelter.

against bone. Varying degrees of damage can be seen in buried bones, from a slight polishing of the vertebrae spines to the fusing together of vertebrae in stiff, painful bone masses.

As of 2019, no published research has been conducted on whether the horses found within the graves have osteological signs of being ridden. If such a study was conducted, determination of whether the sacrificed horses were personal horses or temple-dedicated horses could be made.

### WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Why would such a distinction matter? Why would knowing the difference be useful in our understanding of the Icelandic horse or the early Icelanders? On one hand, if the buried horses were not ridden, then we'd know that Icelanders considered the sacrifice as more of a ritual—akin to modern Western society's pall bearers or a gunfire salute at a funeral. If it was a ritual, what was the meaning of it? Who in society was deemed worthy enough to have a horse in their burial? Was it just a display of wealth? Or was there a belief that the horse would indeed accompany the dead to the afterlife?

None of the aforementioned scenarios address why Iceland is home to the unique set of horse burials that are not associated with a human. Why go through the process of burying a horse without the human-related funerary process? Did such horses possess something worthy to sacrifice to the gods? If so, why would it differ from other known rituals of the time period that ended with the consumption of the sacrificed horse? Or was it even more simple and relatable to us today? Were these buried horses a beloved horse that was lost, and the owner's heartbreak demanded it have a good resting place? It is more than likely. However, such information will only be learned through further study of the physical remains.

In any case, the horse was obviously integral to the Icelandic Viking funerary process, taking center stage away from the previous generation's sea-faring culture. Pagan burials, and thus horse burials, are concentrated in the north and the southwest of Iceland, correlating with the most habitable part of the island and therefore the most densely populated. Most of these burials are located within outfields and by farm boundaries, and they are usually discovered by accident, through the



A reconstruction of a Viking Age *nithing*, or insult pole. Photo by Circle Eyes.

construction of roads and other ground disturbances, and not by planned archaeological excavations.

We might wonder how the process was completed—how were the horses sacrificed? Archaeological investigations suggest that the killing was done in multiple ways, by blunt force trauma, by decapitation, and, most commonly, by slitting the throat of the horse. The first is rarely seen, with only a few burials showing a fatal blow to the head of the horse. The second is seen throughout the Viking world—in the famous Oseberg ship burial in Norway, for example, 15 horses were beheaded to accompany two women to the otherworld; decapitation is also associated with other rituals such as the nithing pole—a magical ritual associated with insulting or cursing—or other non-burial rituals. The last is an educated guess, as slitting the throat of

the horse does not leave any marks on the skeleton for archaeologists to see. However, the lack of trauma associated with the sacrifice of horses in Iceland suggest that the simple answer may be the correct one. Most horses in burials are placed near the foot of the deceased person, or to one side. The horses are usually intact (not butchered), and range from being carefully posed, lying down with their hooves tucked under them and their heads curled toward their body, to fully lying on their sides and not posed at all. The horses are often wearing tack, as bits and buckles are frequently found with them. Saddles are often included, as seen by the remains of more buckles and nails near their spine and ribs. Stirrups, however, are rare in Iceland (though they are often found in other parts of the Viking world), whether due to their value or something else, is unknown.

The practice of sacrificing horses for burials declined sharply after the year 1000 AD, roughly 130 years after it had begun. During the year 1000, the Althing, Iceland's medieval parliament, made the momentous decision for the country to become officially Christian, and it decided to ban horse sacrifice. Christian burials, which do not include grave goods, became more commonplace. Yet while the inclusion of horses within the burial proper waned, their presence in funerals were still felt. The Icelandic horse was not only used as transportation for the living but it also carried the caskets to the church graveyard—one final ride for the dead.

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- Editors' note: Kristina Stelter is a member of the Klettafjalla Icelandic Horse Club and works for SWCA Environmental Consultants, which partially funded her work on this project.*

# HORSES IN THE SAGAS

BY NANCY MARIE BROWN

Most people who will read this fell in love with Icelandic horses and then, perhaps, became curious about the land they came from. I traveled the opposite path. I discovered the Icelandic Sagas in college, where I studied medieval literature. I first went to Iceland in 1986 to see the saga sites, and somebody put me on a horse. For me, the horses and their history are inseparable. To appreciate an Icelandic horse, I think you need to understand Iceland. And understanding Iceland means knowing about the sagas.

What is a saga? From the 1100s to the 1300s, Icelanders produced books at an enormous rate: More medieval literature exists in Icelandic than in any other European language except Latin. First came a lawbook; next, a short history of the island. Then came stories of Iceland's first settlers; chronicles of the kings of Norway and Denmark; treatises on poetry, grammar, astronomy, and medicine; saints' lives; romances and fantastical tales; stories of Greenland, of Viking raids, of voyages to Constantinople or to the New World, of famous feuds and love affairs; even a Guide to the Holy Land.

Confusingly, 140 of these books are labeled "sagas." Saga comes from the Icelandic verb *segja*, "to say." It implies neither fact nor fiction, simply something said: a story. Some sagas are like modern fantasy, full of trolls and dragons; others read like historical novels. There are horses in all of them. The best sagas, the ones people usually mean when they say "the Icelandic sagas," are the 40 "Family Sagas," which describe Icelandic society in the Viking Age—from its settlement in about 870 through the conversion to Christianity in the year 1000 and up until about 1053, when the first Icelandic bishop was elected. These sagas are considered "a great world treasure," comparable—as one scholar puts it—to "Homer, Shakespeare, Socrates, and those few others who live at the very heart of human literary endeavor."

## SKALM

*Landnámabók*, or *The Book of Settlements*, is a more-or-less factual account of more than four hundred people who came to Iceland between 870 and 930 from Scandinavia



"There's no point in making prophecies about you," said the seer, "but that boy will settle and claim land where your mare Skalm lies down under her load." Illustration by Margot Apple.

and the British Isles. It is not a saga itself, but it contains many anecdotes that were later developed into sagas.

One of these stories is about Grim, the nephew of a Norwegian chieftain. Grim sailed to Iceland with his wife, his infant son, his household servants, and all the wealth he could carry, including a sturdy mare named Skalm. He set up camp in the north, intending to look around a bit before he made a formal land claim. One day he went fishing, taking along his young son tucked into a waterproof sealskin bag tied tight under his chin.

The boy must have looked like one of the seal people, who can cast off their sealskins and dance on the shore in human form on certain days of the year, for a merman came up to see what was going on. Grimur hooked him with his gaff and hauled him into the boat.

"What can you tell us about the future?" he asked, for mermen were known to be seers.

"There's no point in making prophecies about you," said the merman, "but that boy in the sealskin bag will settle and

claim land where your mare Skalm lies down under her load."

Skalm is the first Icelandic horse known by name—or perhaps she should still be considered a Norwegian horse. Horses were also brought to Iceland from the British Isles, and one, called *Kinnskaer*, came from Eastern Europe or Central Asia. According to the saga that mentions him, *Kinnskaer* was an extremely tall horse that had to be fed on grain both summer and winter. The other horses brought to Iceland would likewise have been exceptional in one way or another. Viking ships were small.

As the story of Skalm points out, horses in early Iceland were first of all beasts of burden, carrying everything from coffins to charcoal to haybales to roof beams. Iceland's landscape, with its high mountains, wide bogs and mires, impassable lava fields, and torrential glacier-fed rivers, made wagons impractical, and roads were not built in many parts of the country until the 20th century. A sturdy, strong horse, pleasant to ride but able to carry heavy loads over long distances, was the one tool

that could open Iceland's vast empty lands and stitch its scattered settlements into a society.

### **KENGALA**

Besides being sturdy, strong, and comfortable to ride, many of the horses in the sagas have unusual intelligence and character. They form deep emotional bonds with their owners, as Icelandic horses still do. Unfortunately, their stories do not always have happy endings and what happens to them can be pretty gruesome. There's the story of Kengala, for instance, in *Grettir's Saga*. Kengala was a dun-colored mare with a dark eel-stripe. She was "so wise about the weather" that when a storm was on its way, she would refuse to graze. "If she does this," Grettir's father told him, "you are to stable the horses, but otherwise keep them grazing up north on the ridge, once winter sets in.

Grettir hated the chores his father gave him. As the winter deepened, the saga says, "he began to feel the cold bitterly, but Kengala grazed away in the most exposed places during the worst of the weather." One morning, Grettir came to the stable with a sharp knife. "There was a fierce struggle, but in the end he succeeded in cutting loose her back skin"—essentially flaying off her eel stripe. When he drove the horses out to pasture that day, Kengala ran back to the barn.

His father told the household to get set for a blizzard. After two nights and still no sign of a storm, he went out to the stable to see Kengala for himself. Greeting his favorite mare, he ran a hand along her back and was horrified to find the skin coming away at his touch. Grettir stood there smirking. His father went out "swearing violently." The weather-wise Kengala had to be put down, but Grettir also came to a bad end, living most of his life as an outlaw, chased from place to place. From the horse's perspective, he got what he deserved, as did another saga character, Hrafnkel, whose fate turned out a bit differently.

### **FREYFAXI**

The chieftain Hrafnkel owned a buckskin stallion named Freyfaxi, whom he dedicated to the god Freyr. Hrafnkel "loved this horse so passionately," says *Hrafnkel's Saga*, "that he swore a solemn oath to kill anyone who rode the stallion without his permission." In the sagas, such an oath is usually regretted.

Hrafnkel hired a neighbor's son, Einar, to herd his sheep. He warned Einar not to ride Freyfaxi and told him of his oath. All went well until midsummer, when Einar lost thirty sheep. They went missing for a week. Finally Einar took a bridle and went off to catch a horse to help him search. "But when he came closer," the saga says, "all the mares bolted away from him, and he chased them without success. They had never been so shy before. Only Freyfaxi remained behind; he was as still as if he were anchored to the ground." Recklessly, Einar caught Freyfaxi. He rode him "from dawn to mid-evening, traveling fast and far, for this was an outstanding horse." By the time they found the lost sheep, "Freyfaxi was all running with sweat; and every hair on his body was dripping. He was covered in mud and panting with exhaustion."

As soon as Einar loosed him, "he rolled over a dozen times, and then neighed loudly and started to race down the path." Freyfaxi galloped straight to the farmhouse and neighed at the door. "It grieves me to see how you have been treated," Hrafnkel said to the stallion. "You had your wits about you when you came to me, and this shall be avenged. Go back to your herd."

The next morning Hrafnkel rode up to the sheep pens and killed Einar. In the ensuing feud, Hrafnkel lost everything, including Freyfaxi. They led his beloved stallion to a steep cliff beside a waterfall, put a bag over his head, and used poles to push him over. It's meant to horrify. Clearly Hrafnkel's enemies had overstepped the bounds of justice. As the saga tells it, Hrafnkel worked his way back to prosperity and popularity until he finally resumed his place as leader of the district. But he never had another horse like Freyfaxi.

### **FLUGA**

From these Icelandic stories, we can see that the early Icelanders loved their horses. They took good care of them, grooming them, keeping them in stables, feeding them hay and grain, and being concerned about them being worked too hard. They bred them carefully, looking for certain qualities. They used them as draft animals, but they also treasured them—for their character, their color, and their ability to bond with their riders. *The Book of Settlements* tells of another horse famous for her speed: the mare Fluga. Late in the Settle-

ment Period, around the year 900, a cargo ship carrying horses landed at Kolkuos in Skagafjord. While the ship was being unloaded, Fluga escaped. A man named Thorir Dove-Nose "bought the chance of finding her, and find her he did. She was an exceptionally fast horse."

One day, the story goes, Thorir was riding Fluga on one of the two summer routes that cross the center of Iceland, when he was waylaid by a mysterious character named Orn, "a sorcerer who used to wander from one part of the country to another." Orn bet Thorir a hundred marks of silver (a fantastic sum) that his horse was faster than Fluga. The two men rode on until they reached a flat stretch of land, laid out a course, and raced off. But, according to the story, "Orn was only half way up the course by the time Thorir met him on his way back, so great was the difference between the two horses."

Orn took his loss so badly that he rode off into the mountains and was never seen again. (The story doesn't say if he paid up or not.) Fluga, for her part, was exhausted, so Thorir left her behind, switching his saddle to another one of his horses, and continued on his way.

When Thorir came back to get Fluga several weeks later, he was surprised to find a gray stallion with his mare. Where he had left Fluga was far from any farms, in a rugged part of the country with little grass. That fact, and the mystery surrounding Orn's disappearance, hints that the stallion was the sorcerer himself.

Fluga had a foal the next spring, the story continues, "and from their line sprang the horse Eidfaxi"—for whom the Icelandic horse magazine is named. I like to think of Eidfaxi as the foundation sire of the Icelandic horse breed, for in each Icelandic horse there is a little bit of magic.

### **FURTHER READING**

These and other horse stories from Icelandic folklore and sagas can be found in my 2001 book, *A Good Horse Has No Color: Searching Iceland for the Perfect Horse*.

# HOW ICELANDICS DIFFER

BY NANCY MARIE BROWN

Icelandics are different. If you own an Icelandic horse, you've said this, I bet, to a farrier, a vet, or a riding buddy. Now science has proven it true: Icelandics are different.

In the May 30, 2019 issue of the journal *Cell*, Antoine Fages, Ludovic Orlando, and over of their 100 colleagues present a history of the horse, as revealed by its genes. Using DNA extracted from the bones of 278 ancient horses, donkeys, and mules, including Icelandic horses, and comparative data from 18 breeds of modern horse, the researchers' genomic time series study shows how the horse has come to be the swift, beautiful, and in some ways flawed creature we know and love today.

More than 5,000 years ago, when the horse was first domesticated, there were four lineages of horse roaming Europe and Asia, each with its own distinct complement of genes. One lineage led to all modern breeds of the domestic horse. One led to the wild Przewalski's horse. Two became extinct: the ancient horse of Siberia and that of the Iberian peninsula (now Spain and Portugal). The genes of these "ghost horses" contributed very little to either the Przewalski's horse or to the modern domestic horse. Were they untamable, unfit to ride, or ugly? Were they seen only as food and overhunted? We don't know. But people chose not to breed them, and they disappeared.

The first horses known to be tamed also turn out to be unrelated to our modern horse. The Botai people who lived on the steppes of Central Asia milked, harnessed, and corralled horses, archaeologists know, more than 5,000 years ago. But the Botai horses, the genetic study found, are not the ancestors of our modern horses; instead, their lineage leads to the wild Przewalski's horse.

Where the earliest ancestors of our horses came from remains a mystery. But the origin of the most influential horses, worldwide, can be read in the genes. When they studied the Y-chromosome, found only in males, the geneticists saw how breeders' preferences for certain stallions has changed the horse. As people—not nature—made more and more of the deci-



Icelandics descend from the ancient North European horse. Photo by Nancy Marie Brown.

sions about which stallions could breed, the overall genetic diversity of horses dropped.

This decline was slow and steady for thousands of years. But in the Viking Age, about 850, the slide became dramatic. At that point, stallions from Persia and Arabia began dominating most horse breeds. Of those that remain, only two breeds remain genetically distinct from the modern Arabian horse. One of those two is the Icelandic horse.

## NORTH EUROPEAN HORSES

The geneticists found that modern Icelandic horses and Shetland ponies "were most closely related to a group of north European horses including pre-Viking Pictish horses from sixth- and seventh-century Britain and one ninth- to tenth-century horse from Estonia." The Vikings settled Shetland and the Pictish areas of Scotland in the late 700s or early 800s. Estonia, on the Viking's East Way through the Baltic Sea to Russia, was part of the Viking world by at least 750.

Horses from any of these areas could easily have made it to Iceland with the first settlers. We used to think Iceland was settled beginning in 874, but recent archaeological research has pushed that date back perhaps as much as a hundred years—well before the Arabian horse began changing the genetics of the north European horse. Genetically, the Icelandic horse remains more like the horses known throughout Europe from the time of the Roman Empire through the seventh century.

Other modern breeds from northern Europe, like the Friesian and the Connemara, on the other hand, were shaped by the Arabian horse. These two breeds (among others) belong to a clade, or genetic group with a common ancestor, that first appeared in Croatia in the 800s. It was not found

at that time in northern Europe. "This suggests the introduction of new domestic lineages to the south of mainland Europe between the seventh and ninth centuries, a time strikingly coincident with the peak of Arab raids on the Mediterranean coasts, including Croatia," the geneticists write. That the earliest example of this clade comes from two Persian horses from fourth or fifth century Iran supports the researchers' theory of "the growing influence of oriental bloodlines in mainland Europe following at least the ninth century."

The majority of the modern horse breeds the researchers investigated are, in fact, related to the two Persian horses—even modern Mongolian horses and the Yakutian horses of Siberia. Not only that, the loss in genetic diversity among horses has recently become acute. "Most strikingly, we found that while past horse breeders maintained diverse genetic resources for millennia after they first domesticated the horse," the researchers write, "this diversity dropped by about 16% within the last 200 years. This illustrates the massive impact of modern breeding."

Is it perhaps the lack of certain genes, inherited from Arabian or Persian horses, that make our Icelandics so different? Or did Icelandics retain genes that were lost in other breeds? Likely the answer to both questions is yes. Icelandics are different because their genetic makeup is different. They represent the original North European horse.

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# TOLTING THE DIVIDE III

BY ALYS CULHAINE

**T**olting the Divide is the name my husband, Pete, and I gave to our plan to ride the entire Continental Divide on our Icelandic horses. In 2011, we completed Part I of this long-distance horse trek: 500 miles through Colorado from Gulnare to Vail (see the story in Issue Four 2011 of the *Quarterly*). In 2013 we left Alaska with the intention of riding Part II, from Hagerman Pass, CO to Butte, MT. But Part II didn't go as planned. (You can read about that misadventure in Issue Two 2014.)

We started planning Part III a year and a half ago. We figured that by May 2019, Týra from Tuskast, then age 5, and Hrímfara from Lough Arrow II (aka Hrimmi), age 6, would be mentally and physically up for doing a lengthy trek. Plus, Rauðhetta from Alaskastadir (aka Raudi), 16, would still be in her prime. Our Toltling the Divide III trip plans were more all-encompassing than those for parts I and II, as we had our past experiences, good and bad, to draw on in putting together our new plans. As I write this, in early June, we are heading down the trail. This article will focus on what's involved in preparing for such a trip, including our preliminary 2,000-mile drive from our home in Palmer, Alaska to the trailhead.

## LEARNING & LOGISTICS

I began working with the horses in preparation for this endeavor in July 2018. I rode all three mares nearly every day, even when it rained or snowed. I did short rides at first, and left longer ones for later, because with shorter lessons early on the horses better retain what they're taught. My favorite winter activity was emergency dismounts: I'd dive off Raudi or Hrimmi's back into the off-trail snowdrifts.

Tyra's education differed. This was a matter of circumstance that proved to be fortuitous. I'd had a custom endurance saddle made for her at Synergist Saddles, but when it arrived I discovered it didn't fit either of us. Shipping saddles to and from Alaska is costly, which is why Pete and I decided that Cheyenne, WY (the home of Synergist Saddles) would be our horse-packing departure point. In the meantime, I target-trained Tyra to come to my outstretched hand, then had her accompany me as I either ran or rode my fat-tired bicycle. I also did TTeam, Intrinzen, and agility work with her in our Playground of Higher Learning obstacle course.

Pete, meanwhile, spent the dark, cold Alaska winter evenings poring over topographic, road, BLM, and National Forest

Service maps. Most routes of interest were in the high country, where we might have to deal with a heavy snowpack. So we refrained from settling on a set route. All we knew was that we had from May 15 to August 15 in which to complete our trip.

My self-preparations included body awareness work, strength training, and yoga classes. In addition, Pete and I took a semester-long Wilderness First Responder course. I also sat in on a twice-weekly Wilderness EMT course. By the semester's end we both felt confident about our ability to deal with human-related wilderness trauma.

Add to the above that we both took a Pete Ramey barefoot shoeing clinic and then, with our farrier's assistance, learned how to rasp and trim our horses' feet. Our reasoning for this was twofold. First of all, going barefoot seemed like a healthier option. And secondly, we learned on our first two trips that farriers can be hard to find when you are trekking.

Pete and I also organized a two-part Back Country Horsemen of Alaska clinic, the topics being pack saddle type and use, Leave No Trace principles, equine first aid, and the like. Putting it together was like taking a good refresher course.



Alys and Hrímfara got warmed up for their long ride along the Continental Divide with a wild and crazy ride along the Alaska Pipeline with Felipe Letit Massetti, another famous long-distance rider. Photo by Pete Praetorius.

As our date of departure drew closer, we focused on more immediate concerns. We paid bills in advance and enlisted the assistance of a neighbor to collect our mail. (This was a good thing: She emailed us a month after we'd left home and said Pete had jury duty). Pete also took care of particulars related to vehicle and trailer maintenance. He then dehydrated six weeks' worth of food at a neighbor's place (we live off the grid so we don't have electricity), vacuum packed the parcels, and stored them in postal boxes (we would send food ahead of us, so as not to have to carry it all). Our veterinarian paid us four visits in which he inoculated our horses, took care of border crossing administrative details, did routine exams, and floated teeth.

Our trip was dependent upon our finding a house sitter and summer homes for Tinni, our 30-year-old Icelandic; Stormy and Ranger, goats extraordinaire; and Thelma and Louise, our two chickens. In this respect, things fell into place at nearly the last minute. Parting company with Tinni was difficult for me, but made easier by the fact that he'd be well cared for and doted on by little girls.

#### FRIENDS & FANFARE

Our trip preparations also included another traveler's plans. In January 2018, Pete informed me that on May 17, Felipe Letit Massetti would be riding from Fairbanks, AK, to Calgary, BC. He'd previously ridden from Calgary to the tip of Argentina. In between doing all those other things, we organized a motivational talk for him to give at our local college and put him in touch with people in Fairbanks who could give him an assist in boarding the two wild mustangs who were to be transported from BC to Fairbanks.



At Congdon Campground in Yellowstone Territory, Pete checks to see if the electric bear fence really is hot (it's not). Photo by Alys Culhane.

Felipe and his girlfriend, Clara, arrived at our place in their support vehicle, a motor home, a few days before we were to leave Palmer. We put them up and went over Felipe's route with him. I got him an interview on Big Cabbage Radio and arranged for him to do interviews with local dignitaries.

We accompanied Felipe on his first day of riding in Alaska, as did 13 others. This turned out to be one of the most harrowing experiences in my horseback-riding career. This ride began with a drone flying overhead and several false starts (the videographer had to get everything just right). It continued with our having to deal with heavy traffic and road construction. And it ended with considerable fanfare at a local ranch. After the fact, I was glad I had done the ride, because if our three red-headed mares could handle a ride like this one, I knew they could handle just about anything.

#### HITTING THE HIGHWAY

The next day we bid Felipe and his

entourage good-bye and began our drive down the Alcan Highway. As Pete recently said about this drive, "It's no picnic." The highway extends from Interior Alaska to central British Columbia—the Yukon is in between. In total, it's a distance of over 1,500 miles. Services are limited and becoming even more so as roadhouses—places with cafes, gas, groceries, and lodging—are becoming increasingly scarce. There are no billboards or stoplights. The scenery is fantastic, and wildlife is abundant. On this particular trip we saw swans, black bear, mountain goats, and bison.

You have to be innovative in terms of horse accommodations when travelling this road. There are haulers who truck horses to and from Alaska and the US. They generally go for distance and keep the horses in their trailers. We, on the other hand, averaged 250 miles a day, stopping every two hours in order to rest and water our horses. Keeping the horses hydrated is always a concern, and it was even more of one this year because the weather was unusually hot. We gave them water in individual buckets and monitored their consumption. This time around, I gave them dandelions that I picked in rest areas. I then began putting the dandelions in their water. They had a great time diving for dandelions, and yes, they consumed more water.

Our accommodations varied. One night we stayed at Congdon Creek Campground in the Yukon Territory, in a tenting area that's surrounded by an electric fence to keep the bears out. On another night we high-lined the horses next to a gravel pit. We sometimes stayed in rodeo- and fairgrounds, always being careful to keep our equines from having direct contact with others.

Our most memorable overnight stay was in Penticton, BC. We pulled into Todd's



Camping with their Icelandics on a high line at an RV park, Alys and Pete had plenty of curious visitors. Photo by Pete Praetorius.

RV Park in hopes of getting information on where we might camp. The owners greeted us with open arms and found an appropriate site, a former boat storage area. All that evening and the next morning we had visitors. Our Icelandics (who are always good breed ambassadors) enjoyed all the attention. Before leaving, I took Tyra over to the checkout counter and she made friends with the morning clerk.

Our second border crossing was like our first—uneventful. The agricultural inspector who checked out our livestock couldn't help smiling when she saw the three red heads, all clamoring for a pat. We told her that Icelandics are generally very social horses. I added that, the entire way down, they had drawn crowds at rest areas, visitor centers, and roadside pull-out areas.

### HITTING THE TRAIL

Our first major stop was Spokane, WA where we stayed at a friend's B&B. Here the horses got a few days' rest and were taken on a trail ride. Then it was on to Idaho, where we spent a few days in the Selway-Bitterroot National Forest. The Selway River area is particularly beautiful, and our campsite there had all the amenities: an outhouse, a creek, a grassy camping area, and trees from which to highline the horses. In both Selway and Bitterroot, we did lengthy trail rides.



Tyra and Alys checking out of the RV park, ready to hit the trail for their long ride along the Continental Divide. Photo by Pete Praetorius.



Saddlemaker Dave Di Pietras made a custom packing saddle for Tyra. Since the Icelandic is built like a barrel with no withers, he added a breast collar and crupper. Photo by Pete Praetorius.

Our next major stop was Cheyenne, WY where we stayed a week with old friends and saddle makers CJ and Dave Di Pietras. These days CJ deals with customers, prepares orders for Dave to follow, and prepares saddles for shipping. It's a two-person operation—the saddles are made in a shop adjacent to CJ's arena. Dave stopped production to work on Tyra's saddle. He examined the mold (called an impression pad) that we'd heated in an oven and applied to Tyra's back, the

purpose being to fit the tree to it. The mold still fit Tyra, and fit the saddle perfectly, which was why Dave next removed the stirrup leathers in order to make sure they were even. They were not. This led him to deduce that the problem wasn't with the saddle, but with the horse and rider. Tyra is built like a barrel and has no withers; therefore, I needed to focus more on my own balance. Dave added the addition of a crupper and breast collar.

The next day we rode with CJ in nearby Curt Gowdy State Park. Pete rode Raudi and ponied Hrimmi, and I rode Tyra in her new saddle. I was nervous, for we were riding in an area that was unfamiliar to Tyra and CJ was riding her Rimrock, a fractious Arab. But I was pleased with how all our horses did, especially Tyra, who had never before been among cows.

It was difficult parting company with CJ and Dave, for we had all gotten along so well together. However, Pete and I were ready for the next phase of our trip. We traveled to the Blair Wallis recreation area, between Laramie and Cheyenne, and spent a week riding. The multi-use trails there are varied in terms of terrain and traverse both rolling meadows and hilly, rocky, forested areas. We did several all-day rides and, after trying out the various options, determined that on our upcoming trek Pete would ride Raudi and pony Hrimmi (our pack animal) and that I would ride Tyra.

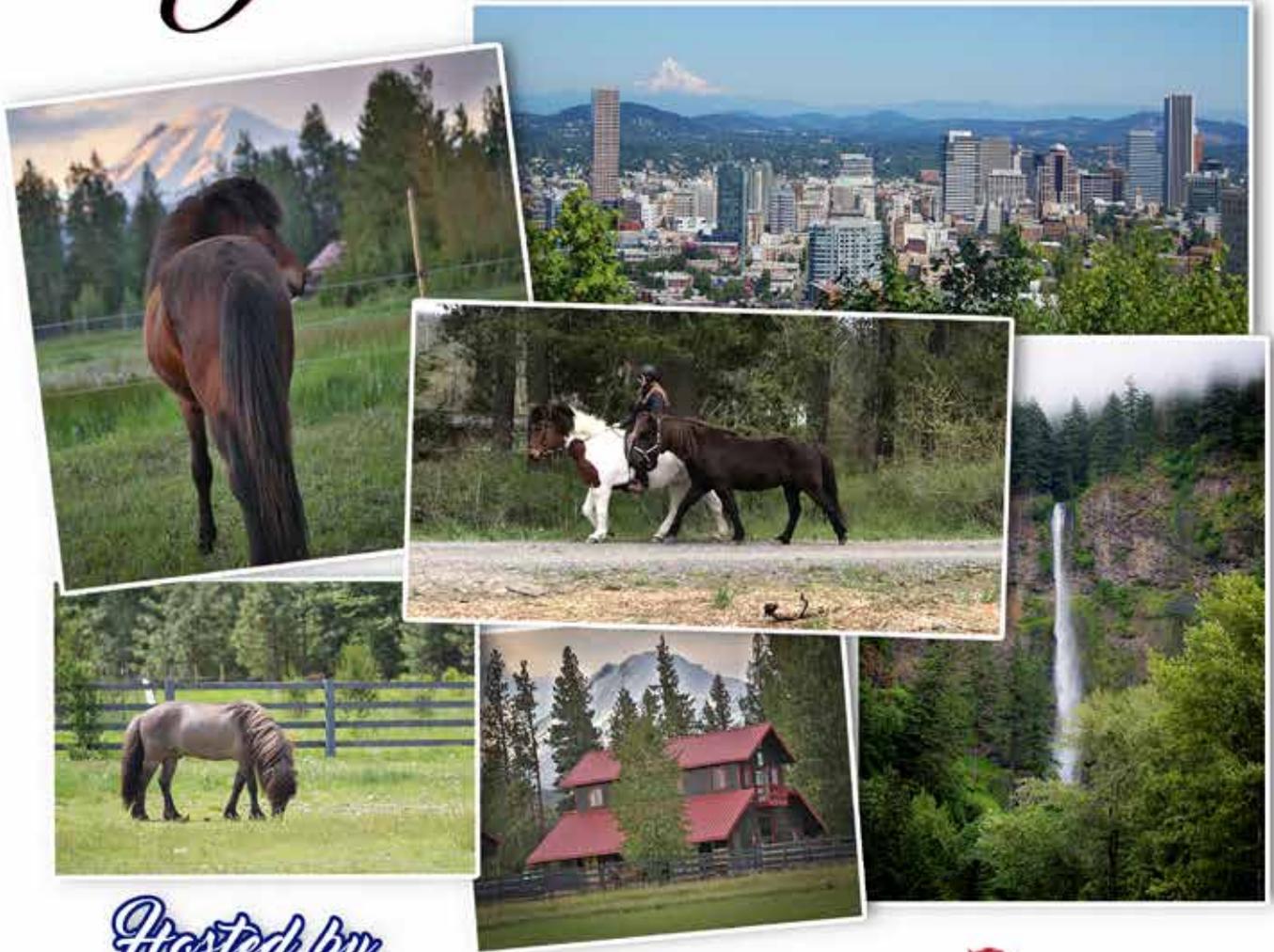
Finally, all was in readiness for our actual trek. The preparatory phase of our trip was now over. It was now time to hit the trail.

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Keep my name and contact information private.

When possible, use my email address instead of the US Mail to notify me of official USIHC business.

I prefer **not** to receive a copy of the *Quarterly* magazine in the US Mail.

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

Name	Year of Birth (juniors only)	Email (optional)

Farm Listing.

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

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**Congress memberships are for one year. Your membership expires on the anniversary of your payment.**

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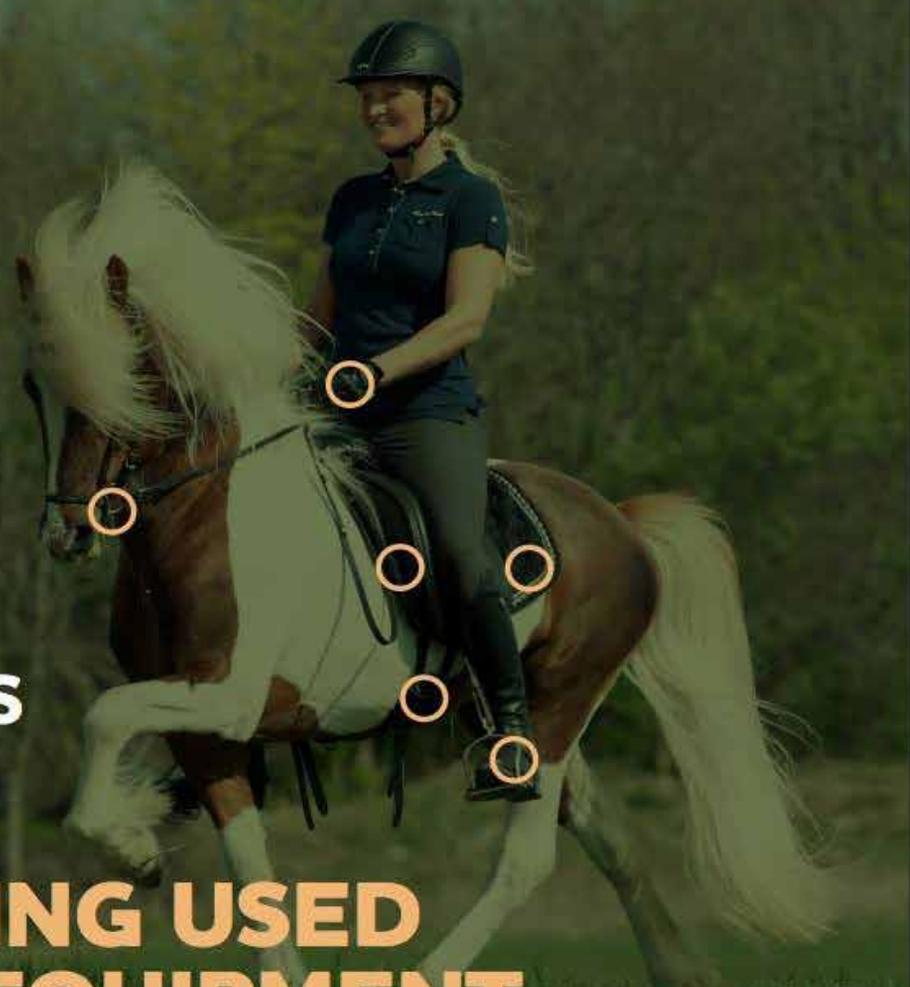
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### KEEP DISEASE OUT

As a result of its geographical isolation and strict import policies, Iceland has remained **FREE** from serious infectious diseases in animals. Please avoid introducing infectious agents to the country.

### DO NOT ENTER ICELAND WITH:

- used riding equipment, such as saddles, bits, bridles, nosebands pads, rugs, whips, etc.
- used riding gloves or riding shoes

### CLEANING AND DISINFECTION OF RIDING CLOTHES:

Used riding clothes must be washed in a washing machine or dry cleaned prior to entering the country.

Riding clothes and boots that cannot be cleaned this way must be washed and disinfected as follows:

1. Rinse thoroughly with detergent
2. Dry
3. Spray with a wide spectrum disinfectant (effective against bacteria, fungi and viruses) as Virkon S (1%) or Septustin M (0,4%).
4. Store for at least 5 days prior to bringing the clothes into contact with horses in Iceland



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Icelandic Horse Breeding Club

USIHC Activity Club

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### FEIF Icelandic Breeding Shows 2019

Cobleskill, NY: 1<sup>st</sup> - 2<sup>nd</sup> September

Peru, IA: 12<sup>th</sup> - 13<sup>th</sup> September

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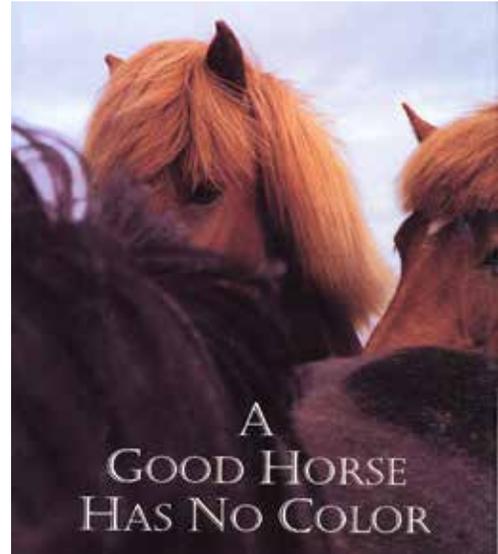
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sagas•history•culture•horses

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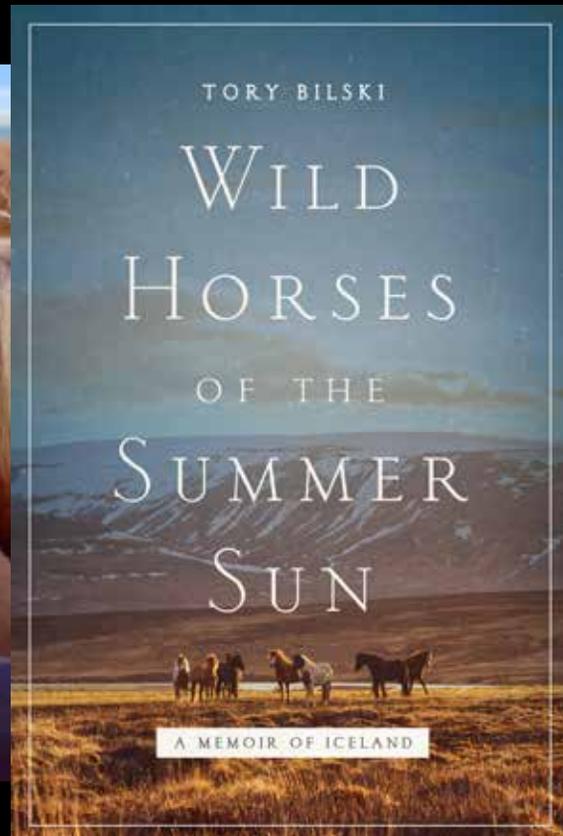


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(949) 660-7139 (fax)  
bonnielou92660@yahoo.com  
www.bohartkkranch.com

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Will & Asta Covert  
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Santa Ynez, CA 93460  
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info@tolt.net  
www.tolt.net

Valkyrie Icelandic  
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laura@valkyrieicelandic.com  
www.valkyrieicelandic.com

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fiddlinvet@gmail.com  
www.coloradoicelandics.com

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kat@creeksideusa.com  
www.creeksideusa.com

## IOWA

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Virginia Lauridsen  
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virginia@harmonyicelandics.com  
www.harmonyicelandics.com

## KENTUCKY

Lettleiki Icelandics  
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maggie@letteikiicelandics.com  
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slyterz@yahoo.com

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fivegaitfarm.com



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annette@mountainicelandics.com  
www.mountainicelandics.com

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daumkarin@gmail.com

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### **TENNESSEE**

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May 16, 2019 Colt - Photograph at 1 week old

## Andvari from Beat N' Branch

F.: IS2005137340 **Sporður frá Bergi**  
M.: IS1998225081 **List frá Hrafnhólum**



June 23, 2019 Colt - Photograph 3 at days old

## Kveikur from Beat N' Branch

F.: IS2007187661 **Strokkur frá Syðri-Gegnishólum**  
M.: US2010204585 **Kvika from Four Winds Farm**



US2016205158

## Elldrottning from Beat N' Branch

F.: IS1998186693 **Hjörtur frá Holtsmúla 1**  
M.: IS1999237400 **Glóð frá Brimilsvöllum**

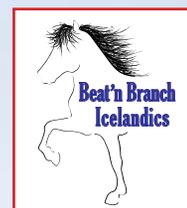


US2017205263

## Hríma from Beat N' Branch

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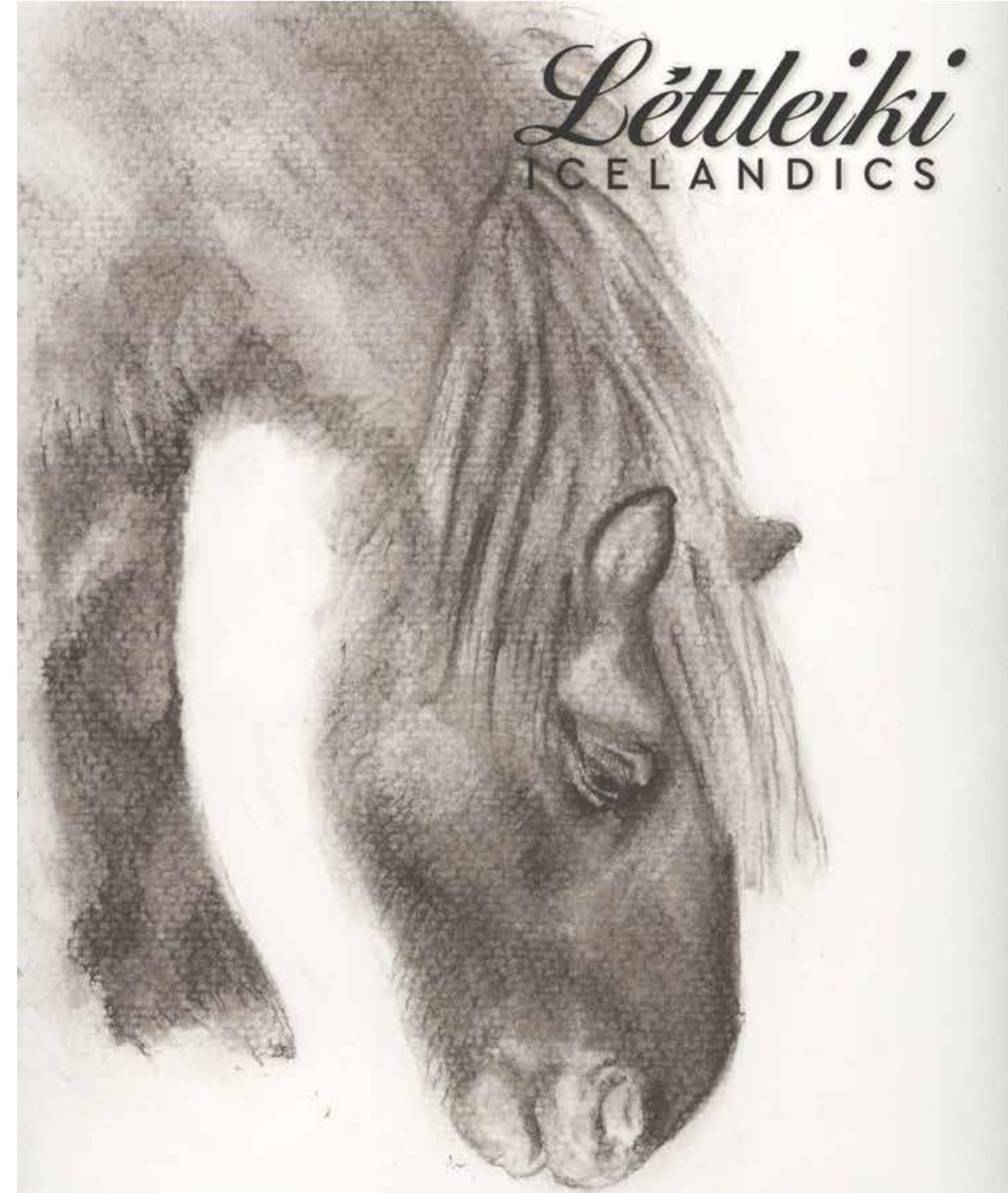


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