

Issue One

THE

2020

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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Þröstur frá Hvammi



"Þröstur's uniquely kind and cooperative attitude combined with his fantastic gaits and conformation makes him a great breeding option for almost any mare. He has enormous speed capacity in his tölt and pace and his well set neck, withers and shoulders stand out as particularly good characteristics".
Carrie~Taktur

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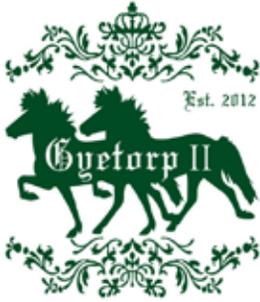
"Þröstur really is a truly complete package of talent, temperament & elegance. His gaits are well-separated & fluid. His temperament is that perfect mix of being forward but in control. These are attributes he has passed on to his offspring. No stallion in this country has a more impressive record with an Icelandic Champion & the highest evaluated four year old of 2015 counted among his offspring".
Caeli Cavanagh BSci Riding and Riding Instruction, Hólar University, Level 3 FEIF Trainer

He currently has 215 registered offspring. His 3 highest judged offsprings are: Trausti frá Þóróddsstöðum with 9.5 tölt and total of 8.64; Gammur frá Hemlu II with 9.0 for pace and 8.37 total; Valíant frá Vatnshörmum with 9.0 trot and a total of 8.23.

CONFORMATION			RIDDEN		
Head	8	107	Tölt	9	109
NWS	9	114	Trot	9	113
Back&Croup	8	101	Pace	8	112
Proportions	8.5	111	Gallop	8.5	109
Legs	8	100	Spirit	8.5	109
Joints	8	112	Gen.Impr.	6.5	112
Hooves	9	117	Walk	9	96
Mane & Tail	9	120	Slow Tölt	8	101
TOTAL	8.59	118			

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May 9 & 10



Luther Gudmundsson has been riding and working with Icelandic horses for 40 years. He has ridden Landsmót, Fjordungsmot, European Championship, Danish and Swedish Championship, Icelandic Championship any many many other tournaments around Europe and Iceland. He is also the creator of, among other things, the Vals bits and many stangir. Our clinic will focus on achieving balance and self-carriage & will include learning the advantages of training with different bits.

August 1 & 2



Sörli in an almost perfect shoulder in (poll should be a bit higher)

How about just a little dressage? If you want a healthy and happy horse you should give it a try. Dressage means training and with correct exercises you can strengthen and supple the horse while maintaining a calm and attentive riding partner. As a result, you will develop muscles, strengthen tummy and back, and increase the carrying power (hind legs) and improve the gaits. Learn and have a lot of fun with Ulla Hudson who has won many awards in dressage and has many years of training Icelandic horses.

September 11, 12 & 13



Eyjólfur Ísólfsson! Legendary horse trainer, rider and teacher, and one of the world's best. A certified Master Trainer, honored by The Icelandic Horse Association and with 15 years of experience as the Chief Riding Teacher at Hólar University in Iceland. He is a true scholar with a great ability to communicate and transfer his knowledge to others. As a riding teacher he is the pioneer that others follow. Come ride, learn and leave feeling inspired.

October 24 & 25



Photo Credit: Martina Gates

Caeli Cavanagh, Hólar University graduate focuses on the benefits of liberty work with your horse. Liberty is the ultimate tool to isolate the mind of your horse, reinforcing your bond, refining your communication system and building trust between horse and trainer. We will seek to learn to use liberty exercises to improve our horses confidence, increase their motivation and have our horses move freely with us.



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ICELANDIC HORSE

Q U A R T E R L Y

THE ICELANDIC HORSE QUARTERLY

Issue One 2020

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

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On the cover: This beautiful portrait of a young mare captures Jonina from Tolthaven's (US2016205163) sweet character and charming personality, and shows off her extraordinary coloring. She is a three-year-old chestnut going gray, and will be all gray in the future. She is the daughter of Álfadans frá Ingólfshvoli (IS1996187025) and Glódis von Hof Osterkamp (DE2001234059), bred by Jer Oliver. Owner and photographer Susy Oliver says Jonina also has plenty of spirit and loves to show off her big, speed-demon tölt at liberty in the field.

Opposite Page: Suzi McGraw riding Zara frá Álfhólum and Brynja Meehan riding Thorsdaggur from Bluegrass in the 2019 Frida Show. Photo by Valerie Durbon.

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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), 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 Valerie Durbon

WHY JOIN THE USIHC?

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 for 15 affiliated clubs: 14 regional clubs and an activity club for 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."

USIHC NEWS

2020 ANNUAL MEETING

The USIHC Annual Meeting was organized by the North West Icelandic Horse Club and held in Portland, OR on Sunday, January 19. About 30 members from all over the U.S. attended.

In the morning, board members and committee chairs presented their Annual Reports for 2019, accompanied by a beautifully designed PowerPoint presentation by Emily Potts, our promotion chair. The afternoon program was filled by presentations by Caeli Cavanagh and Martin Nielsen.

Caeli, the main organizer of the Annual Meeting, gave an overview of four different education systems for riders, instructors, and trainers: the German IPZV system, the Icelandic FT system, the United States Pony Club's, and the USIHC's. It was interesting to see how the first three long-established education systems work. The USIHC now has a basic Riding Badge Program and is urgently working on a trainer/instructor certification program. Caeli asked the people present to write down their ideas and hand them in. Stay tuned!

Martin Nielsen, our new board member and secretary, had a very bad travel day and barely made it to the meeting in time for his eagerly awaited presentation on "Horses vs. Worms." A veterinarian and a research scientist at the Gluck Equine Research Center of the University of Kentucky, Martin is an internationally recognized expert on equine parasites and their control. The *Quarterly's* Alex Pregitzer interviewed him in 2014 and wrote an excellent article on the subject (see Issue Two 2014). Martin says that the information in Alex's article is still valid, but that the situation concerning drug resistance of the parasites has become even more dire. Effective, science-based parasite prevention and management regimens are essential. For more information, you can follow @MartinKNielsen on Twitter and Youtube, and look for Gluck Equine Research Center on Facebook.

Here are some highlights from the board and committee reports:

Last year we saw a dramatic increase in our membership, which helped keep us in the black even though the development of our new website meant an added expense of over \$10,000. We are doing well financial-



The mark of a great riding teacher is when your students surpass your scores, as Alicia Flanigan (with the blue ribbon) and Maria Octavo (red) did their teacher Terral Hill at the 2019 Frida Show. Photo by Valerie Durbon.

ly and will be able to continue to support our important programs.

Further increasing the membership remains a goal for 2020—there are still 255 people who belong to a USIHC-affiliated club, but who do not pay dues to the USIHC itself. A second goal is to support the registration of all Icelandic horses in the U.S. and their transfers to new owners.

Of the 14 Regional Clubs and one Activity Club affiliated with the USIHC, 10 held clinics supported by Policy #31; each received a grant of \$250 (the amount was based on the number of USIHC members participating). Many clubs participating in horse expos and local fairs also received free promotional copies of the *Quarterly*.

Two Breeding Evaluations were held in September 2019, one in New York, and one in Iowa. Two evaluations are planned for 2020: in California in August, and in Kentucky in September.

Twenty USIHC sanctioned shows were held in 2019, compared to 13 the previous year. The North American Youth Cup, held

at Red Feather Icelandics in Washington State, was a great success and attended by young riders from both the U.S. and Canada.

The USIHC nominated Laura Benson for 2019 FEIF Trainer of the Year. The winner was announced at the FEIF Annual Meeting in February, when this issue of the *Quarterly* was at press.

Anne Owen was the individual winner of the 2019 Sea to Shining Sea ride, completing 3,432 miles; the Rocky Mountain Tölter, with 7,841.68 miles, won the team award. The ride boasted 8 teams and 13 individual riders, who logged 36,710 miles and shared 353 photos of their adventures on Facebook. The 2020 S2SS ride is underway, with 52 participants and 355 miles logged by mid-January. It is not too late to join!

The USIHC officially launched its new logo in February and its new website in December. Take a look! We have 1,800 followers on Facebook, and over 60,000

people saw USIHC content in their news feeds. An online store featuring USIHC branded merchandise is coming soon.

Each issue of *The Icelandic Horse Quarterly* had 45 to 50 contributors from our membership. If you have “wow” photos of your horse or a good story to tell, please send them in.

Below are more details from our 2019 Annual Report:

SECRETARY'S REPORT

This year the USIHC saw an increase of 108 members and an increase of 70 households. As of January 2020, we have 772 members in 577 households, compared to 664 members in 507 households in January 2019.

TREASURER'S REPORT

At the end of 2019, the total cash in all of USIHC's accounts was \$115,444.47. After deducting the unexpended Youth, World Championship, and Judge Scholarship funds, our total Unrestricted Cash Balance was \$103,036.30.

From a strict income and expense perspective, 2019 yielded a \$2,411 gain. However, two rather large 2019 expenses (possibly totaling \$2,500) were not received before year's end. If we include them, our 2019 income and expenses balance each other out. All in all, that's a very good change from the last five years, which had substantial losses.

Our new “bare bones” budget process has definitely improved our ability to better understand and therefore control our spending on special funding requests from the various committees. In this process, which we began in 2018, we first deduct from our expected income all those expenses needed to run the organization and to fulfill our commitments to FEIF (the “bare bones”). Then the Board looks at the various committees' budget requests to decide how much we can fund and how much of a loss we are willing to take on for the year.

In 2019 there was an overall increase in income of 20.1%, mainly due to an increase in the number of competitions (19 vs.13), the increase in our membership, and an increase in the number of registered horses and transfers. Our total expenses for 2019 were almost identical to those of 2018.

RIDE THE U.S.A. FROM SEA TO SHINING SEA

Sea 2 Shining Sea is a virtual ride on Icelandic horses. The 2020 ride explores five landmark trails in each of four regions of the U.S., for a total of 5,000 miles. Each trail requires 250 miles or 62.5 hours to complete.

To participate you must be a USIHC member. You can compete as an individual or as part of a team (of up to six riders). You log your hours in the saddle and we convert them to distance (at four miles-per-hour) and credit the appropriate team, if you are part of one.

The horses you ride must be Icelandic and be registered in WorldFengur or any FEIF country registry. You ride (or drive) your horse however you like, so long as you are not being paid for the time—only leisure riding counts.

Unlike our previous virtual rides, S2SS 2020 does not follow one continuous trail. Instead each landmark trail is an actual place that you can ride in the U.S. Said Leisure Committee chair Janet Mulder, “We wanted the landmarks to be places where groups could physically get together to ride. We tried to choose landmarks near where a number of USIHC members lived. Local input helped us pick some really good options, but not all of the trails have been experienced by our committee members—we had to trust the internet that they were open to horses.”

The ride begins in the Pacific Mountain Region at Chugach Mountain State Park in Alaska and proceeds to visit Yosemite National Park, CA; Rocky Mountain National Park, CO; Yellowstone National Park, WY; and Grand Canyon National Park, AZ. It then moves into the Midwest Region, visiting Cuyahoga Valley National Park, OH; Green River Lake State Park, KY; the Shore to Shore Riding Trail, MI; Zumbro Bottoms, MN; and Wildcat Mountain State Park, WI—at which point riders have completed 2500 miles.

The second half of the ride begins in the Southern Region, visiting Shenandoah National Park, VA; Great Smokey Mountains National Park, TN; Bussy Point Recreation Area, GA; Big Bend Ranch State Park, TX; and Princess Place Preserve, FL. The ride ends in the Northeast Region, visiting Mount Toby, MA; Sprague Land Preserve, CT; Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historic Park, VT; Otter Creek Horse Trails, NY; and Acadia National Park, ME.

Local clubs are encouraged to host group rides at these locations. They will be announced on the “Sea 2 Shining Sea” Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1866794093559110/>) and you are welcome to join! We also encourage you to share photos and stories about your rides on that page.

See icelandics.org/sea-2-shining-sea-ride for the complete rules and regulations. For more information, email s2ss@icelandics.org.





The North American Youth Cup, held at Red Feather Icelandics in Washington, was attended by 19 young riders from the U.S. and Canada. Here, the Purple Team shows their style.

REGISTRY REPORT

The total number of horses registered in 2019 was 115; registrations of another 139 were transferred. The number of domestic-bred foals under 12 months was 31 mares, 25 stallions, and 1 gelding, an increase of 2 foals over 2018. Seventeen domestic-bred horses more than a year old were registered (10 mares, 3 stallions, and 4 geldings), an increase of 5 over 2018. Seven more horses imported from Canada were registered this year than last (8 mares, 5 geldings total), and one fewer horse imported from Iceland (17 mares, 4 stallions, and 15 geldings total).

The total number of USIHC-registered horses in the WorldFengur studbook is 6,248 (3,393 domestic-bred, 2,855 imported).

AFFILIATED CLUBS

The USIHC began 2019 with 14 Regional and two Activity Clubs. The Gæðingar Club (for breeders) is “on hold,” so we ended the year with one Activity Club, Sleipnir (for trainers and instructors). The Regional Clubs are: AIHA (Alaska; 48 members), Cascade (Pacific Northwest; 24), CIA (California; 17), Flugnir (Minnesota & Wisconsin; 69), Frida (Mid-Atlantic; 85), Glitfaxa (California; 15), Hestafolk (Washington; 29), Klettajalla (Rocky Mountains; 43), Kraftur (California; 42), NEIHC (Northeast; 190),

NWIHC (Washington; 26), Saint Skutla (New York; 34), Sirius (Ohio & Kentucky; 31), and Toppur (Iowa; 35).

Ten clubs held clinics or schooling shows supported by Policy #31 funding; the USIHC paid out \$2,275 of the \$3,500 budgeted for this program. Many Regional Clubs also participated in horse expos, all-breed shows, and local fairs, where they promoted the Icelandic horse, in part using materials supplied by the Congress. For 2020, the clubs have requested 270 copies of the *Quarterly* for these events.

For the 2019 FEIF census, the U.S. reported 765 members. As decided at the September Board of Directors’ meeting, we only counted dues-paying USIHC members this year, rather than including (as the FEIF census allows) those Affiliated Club members who are not USIHC members. This decision ended a dispute with WorldFengur, the international studbook. For use of its database, WorldFengur wanted to charge the USIHC based on our reported FEIF census number, even though only dues-paying USIHC members would have access to the database.

Our official FEIF census numbers thus seem to have dropped from the 1,008 members reported in 2017 and 2018. The comparable figure in 2019, however, is

1,003. The data suggests we still have 255 members of Affiliated Clubs who do not belong to the USIHC. There are also 383 USIHC members who do not belong to a Regional Club. Overall, USIHC membership has increased dramatically over the last three years from 653 (in 2017), to 673 (in 2018), to 772 (in 2019).

BREEDING

Two USIHC-sanctioned breeding evaluations were held in 2019. (See our news report in Issue Four 2019 and the article in this issue, “The Magic 8.”) Martina Gates and Sigrún Brynjarsdóttir organized the first show on September 1-2 at the Cobleskill Fair Grounds in New York; the show manager was Kara Noble. Judges Þorvaldur Kristjánsson and Arnar Bjarki Sigurðarson also presented a lecture on the FEIF breeding goals and possible updates to the current policies. Eleven horses were presented. Five received first prize (8.0 or above) for conformation. Four were presented for full evaluation and one received a first prize total score.

The second evaluation was held September 12-13 at Harmony Icelandics in Iowa, organized by Virginia Lauridsen; show assistants were Deb Cook and Sherry Hoover. Judges Elsa Albertsdóttir and Heimir Gunnarsson lectured on breed evaluations through the decades, with videos showing changes in the horses’ form under rider. They led a practice session in conformation assessment, noting the importance of training your horse to stand correctly. They also lectured on BLUP and the importance of breed evaluations to the accuracy of BLUP’s predictions of the quality of future offspring. Four horses were presented for full evaluation; one received first prize for conformation.

In 2020, Heidi Benson is organizing a breeding evaluation scheduled for August 1-2 at Victory Rose Thoroughbreds in Vacaville, CA. Twelve horses are expected. On September 28-29, Léttleiki Icelandics will host a breeding evaluation and young horse linear assessment in Shelbyville, KY. Ten horses are expected. Both shows qualify under Policy #30b for USIHC funding.

EDUCATION

Five students received USIHC Riding Badges through a program led by Jess Haynsworth at Mad River Valley Icelandic Horses in Vermont. Tested by Jana Meyer on August 24, Megan Morse and Judson Hally earned the Basic Level 1 Badge, Arianna De Forge earned Basic Level 2, and Josie Nicholas and Keziah Dunn earned Competition Level 1 (see Keziah's article in this issue).

The Education Committee also sponsored the Sixth Sport Judge Seminar, held in September in Vermont; the instructor and judge was Þorgeir Guðlaugsson; second examiner was Jana Meyer. Of eight attendees, seven took the exam; none passed. A 2020 Judge Seminar is planned for Colorado.

Finally, the Education Committee voted Laura Benson as the USIHC nominee for FEIF Trainer of the Year. The winner is announced at the FEIF Annual Meeting in February.

Plans for 2020 are to continue to develop a certification process for instructors and trainers. We also will continue to encourage the use of the USIHC Riding Badge Program as an educational tool for our members to broaden their knowledge and understanding of the correct use of the Icelandic horse as a competition and pleasure riding horse.

LEISURE

From July 2018 to December 2019, the Sea2Shining Sea Virtual Ride followed the Pony Express Route, traveling 9,900 miles. Eight teams and 13 individual riders—45 riders in all—logged a total of 9,177.58 hours, which translates to over 36,710 miles ridden. The winning team, with 7,841.68 miles, was the Rocky Mountain Tölter: Angie Calve, Iris Heidberg, Jeffrey Rose, Jeny Feldner, Peyton Black, and Zoe Johnson. The top individual rider, with 3,432 miles, was Anne Owen. Along the way, the S2SS riders shared 353 photos on their Facebook page.

By January 2020, there were already eight teams and 52 participants in the new S2SS Ride (see the sidebar).

The Leisure Committee also featured a Rider of the Month. Those already featured

in the *Quarterly* were Iris Heidberg, Ron Hoover, Chris Feldner, Rachel Miller, Raven Flores, Sandie Weaver, and Lisa McKeen.

Rider of the Month for September is Samantha Harrigan of Molalla, OR. Samantha owns two Icelandics. She hopes to qualify for the FEIF Youth Cup team in 2022 “and to one day become a professional Icelandic horse trainer.” Asked what she enjoys about trail riding, she said, “I love riding outside, going fast down the trails and also working with my horse in new environments.”

Rider of the Month for October is Kristen Humble of Clyde, MI. She has raised “about 100” Quarter horses over 20 years and is new to owning Icelandics. “About two years ago, when I was given two unbroke Icelandics, I immediately started researching the breed to learn as much as I could about them. This included finding local experts, watching videos online, joining a variety of Icelandic-related Facebook groups, becoming a member of the USIHC, and joining the S2SS club.” This year, she and her Icelandic Dyggur achieved her goal of completing the Michigan Shore to Shore ride of almost 300 miles in two weeks. “Trail riding lets you see the beauty of the world and slow down life for a while,” she notes. “I also really love the smooth, fearless, and willing disposition of my Icelandic horse. He makes the trail even more enjoyable.”

Rider of the Month for November is Anne Owen of Whitehouse Station, NJ. The top individual rider in the 2019 S2SS ride, Anne has been riding for 50 years and owns three Icelandics. “I am competitive and do a lot of endurance trail riding on my horses. These horses are fearless and fun and we love to tölt really fast on the flat and enjoy the view of the mountains.” She joined S2SS, she says, because “it is nice to see how many miles/hours I actually do.” In 2019, it was 3,432 miles!

QUARTERLY

The 19 members of the committee, and up to 50 contributors, produced four 52-page full-color issues of *The Icelandic Horse Quarterly* in 2019. In keeping with our goal to provide a two-way communication channel for the Board, Committees, Affiliated Clubs, and members, we dedicated 92 pages to



Anne Owen was Leisure Rider of the Month for November.

USIHC News and announcements, FEIF News, and Club Updates. Paid advertising accounted for another 45 pages, up from 38 in 2018 thanks to ad representative Jean Ervasti and treasurer Kari Pietsch-Wangard.

We printed 600 copies of each issue. Member households received 501 copies in March, 522 in June, 533 in September, and 575 in December—an increase of nearly 100 over December 2018, when we mailed out 477 copies.

Members, Farms, and Affiliated Clubs received 145 promotional copies to give away at shows, expos, and clinics. In 2020, we are requesting an increase in our print run to have more copies for promotion. We welcome requests from any USIHC member for copies of the magazine to use to promote the Icelandic horse.

PROMOTION

We launched the new USIHC logo in February 2019. Our goal was to represent the spirit of the Icelandic horse with a timeless and bold aesthetic.

Four Affiliated Clubs received Policy #21 funding for their promotional activities this year: Toppur (Midwest Horse Fair), Cascade (Northwest Horse Fair), Flugnir (Minnesota Horse Expo), and NEIHC (Equine Affaire Massachusetts). Policy #21 reimburses clubs for some of the cost of



Samantha Harrigan was Leisure Rider of the Month for September.

display spaces, booths, and breed demos at shows and expos. Combined, these events gave us the opportunity to reach over 210,000 equine enthusiasts.

The USIHC also continued our partnership with Horses of Iceland, a strategic marketing plan. Our financial contribution supports the creation of education and promotional videos, booklets, brochures, and digital initiatives, and Horses of Iceland makes many of these available to us to use at shows and expos.

In social media, we increased the followers of our Facebook page this year by 12.4%. We now have 1,800 followers, while 66,388 people have seen USIHC content in their Facebook feeds and 9,343 have engaged with them by liking, commenting, sharing, or clicking through to USIHC content. On Instagram, we have 429 followers; 655 users hashtagged #usihc and 353 users hashtagged #usihcproud in their posts.

Finally, we launched the new USIHC website on December 12. We hope it reflects the bold, energetic, and powerful message the Icelandic horse represents. The new design improves navigability and provides a seamless user experience on mobile and desktop devices; it is also ADA compliant. New features include a blog featuring events and news, an email newsletter, and new photos by Susy Oliver, Andrea Barber, and Shannon Fitzgerald. In its first

month, the site has logged 4,400 sessions, averaging 147 sessions per day. The top five pages viewed are: Farm List, Registered Horse Search, Join, Quarterly, and Registry.

SPORT

In 2019 there were a total of 20 USIHC-sanctioned sport competitions, vs. 13 in 2018. Shows were held in March (in California), May (California & Kentucky), June (Minnesota, New York, and by video judging), July (Vermont & Washington), August (California), September (Indiana, Alaska, Vermont, & Colorado), and October (California, Kentucky, & Virginia).

Three shows were WorldRanking competitions, held over the same weekend in Kentucky. The following riders made the FEIF World Ranking list: Carrie Lyons Brandt, Coralie Denmeade, Mackenzie Durbin, Jessica Haynsworth, Terral Hill, Sydney Horas, Zoe Johnson, and Charlotte Reilly.

The National Ranking Award Winners for each test, and their average scores, are: Tölt T1 Asta Covert (7.75); T2 Terral Hill (6.99), T3 Olivia Rasmussen (6.15); T4 Lucy Nold (5.70); T5 Lori Cretney (5.95); T6 Eden Hendricks (6.40); T7 Maria Octavo (5.48); T8 Jackie Harris (6.50). Four-Gait V1 Asta Covert (7.40); V2 Laura Benson (6.55); V3 Kydee Sheetz (6.00); V5 Barbara Chilton (5.50); V6 Jackie Harris (5.80). Five-Gait F1 Ayla Green (6.65); F2 Heidi Benson (5.80); F3 Nadia Rusterholz (3.87).

The U.S. also sponsored two riders at the World Championships in Berlin, August 4-11. Jennifer Melville placed 12th in Four Gait Combination, with 13.66 total. She scored 6.43 in V1 (19th place), 7.03 in T2 Preliminaries (11th place), and 6.79 in the T2 B-Final (10th place). Isabella Gneist scored 5.83 in T2 Young Riders (19th place).

YOUTH

Keziah Dunn is the winner of the 2019 Spaeri Youth Essay Award (see her article in this issue).

Two USIHC youth members, Maile Behringer and Mackenzie Durbin, attended the FEIF Young Leader Seminar near Amsterdam. They reported that the conference was excellent and recommend that other

youth attend events like this one in the future. (See FEIF News.)

The third North American Youth Cup was held at Red Feather Icelandics in Trout Lake, WA with 19 participants, four team leaders, and four trainers: Ásta Covert, Caeli Cavanagh, Jana Meyers, and Lucy Nold. The week included riding lessons, team competitions, team bonding activities, and whitewater rafting. The final USIHC-sanctioned show was judged by Will Covert. Though Youth Cup is not organized by the Youth Committee, the USIHC supported each youth member with \$100.

BOARD MEETINGS

The USIHC Board of Directors met by conference call on November 19, December 10, and January 7. Complete minutes, including the monthly Treasurer's and Secretary's reports, can be found online at icelandics.org/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.

CORRECTIONS

The photograph accompanying the "Moon Blindness Study" report on page 42 of Issue Four 2019 was missing its caption and credit line. The image of Ann Dwyer of the Genesee Valley Equine Clinic examining the stallion Strákur frá Vatnsleysu should have been credited to Andrea Barber. We also apologize for the extreme cropping of the picture.



Kristen Humble was Leisure Rider of the Month for October.



YOUTH CUP

The 2020 FEIF Youth Cup will take place July 18-26 at Vilhelmsborg, Jutland in Denmark. Held every other year, the FEIF Youth Cup consists of a week of intense training with instructors of international standing. The week ends in a competition, with a range of classes on and off the oval track. Riders aged 14-17 train and compete in international teams, with the aim of fostering friendship and an awareness of cultural differences. The common language is English. Most participants have some experience of competition riding. Most riders from Europe bring their own horses for the event, but for those traveling overseas, good rental horses are available.

YOUNG LEADERS

Twenty-two young adults, from as far away as the U.S. and Australia, came to the FEIF Young Leaders Seminar, hosted by the Dutch association, NIJSP, near Amsterdam in November. The program included workshops with Ruitertfit (herculeshorsetraining.com), engaging in mental and physical exercises in rider balance and mental preparedness for competition; MapsTell (mapstell.com), into how character type affects leadership style; and groundwork with very green horses. Social time was filled with cooking, games, and lots of laughter. See the photos on Instagram @feiforg, or look for #feifyouth.

50TH ANNIVERSARY

FEIF published a professionally designed booklet to celebrate its 50th anniversary in 2019. Launched at the 2019 World Championships in Berlin, the booklet is now available for purchase at 15€ (plus postage) per copy. Contact office@feif.org to place an order (ask about discounts for 20+ copies).

The 60-page booklet contains beautiful photographs and stories from the first 50 years of FEIF's work for the Icelandic horse community. Many well-known members, including founding president Ewald Isenbügel, share their memories and thoughts about FEIF's future.

FEIF also prepared a collection of five leaflets, each a single page, to highlight the work in each of the departments. These can be downloaded at www.feif.org or purchased through office@feif.org.

BREEDERS MEETING

Thirty-five Icelandic horse breeders met in December at the Open Breeders Meeting at the IPZV office in Laatzen, Germany. The aims of the meeting were to strengthen international cooperation in the FEIF breeding department, to share information on breeding, and to promote an open exchange of experiences. A lively discussion was held on improving the flow of information between FEIF and breeders, riders, and owners.

The meeting also featured two lectures: The Icelandic breeding leader Þor-

valdur Kristjánsson spoke on the planned innovations in the field of breeding assessments; video sequences on the individual test requirements with different horses underlined his presentation. German veterinarian Mathias Rettig lectured about the leg health of Icelandic horses, with information from international studies on the problems of using training tracks with different structures. He suggested ways to improve our training methods and the construction of our oval tracks to prevent eventual health problems.

EXAMINERS SEMINAR

The first Examiners Seminar took place in Sweden in November, bringing together those who score trainer exams in the FEIF member countries. Initiated by the FEIF Education Department and organized by Ulrika Backan and Jenny Mandal, the seminar took place at Ledingenäs Gärd, where accommodations, catering, and a seminar room with access to a large riding hall offered the ideal conditions for a seminar of this kind. Anna Hartman and Elke Hartman from the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences gave lectures on how to judge practical skills and on how horses learn (and how we should consider this as riding teachers). Both are important aspects of examining, judging, teaching, and learning. Demonstrations of the trainer exams at different levels from the Icelandic, Swedish, German, and Swiss education systems were also dis-



cussed and evaluated. A big thank you to the riders who were willing to participate in these partly unknown examination procedures from other FEIF countries.

VIRTUAL RIDE

FEIF's Virtual Ride offers everyone in the Icelandic horse world a chance to celebrate the flagship events of the Icelandic horse calendar: the World Championships and Landsmót. These events are held in alternating years on the European continent and Iceland, respectively. In the course of a year, the Virtual Ride makes it possible for all Icelandic horse riders to make their way gradually to these events!

Riders may go on their own, or in groups. The idea is that all riders who live more than 800-1000 km away from the venue should form teams. Then all the ridden miles of team members will be added together to help them get to the destination. Each rider or team rides their local trails according to their own time and fitness, keeping track of the approximate distance covered on each ride. The distances are tallied up and logged via the Virtual Ride website each month. Riders and teams can track their own progress—and that of everyone else—on the scoreboard.

This is not a competition. Instead, we encourage all riders to join in the fun that can be had along the way by sharing their passion for the Icelandic horse. Fancy joining in? It is not too late. We can

promise a lot of fun on the way, the opportunity to get to know Icelandic horse fans from all over the world, and best of all, you can take your own favorite horse to the next world Championships, or even to Landsmót—virtually. To register, and to submit your monthly progress, go to <https://feif-virtual.weebly.com>.

RIDING HORSE PROFILE

Are you in the market for a new horse? FEIF has developed a tool to help leisure riders find the best possible match when buying a horse. The tool seeks to identify the traits a horse needs to have to create a safe and comfortable relationship with its human and prevent the negative consequences of a poor match, which benefits both the buyer/rider and horse.

The FEIF Riding Horse Profile represents a neutral description and assessment of the character and behavior of a horse as well as the needs of the buyer/rider. The process recognizes that every rider and every horse is special, with their own character traits and qualities. A horse which may be a completely wrong choice for one rider may be the perfect match for another.

The FEIF Riding Horse Profile does not give marks, but instead creates a neutral and descriptive snapshot of both the buyer/rider and the horse at a specific moment.

The FEIF Riding Horse Profile consists of two forms which are completed by the buyer/rider in cooperation with professional trainers. The questions are designed to guide the buyer/rider and trainer toward the best possible match with a horse.

The buyer/rider completes the Rider's Form describing the ideal riding horse. This process helps the buyer/rider to reflect on the key traits and information his or her dream horse should have. In particular, there are questions relating to the desired behavior, general characteristics, willingness, education level, abilities and gaits. The first form is all about the buyer/rider and independent of any specific horse being considered. The information on this form can be compared to any horse as long as the answers are

fairly recent and accurate.

The second part of the FEIF Riding Horse Profile, the Trainer's Form, is completed in cooperation with a professional trainer and is focused on a particular horse. The trainer records observations about the horse made from the ground and when riding the horse. The trainer observes the horse when being prepared to ride, being mounted, being ridden indoors and outside, and in as many unusual situations as possible.

The list of unusual situations includes encounters with dogs, bicycles, other horses, cars, etc. The more of these situations which can be observed the better. When riding out on trails, the trainer might observe the horse's reaction to approaching and passing a group of horses.

All information collected on the two forms are completely independent. Both forms can be reused for different rider/buyers and different horses. The forms only need to be updated when the information changes, for example, if the rider/buyer changes priorities or if the horse receives more training.

The rider/buyer and trainer work together to compare the information on the two forms to identify a good match between the horse and rider. The process also identifies areas where the horse, the rider, or combination can seek additional education after a purchase is made.

Please Note: The FEIF Riding Horse Profile was developed from material from several FEIF member countries in cooperation with educational institutions in Iceland. It is important to stress that the FEIF Riding Horse Profile gives a snapshot of the horse and rider at a specific moment. There is no guarantee the results are reproducible over time, with different riders, or in different circumstances.

For more information, and to download the forms, see www.feif.org/LeisureRiding/RidingHorseProfile.aspx

CLUB UPDATES

There are 14 Regional Clubs and one Activity Club affiliated with the U.S. Icelandic Horse Congress. To find the Regional Club nearest you, see the USIHC website at www.icelandics.org. The following clubs filed updates on their activities this quarter.



The Alaska Icelandic Horse Association's youth members hit the trail.
Photo by Janet Mulder.

ALASKA

by Jane Wehrheim

Mother Nature hasn't been able to make up her mind if it will be winter or not for us up here in Alaska, which means that riding hasn't been part of our plans as frequently as we all want. The good thing is that there is always something to do—that's just part of having horses. Our members stay busy with ground work, inside arena time, practicing driving, mounted archery, and some good grooming and brushing time. And of course this is a great time to clean and reorganize the tack room. I don't think the word "bored" is in any equestrian's vocabulary!

We are excited for the coming riding season, as we have many events planned again this year. There will be Mounted Archery events, Competitive Trail Riding, clinics, a youth camp, a schooling show, and a USIHC-sanctioned show, to mention a few. Please check our website, alaskaicelandics.org, for dates and more information. We also share the activities

of our members and trail updates on our Facebook page.

As I write this in December, we just finished our Alaska Icelandic Horse Association (AIHA) and Tölt Alaska Holiday party. It was so nice to get together and celebrate our common link—the horses that made us all friends. Organized and hosted by Janet Mulder and her family, the party was complete with a traditional Icelandic book exchange. It was a wonderful evening, and the perfect way to cap off a fantastic 2019.

FLUGNIR

by Kat Payne, Dave & Eve Loftness

Early in December, a group of Flugnir members gathered to participate in the 30th Annual Horse Parade in Baldwin, WI. The parade featured many different breeds, from petite miniature horses to extra large draft horses and everything in between! The weather couldn't have been better, and horse-drawn vehicles, riders, and hand-walkers were all decked out in festive holiday attire. This was the first parade experience for many of the Icelandic horses and owners in our group, and we're happy to report that all of our horses behaved as though they'd been



Kat Payne and Lydíá from Krakua at the 30th Annual Horse Parade in Baldwin, WI. Photo by Judy Payne.



Flugnir member Judy Payne and her stallion, Dyggur II from Helms Hill Farm.
Photo by Kat Payne.

doing this for years! Highlights of the parade included passing by the Baldwin Care Center and waving to the residents as they watched through their windows, and showing off with a little bit of tölt down Main Street as the announcer gave a brief overview of the Icelandic horse to spectators. By the end of the day, our group was already busy making plans to attend next year's parade. All in all, it was a wonderful day filled with good cheer, laughter, and friends, and was a perfect start to the holiday season.

The Minneapolis-based Icelandic Hekla Club, celebrating all things Icelandic, contacted Flugnir in the fall about presenting an Icelandic horse event. Some members of the Hekla Club were born and raised in the U.S. and Canada, so weren't intimate with Icelandic horses. Jumping on any opportunity to brag about our wonderful breed, Flugnir President Eve Loftness and her husband, Dave, gave a lively and informative presentation. With assistance from Flugnir members Jackie Alschuler and Cindy Nadler, they spoke on horses in general, and Icelandic horses in specific, including overviews of breeding and sport standards and leisure riding. The program was well received, and in all likelihood the Hekla Club will be joining Flugnir at the Minnesota Horse Expo to promote Iceland. One Hekla member (who owns a colt in Iceland and travels there every summer) joined both USIHC and Flugnir. She was invited



The Flugnir team at the Baldwin Horse Parade (left to right): Dave, Susanna, and Eve Loftness; Kat Payne, Katie Livingood, Ellen Rose Parkey, Kai Payne, and Nic Youngmans.

by Eve and Dave to visit their barn, and she enjoyed the chance to ride three different Icelandic horses without having to wait until next summer!

From the Icelandic Hekla Club Facebook page, November 16: “A very big *takk fyrir* to Eve, Dave, Jackie, and Cindy from the Flugnir Icelandic Horse Association of the Midwest for their outstanding program at today’s Hekla meeting. We learned quite a bit and were highly entertained in the process. Best wishes in all future endeavors!”

For more information on Flugnir activities, please visit our website at www.flugnir.org.

FRIDA

by Suzi McGraw

The last quarter of 2019 was a busy one for the Frida Icelandic Riding Club. On October 5, members spent a perfect fall day riding together at the Fair Hill Nature Center in Maryland. They met in the parking lot by the Covered Bridge and rode a short trail before lunch. After a picnic in the pavilion, they set off for a six-mile jaunt up and down hills, through the woods, across gravel roads, and along fields. All the horses and riders enjoyed themselves and are looking forward to doing the ride again in 2020.

German master-trainer Nicole Kempf arrived at Montaire in Middleburg, VA two

weeks later to begin intensive training for our members, many of whom planned to compete in the Frida Icelandic Sanctioned Show on October 26-27. Nicole worked with each horse-and-rider pair to improve gaits, refine transitions, and provide insights into riding competition classes.

Show week began with the arrival of temporary stalls and then with the horses who would call those stalls home for the rest of the week. On Wednesday and Thursday eight riders and horses partic-

ipated in a pre-show clinic with Hólar graduate and veteran competitor Laura Benson. On Friday, Curtis Pierce, show coordinator and manager, worked on IceTest entries, while technicians installed, tested, and re-tested the sound system, and the event coordinators, Jennifer Rooney and Catherine Allen, decorated, assembled goodies for the competitors, and helped with whatever else was needed. Medals and ribbons were prepared, the silent auction was set up, and the



Carrie Lyons Brandt riding Ísak from Mollenmaren in trot in Green Horse Four Gait at the Frida Show. Photo by Valerie Durbon.



Nicole Kempf presenting Vaskur frá Kaðarhóli in tölt (left) and an exaggerated loose rein tölt for his owner, Antje Freygang, in the Stallion Showcase at the 2019 Frida Show, held at Montaire Icelandics, Middleburg, VA, in October. Photos by Valerie Durbon.

track was closed for final grooming by the fabulous grounds crew, Hunter and Buck. Friday evening the riders and judges met to discuss show details and to appoint their rider representative, Carrie Lyons Brandt. Antje Freygang and her husband Mike Padgett then invited everyone into their home to enjoy a delicious pre-show dinner.

The second annual Frida Icelandic Sanctioned Show began bright and early on Saturday morning with everything running smoothly. The spectators, who

came from as far away as Iceland enjoyed watching the horses and riders perform and were kept informed and entertained by Keith Houston, who came from California to serve as show announcer.

On Saturday evening the volunteers, riders, and friends gathered for a delicious show dinner prepared by host Mike Padgett. Keith doubled as DJ while the guests danced, drank, ate, and chatted about horses (and maybe other things?). Odin, the Icelandic god of weather, decided that the track was too dry and busied

himself with providing the necessary rain to resolve the situation. Sunday's finals were delayed so that he could complete his job. The competitors, who came from Maine, Kentucky, Virginia, West Virginia, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, Wisconsin, and California, waited patiently for the Sunday finals to begin and were overjoyed that Odin provided beautiful sunshine for the rest of the day.

The show organizers ensured that there were classes suitable for all levels of riders. They also capitalized on the fact that Halloween was just around the corner, including a costume class in the offerings. The costume class proved to be the most popular fun class of the show. The class was judged by the audience, who decided that Embla frá Keldum and her partner Amanda Malone, who were dressed as Cousin It and Morticia from the Addams Family, should be the winners.

This year's show had two judges rather than one: a FEIF International Sports Judge and a USIHC Sport Judge B. Both judges kept scribes Martina Gates and Amy Goddard busy recording scores and feedback for each horse and rider pair.

Also new this year was the addition of a stallion show during the Saturday lunch break. The stallion show featured Vaskur frá Kaðarhóli, ridden by Nicole Kempf, and Lykill frá Stóra-Ásí, ridden by Laura Benson. The horses and riders dazzled the



The costume class was a favorite event at this pre-Halloween show. Here, Ófeigur frá Selfossi competes with Julia, Sophie, Bella, and Joe Hutter. Photo by Valerie Durbon.



Left, Cousin It (Embla frá Keldum) and Morticia (Amanda Malone) from *The Addams Family* won the costume class. Right, Alicia Flanigan shows Fleygur from Destiny Farms. Photos by Valerie Durbon.

audience with displays of beautiful gaits and harmonious riding.

The Sunday finals featured terrific riding and great sportsmanship. Among the most memorable of the performances was the Five-Gait class, where Terral Hill on Ásaþór from Krakua competed against two of his students, Alicia Flanigan on Fleygur from Destiny Farms and Maria Octavo on Sólmyrkva from Helms Hill Farm. In the end, the students showed

that they had learned their lessons so well that they beat the teacher—this time, at least! At the end of the day, the special Harmonious Rider prize, donated by Antje Freygang, was awarded to Laura Benson for the second year in a row! What a testament to Laura’s riding and partnership with her horse to have not one, but two sets of judges recognize her in this very special way.

Putting on a show like this is only pos-

sible with the help and support of many, many people. We want to thank our hosts Antje Freygang and Mike Padgett for providing their beautiful Montaire facility, for the gracious hospitality shown to each and every guest, and for the countless hours spent in preparation before, during, and after the show. Thanks to Curtis Pierce for his long hours organizing and preparing for the show, not to mention running IceTest during the show, and to our USI-HC Sport Judge B, Alexandra Pregitzer.

Thanks also to all those who donated items for our silent auction to benefit the show. In particular we would like to recognize artists Leslie Chambers (for donating an original stained glass painting) and Sandra Newkirk (for donating an original oil painting), Lífland of Reykjavík for donating two beautiful bridles, complete with bits and reins, and Mountain Memories at ThorpeWood, for donating a weekend stay at ThorpeWood’s Little Pond Cottage. Thank you to our participants and spectators who eagerly bid on all of the items.

Finally, we want to thank all of our club volunteers and their volunteer coordinator, Kathie Brockhouse, for their help throughout the show. We couldn’t have



Terral Hill shows Ásaþór from Krakua at the 2019 Frida Show, held at Montaire Icelandics, Middleburg, VA, in October. Photo by Valerie Durbon.



Left to right, Tony Marques riding Dalur frá Háleggsstöðum, Millie Angelino riding Dögun frá Borg and Jennifer Bergantino riding Katrin from Mill Farm on their victory lap for T-7 class. Right, Laura Benson won the Montaire Harmonious Horsemanship Award for the second year in a row. Photos by Valerie Durbon.



done it without all of you!

The 2019 Frida season ended with a lovely holiday party at the home of Pat Carballo. Delicious food and great company were enhanced by special little wrapped gifts for each attendee. Pat, a former school teacher, also provided an entertaining online “assessment activity” (apparently you can no longer call it a



Riding their victory lap as a pair are the T6 Intermediate Loose Rein Tölt winners Molly Stotts, riding Friða from Sun Crest Farm (left), and Leslie Chambers riding Pokki from Four Winds Farm. Photo by Valerie Durbon.

“quiz”) to test our knowledge of our club, our horses, and our breed in general. Everyone had a great time and we’re all looking forward to a fabulous 2020.

GLITFAXA

by Gabriele Meyer

This fall, Glitfaxes members in the San Francisco Bay Area had no events, which, however, does not mean that the fall was boring. For some of us, the fall was actually quite eventful.

In the North Bay, gelding Noa and his barn friends had to be evacuated from the Kincadee fire, which threatened a huge area, including all of Sonoma County and parts of Lake County. The fire started on October 23 and wasn’t fully contained until November 6. Despite some 4,000 fire-fighters from all over the West working day and night to complete exhaustion, the fire ultimately burned almost 80,000 acres.

In the East Bay, we had our fire scare on Oct 27. While Stefnir and Askur were happily eating their hay, their owner (that would be me) was having difficulties breathing, due to the thick smoke that had suddenly developed, and was feverish-

ly trying to decide what to do. How could we evacuate 50 horses out of a dead-end canyon with only three people present at the barn and no chance to call for help, because the utility company had shut off the electricity in the whole county. Phone communication was impossible, because the cell towers were down. Thankfully, we learned within a couple of hours that the fire causing the smoke had been contained. It was only six miles to our north...

So, what was this all about? Let me explain.

All parts of North America have their fair share of natural disasters: from time to time, there are hurricanes and tornados in the east, blizzards in the north, and flooding, extreme cold or heat waves, or periods of drought almost anywhere.

California has a specific kind of dangerous off-shore winds, called Santa Ana winds in Southern California or Diablo winds in Northern California. While these winds can occur year ‘round, they become extremely dangerous in the late fall.

We have wet winters and dry summers, with no rainfall at all between May and November. Come fall, the vegetation is either extremely dry (shrubs and trees)

or dead (grasses). Of course, we all hope for a good amount of rain in winter, because that is the water we 40 million Californians and estimated 700,000 horses (and many more cattle) drink during the whole year. The problem is, the winter rain leads to an abundance of plant growth in the spring which, inevitably, will turn into fire fuel by late summer.

Diablo and Santa Ana winds are extremely strong, with gusts up to 80 mph, and ultra-dry. In fact, the air humidity drops to below 5% during these wind events. Add in the funneling action of the canyons in our coastal mountain ranges, and you now have a problem.

Santa Ana and Diablo fires move very differently from usual wildfires. They expand extremely fast and move erratically; they can jump a couple of miles due to whipped up embers. These fires cannot be outrun, and are extremely hard to contain. Sadly, people, pets, livestock, and uncounted wild animals perish every year.

For us horse owners, this means that we live in a state of alertness from September through November. If we keep our horses at home, we clear out defensible spaces, come up with evacuation strategies and places, keep our trailers serviced, hitched, and ready, and hopefully have trained our horses to load without fuss, even in situations where everyone is tense and hurried.

The same applies when our horses live at a boarding facility. But no matter how thoroughly we try to prepare, there is simply no way to predict all the possible scenarios and to include them in our emergency planning.

Everyone has the following plans: Early evacuation, if at all possible; this plan assumes there is enough warning time. The next two plans are very risky and thus less favorable: "Shelter-in-place," if there is not much time and, as a last resort if all else fails, let the horses loose.

Lisa Herbert, who keeps her horses at her house, advises, "If you wait until a mandatory evacuation order, you've waited too long!"

Our barn owner makes sure to have a very good relationship with the fire department (every summer, we entice

them with homemade cookies to check out the facility), and we boarders maintain a frequently updated phone tree. During extreme wind events, we also remind each other to check local emergency apps and alerts and to have our phone ringer set on "on" both day and night.

Officials and first responders have learned from the devastating fires of 2017 and 2018, and they go big right from the start. The weather guys issue so-called "red flag warnings" as soon as they spot the possible occurrence of Diablo/Santa Ana winds. This gives everybody a 24-to-48-hour lead time. Since powerlines have caused some of the most destructive fires of the last years, the utility company preemptively shut down electricity starting in 2019. They call it a "Public Safety Power Shut-off." Power shut-offs last between one and five days and are certainly highly inconvenient for millions of people (or even dangerous for people with medical conditions requiring AC or special equipment), but they seem to be effective.

Horse owners will incorporate last fall's experiences into their emergency planning, and clearly, our barn will need

to update its emergency procedures as well. The new version will have to reflect the fact that there might be no cell phone reception due to a power shut-off. We also will need more people present at the barn at all times during a red flag situation. Thankfully, we have almost a year to come up with a new and improved emergency preparedness plan. For now we are relieved that the winter rains have come and turned the pastures green again. Time to dream about some beautiful spring days and awesome trail rides.

HESTAFOLK

by Lisa McKeen

The Hestafolk Club members have been scattered throughout the Pacific Northwest but active. RJ West has been fox hunting with the Woodbrook Hunt Club, Susie P. Johnson has been racking up miles of trail riding, regardless of weather, and Mary Chamberlin has her own Icelandic now and is helping her to settle in.

We are in the membership renewal part of our year and will have our first meeting of 2020 on January 11, a week before the USIHC Annual Meeting in



Hestafolk member RJ West and Gloinn of Rivendell ride regularly with the Woodbrook Hunt Club. Photo by Marli Parker, White Raven Photography.



The NEIHC Equine Affaire Team (left to right): Emily Potts, Þórdís Anna Gylfadóttir, Becky Hoyt, Bailey Soderberg, Leah Greenberger, and Grace Greenberger.

Portland. Several members plan to attend, as long as the weather cooperates. In the Pacific Northwest, it's mild until it isn't—and then it's wind, rain, ice, snow, and sometimes all of those at once! We're hoping to hear from the other Regional Clubs: What do you do when your membership is scattered over a wide geographical area? How do you find new leadership?



Eleven-year-old Arianna DeForge riding in her very first Hunter Pace in Tunbridge, VT. Her team won the hunt division. Photo courtesy of Round Robin Farm.

Those are the challenges of every club, and we would love to learn what others are doing.

In the meantime, we are doing lots of ground work, and the horses are waiting for snow. We are gathering a small group in January to work at Silver Creek Icelandics on training our horses to drive. Carting really helps many horses learn to use those shoulders and back to lift and pull. I like what it does for my riding horses. It's also a great study in slow, methodical, calm training. Good for all of us.

NEIHC

by Jess Haynsworth

It has been a very snowy winter so far here in most of the Northeast, but luckily there is no better snowplow than the Icelandic horse! As we do our best to stay warm and motivated to keep riding during the shortest, coldest days of the year, we look back on an autumn of good memories.

Mad River Valley Icelandic Horses competed in two distance riding events this Fall: On October 12, Jess Haynsworth and Vigri frá Vallanesi finished in the top 10 in a 30-mile AERC-sanctioned endurance ride in Woodstock, VT. The ride came less than one week after a 20-hour trailer ride home from Kentucky, where Vigri became World Ranked in T1 at the Léttleiki Triple World Ranking shows. Vigri finished the ride bright, happy, and

eager for more! At the endurance ride, he was the only Icelandic horse competing in a sea of Arabians and Morgans, and vets and fellow competitors alike were impressed with his fitness and quick recovery time at vet holds.

On October 19, the “Mad River Valkyries” team of Jess, riding a horse from her own breeding, Bogi frá Efri-Raudalæk, and 11-year-old Arianna DeForge, riding Spönn frá Efri-Raudalæk, competed in a Hunter Pace at Round Robin Farm in Tunbridge, VT. Bogi and Arianna were both new to Hunter Paces, and both had a wonderful time. The Valkyries won the Hunt Division, which is the faster-paced division—a fantastic way to end the competition season! Bogi and Spönn were the only Icelandic horses present at the Hunter Pace, and were excellent representation for the breed.

Icelandic horses were well-represented at Equine Affaire this year in Springfield, MA from November 7-10. Emily Potts writes: “Over 90,000 people attend Equine Affaire, so it is a huge promotional and educational opportunity for our club. This year we had a powerhouse of Icelandic horse representation. The NEIHC rented our usual 10x30 booth space with a display stall in the Breed Pavilion. The Horses of Iceland marketing team shared the space with us for the third year, represented by Þórdís Anna Gylfadóttir, and sponsored an extremely popular raffle to win a trip to Iceland. Þórdís also gave an in-hand presentation on the gaits, history, and characteristics of the Icelandic horse for the Equine Fundamentals forum.

“Merrimack Valley Icelandics presented the breed in two well-attended riding demonstrations on Saturday and Sunday. Riders included Ebba Meehan, Erika Tighe, Jennifer Bergantino, Charity Simard, Andrea Smith, and Claudia Burnham. The Knights of Iceland demo team performed in Fantasia, the evening show, demonstrating the Icelandic horse's speed and gaits.

“Leah Greenberger, Grace Greenberger, and Maren Prenosil provided our equine superstar, Vaka, so the public could meet the Icelandic horse up close. The Knights of Iceland and Merrimack



Left, Sirius member Kerstin Lundgren and Trina from Unicorn Valley take a break on a trail ride in Kentucky. Right, Toppur member Liz Appel and Magni frá Reykjavík lead the club trail ride at Harmony Icelandics.



Valley Icelandics also allowed us to use their horses in the booth, so Vaka could take breaks.

“Equine Affaire would not happen without all the volunteers who took the time to answer questions, talk about the breed, and engage with the greater community. In addition to those mentioned, thanks go to Amy Goddard, Leslie Chambers, Margot Apple, Nancy Roelfs, Becky Hoyt, and Bailey Soderberg. Thanks, too, to everyone who stopped by to say hello, provided materials to pass out, or supported in any way. We’re already looking forward to next year.”

On November 22-24, Merrimack



Virginia Lauridsen on Hlér frá Gullberastöðum and Susan Eleeson on Gnyr frá Morastöðum ride with the Moingona Hunt.

Valley Icelandics hosted a Knappamerki clinic with Carrie Lyons Brandt, Terral Hill, and Guðmar Pétursson.

Our Annual Meeting and Thorrablot is scheduled for March 7 at the home of Leah Greenberger in Belchertown, MA. For more upcoming events, see neihc.com.

SIRIUS

by Kerstin Lundgren & Sherry Hoover

The Sirius Ohio Kentucky Icelandic Horse Club now has a Facebook page. This is a great way for us to promote the breed, to let people know that we are here in the Ohio Valley area, and of course to reach out to as many members as possible. We have some fun pictures to share.

Our Ultimate Obstacle clinic at Taktur Icelandics last fall was a big success, and we hope to host a similar clinic this year.

Another success was the Triple World Ranking Show at Léttleiki Icelandics in early October. Two of our members, Jyl Snyder and Frances Rospotynski, volunteered at the shows. Thanks to both of you, and thank you, Maggie Brandt, for all your hard work organizing them.

Our annual meeting will be held at the Ohio Equine Affaire on April 4. Please join us for an informative and fun opportunity to learn more about our club and meet new and old friends! We are looking forward to another great year of

riding, training, shows, and clinics. Two fun rides are already scheduled. Join us on May 16–17 at the Camargo Hunt property in Owen County, KY, or on June 26–28 to ride and camp at Caesar Creek State Park, Waynesville, OH. Future rides and activities will be posted on Facebook.

TOPPUR

by Virginia Lauridsen

Toppur members gathered in late October for one more round of enjoying the autumn weather on horseback. It was a splendid weekend in Iowa with cool temperatures, clear skies, and the leaves blazing with color. We took a leisurely ride around Harmony Icelandics and settled into the comfort of the lodge for good food and camaraderie.

The next day, members Susan Eleeson, Liz Appel, and Virginia Lauridsen joined the Moingona Hunt to ride in the hilltop group. What fun! Unfortunately, with such a wet year, many crops were yet to be harvested, but our surefooted horses showed off their stamina when we took the “long way” around. Hunt members hosted us for a delicious supper around a roaring bonfire. We now have a standing invitation to ride with them anytime!

THE MAGIC 8

by Martina Gates

Years ago, I picked up one of the old Icelandic studbooks at Anne Elwell's house in New York. I had zero knowledge of bloodlines; I didn't even know the farm names of the horses of mine that had been imported. Anne was the first person I had met who owned spectacular Icelandic horses, among them the World Champion *Prúður frá Neðra-Ási II* and the super tölter *Sindri frá Garði*. Her passion for breeding was infectious, and I was swept away into the world of genetics. Anne had imported some nice mares, as well as the two stallions, and had begun an Icelandic breeding program at her Helms Hill Farm. I bought two of her foals and, because Anne was a huge advocate of having the horses she bred judged, I promised to have them both evaluated.

It was a steep and expensive learning curve. Little did I know what went into training a horse, let alone have it presented for scores at a breeding evaluation. My new horses went to several trainers over the years, and I spent months riding them to get them fit. As the shows drew nearer, I was educated on what the scores meant. Any score of 7.5 meant the horse was average; scores below that were below average. Scores between 7.5 and 7.9 were considered "second prize." And then there was the magic 8! Eight and above was considered "first prize." Something I guessed every breeder would love to accomplish. But it is easier said than done.

It took me three years and three tries. I showed my mare *Osk* from Helms Hill at ages five, six, and seven, until she finally made it to first prize. It took her daughter, *Revia* from Vinland, two years and two tries at ages five and six. My other Helms Hill mare made it to 7.78 at eight years old, after I had shown her at six years old as well. Later I realized that many great horses did not make first prize at their first showing. Actually, many great breeding mares were never shown a second or third time to improve their scores, as they were taken straight into the breeding program.

THE 5-GAIT CHALLENGE

Some might say why bother? We can all just breed horses for fun and never have any of them evaluated. How good do they have to be? Does it really make a difference to ride



Zophonias from Vinland, shown with his owner Martina Gates, is currently the highest-scored domestic-bred horse in the U.S. He is a son of *Stígandi frá Leysingjastöðum II* (IS1996156333; total score 8.27) and *Gnótt frá Holtsmúla 1* (IS2008281115). Photo by Polona Safaric Tepes.

a tölt horse with high scores through the woods, or does it suffice to ride whatever tölt the horse offers? And, more importantly, is a professional outside assessment necessary to keep you on track? The answer probably lies in the eye of the beholder, but every breeder should ask themselves how valuable it is to get educated feedback from knowledgeable critics.

Breeding horses with five gaits is a challenge. This is especially true for breeders who are new to the Icelandic horse and who have limited knowledge about bloodlines and training. Ultimately, the Icelandic horse is bred as a gaited horse and its value lies in the quality of the extra gaits, tölt and pace. Horses that choose tölt as their preferred gait—natural tölters with soft and supple movements—are understand-

ably sought after the most. It is a fact that the better the horse, the easier and more joyful it is to ride. Training, as we know, can get expensive; therefore, horses with easy genetic tölt are not only easier but faster to train as well.

I remember Anne telling me years ago that we as breeders are responsible for the future life of our foals and that we should spare no measure to give them the genetic material of great gaits and sound minds. We do not have the luxury of knowing generations of horses, or of having ridden many great tölters. Some breeders in North America have never even been to Iceland, where the greatest range of horses can be found. This lack of knowledge puts us at the mercy of others and makes breeding shows even more valuable, in my opinion.



Sprettur from Destiny Farms made first prize as a seven-year-old, with 8.5 for pace. Sprettur is a son of Pröstur frá Innri-Skeljabrekku (IS1991135551; total score 8.43) and Sara frá Lækjarbotnum (IS1990286808; 8.05). Ridden by Guðmar Pétursson. Photo by Martina Gates.

WORLDFENGUR

The best crutch we have as breeders in this country, apart from breeding shows, is WorldFengur. This internet database includes all horses registered in the U.S., Iceland, and any other FEIF member country. It lists all a horse's breeding scores, lineage, and BLUP (which predicts the quality of future offspring), as well as the horse's offspring and their scores. We can look at how well specific Icelandic breeding horses scored, what traits they passed on consistently, how they did in sport shows, even if a stallion has spavin.

What we do need to recognize, however, is that WorldFengur would not exist without all the data that the breeders have been supplying by having their horses judged. We would have no knowledge of any great horse if it were not for breeding shows. Only those people personally involved with these great horses would have an idea of its offspring. How sad that would be! And what a loss to the breed. We can proudly say today that Hrafn frá Holtsmúla was one of the greatest sires of Icelandic horses, because we have the data to prove it. Without it Hrafn would have just been a great horse, lost somewhere on a farm in Iceland.

Do we have a star lost somewhere here in the States? Every year we have about 100 horses born in the U.S. Sadly, many of them will never even be registered. Only a small handful will ever make it to a breeding

show in their lifetime. Why is that? Breeders in other FEIF nations routinely have their offspring evaluated to see how their breeding program is going and to increase the value of their stock. To me, showing my offspring is essential in gathering valuable information. My Vinland farm is a tiny breeder, having only eight foals in total, but nevertheless I feel breeding shows are vital to the future of our breed. Three of my Vinland offspring have been shown at breeding shows, and my goal with every breeding is to try to breed a horse with exceptional mind and gaits and to get valuable feedback.



Osk from Helms Hill Farm was not only the highest evaluated horse for ridden abilities in the U.S. (8.43), she also went on to be a successful breeding mare. Here she is with her foal Revia, who also scored first prize. Osk was a daughter of Galsi frá Sauðárkróki (IS1990157003; total score 8.44) and Gæfa frá Þverá, Skíðadal (IS1992265801; 7.91). Photo by Heleen Heyning.

A GAMBLE EVERY TIME

Even if we make the best plans, they occasionally fall through. Breeding to two first-prize parents does not guarantee a spectacular outcome. Nor do full siblings turn out to be identical. That is breeding: a gamble every time. And sometimes the gamble pays off, and a star arises. I am sure there are many unidentified stars in the U.S., and it is a shame they will probably stay anonymous. One thing is for sure, there is no substitute for riding a horse with soft supple tölt and a wonderful character every day. Such a pleasure is the ultimate joy. And such a horse is a great example of our breed.

So the question remains: Is the Magic 8 a deterrent or a draw? Is the fear and pressure of trying to reach the Magic 8 preventing U.S. breeders and owners from showing their horses? Is there too little ambition to play in the big leagues? Does professional feedback stir up insecurities? I have been racking my brain over this question.

Last year I put on my last breeding show. I have been part of ten such shows over the years, in my passion for the Icelandic horse. Every year it gets tougher to draw in horses for the show. The first show in 2000, organized by Anne Elwell for the USIHC and held in Oklahoma, drew 44 entries! Horses came from as far away as New York and Washington State. In 2015 we had five horses evaluated, followed by none in 2016 and 2017. I truly believe we need to reevaluate our approach to breeding in this country. Breeders need to be more educated, to strive for excellence in our breed, and to be a vital part of WorldFengur and FEIF.

Over the years there have been a few breeding farms that have not only contributed greatly to the Icelandic horse breed here in the U.S., but have maintained a high standard and brought their horses to be evaluated. I would like to recognize four of them here that have now ended their breeding programs. Breeding is not cheap, and adding training and breeding shows to the cost can be prohibitive. Nevertheless, these breeders managed to reach the Magic 8. I applaud them for their courage and perseverance, and I hope they can lend some inspiration to the current generation of U.S. breeders.

WINTERHORSE PARK

A gem of a farm in Wisconsin. Breeders Barb and Dan Riva have opened their farm for many events and have supported and hosted several breeding shows. Winterhorse Park began as a “hobby gone wild,” as Barb joked, starting with therapeutic riding and evolving into a 100-acre Icelandic breeding farm. Both Barb and Dan traveled to Iceland several times to learn about bloodlines and watch competitions. Over the years they often had trainers on staff to train their youngsters. It was a costly undertaking, stressing the importance of producing easy horses with good gaits.

While they bred their first horse in 1996, their breeding program really began with the purchase of a first-prize stallion, Fjalar frá Bjargshóli, in 2001. Their goal was always to breed quality easy-going riding and competition horses. Fjalar proved to be an outstanding breeding horse. He had strong linebred bloodlines that produced consistently good horses. Having invested everything into their farm, Barb and Dan felt it was necessary to have most of their horses evaluated, not only to get valuable feedback but to make a good name for themselves.

Winterhorse Park bred 31 horses over the years and presented 15 of them at breeding shows. Two received first prize and four received second prize. Although Barb and Dan do not breed horses anymore, they produced some great offspring and definitely made a name for themselves. Their only regret is that their evaluated mares (with the exception of Thokkadis) have not yet been bred. They hope Fjalar’s line does not fade away in the future.

ALL US BRED HORSES (15) THAT HAVE SCORED FIRST PRIZE.

The first score is conformation, the second, ridden abilities.

US2010104426 Marel from Creekside Farm	8.48	8.13	T:8.27
US1999201258 Osk from Helms Hill	7.78	8.43	T:8.17
US2010104637 Zophonías from Vinland	8.2	8.15	T:8.17
US2010204585 Kvika from Four Winds Farm	8.28	8.08	T:8.16
US2010104354 Vindur from Dalalif	8.37	8.01	T:8.16
US2007203569 Revía from Vinland	8.08	8.14	T:8.12
US2003203998 Timbiltá from Destiny Farm	8.04	8.12	T:8.09
US2005103999 Sprettur from Destiny Farm	8.13	8.07	T:8.09
US1999102994 Heljar from Mill Farm	8.05	8.10	T:8.08
US2002202606 Þokkadis from Winterhorse Park	8.13	8.04	T:8.08
US1993200531 Gaefa from North Salem	7.8	8.22	T:8.05
US1997103009 Hamur from Mill Farm	8.5	8.02	T:8.03
US2000203065 Oskadis from Mill Farm	7.96	8.06	T:8.02
US2003202641 Pia from Winterhorse Park	8.29	7.83	T:8.01
US1998202333 Sola from Helms Hill Farm	8.16	7.90	T:8.00

HELMS HILL FARM

This small farm in upstate New York has been retired for several years. Owner and breeder Anne Elwell was instrumental in helping to form the USIHC and was breeding leader for many years. Her dedication to Icelandic horse breeding in the U.S. was exemplary. Asked why she started breeding, she said it was like asking a toddler why she chose to walk! Helms Hill bred its first horse in 1981.

Anne was strongly influenced by Bruno Podlech, the breeder of Wiesenhof horses in Germany, who ultimately taught her a

lot about breeding—and about herself, she said. She was drawn to the elegance of the Svaðastaðir horses in Iceland and incorporated their bloodlines into her breeding. Anne had a very strong instinct for picking horses with incredibly fluid movements and stellar character, something which is reflected in her offspring.

Anne’s breeding goal was never to breed specifically for competition, performance, or pleasure, but rather to create elegant, cooperative, easy to train horses with fluid movements, assuring them all good lives. Her stallion Sindri frá Garði



Piltur from Winterhorse Park was a sensation when he was shown at age 5, with 8.5 for tölt, gallop, spirit, and slow tölt. He also had fantastic conformation scores, including a 9.0 for proportions. Piltur is a son of Fjalar frá Bjargshóli (IS1990155603; total score 8.24) and Perla frá Stóru-Ásgeirsá (IS1993255027; 7.94). Ridden by Guðmar Pétursson. Photo by Martina Gates.



Revía from Vinland had incredible riding scores at age 6, with 8.5 for all gaits except pace and a 9.0 for gallop. Revía was a daughter of Stígandi frá Leysingjastöðum II (IS1996156333; total score 8.27) and Osk from Helms Hill Farm. Ridden by Kristján Kristjánsson. Photo by Martina Gates.

(imported in 1994) was the most important contribution to her breeding program and to generations afterward. No matter what mare she bred to him, he improved the gaits.

Helms Hill bred a total of 31 horses, of which 14 were shown in breeding shows. Two received first prize and seven second prize. Asked why she felt so strongly about evaluations, Anne pointed out that if you feel truly passionate about something you must find a way to build in criticism. It is a way to keep you honest. Otherwise, it is easy to fall into the trap of thinking you are doing everything right when you are not. Breeding shows are necessary to prevent just that.

MILL FARM

One of the more spectacular Icelandic horse farms in the U.S., with beautiful reclaimed barns and miles of trails, Mill Farm in New York is an idyllic place to visit. Breeder and owner Dan Slott has been actively involved with horses since his childhood and was familiar with gaited horses when he fell in love with the Icelandic horse on a trip to Iceland. Their natural movement from behind, combined with smooth gaits and power compelled him to import a few horses to his upstate farm and start a breeding pro-

gram in 1986. His breeding was heavily influenced by the Hrafn frá Holtsmúla line, and in 1992 he imported the stallion Fjalar frá Hafsteinsstöðum, son of the magnificent Hrafn.

Understanding the importance of training, Dan recruited trainer Kristján Kristjánsson from Iceland. Together they built a breeding program to produce skilled, well-trained, and cooperative horses—something that was not easy to come by at the time.

Dan also felt strongly about creating visibility for the Icelandic horse and was instrumental in its promotion. Over the years he had the Icelandic horse presented at the National Horse Show in Madison Square Garden, NY, featured on CNN, CNBC, an A&E Special, Animal Planet, the NY Times, and in more than 15 major magazines.

Believing in having his horses judged, he held several breeding shows at Mill Farm. Dan bred 34 horses, of which 13 were presented at breeding shows. Three received first prize and five second prize. Dan created his own market over the years, and several Mill Farm horses are still being used by breeders today. (Kristján Kristjánsson, meanwhile, went on to found Thor Icelandics in Claverack, NY.)

DESTINY FARM

A farm in Kentucky that raised horses the Icelandic way. Breeder Pamela Merlo came from a Thoroughbred background and fell in love with Icelandics in 2000. Her goal was to introduce the Icelandic horse to the U.S. horse world. At the time, she and her husband had a farm suitable for raising Icelandics in a herd setting. Knowing the importance of bloodlines for the quality breeding of healthy strong horses, Pamela sought the help of Guðmar Pétursson to purchase five first-prize mares in Iceland that would be great breeding prospects. From Guðmar she also purchased co-ownership of the first-prize stallion Þróstur frá Innri-Skeljabrekku, to whom she bred her first-prize mares.

Destiny Farm was looking to produce horses with good conformation, excellent gaits, good color, strength, and kindness—horses that could be trail horses or competition horses. It was always Pamela's goal to have the horses evaluated so she could get valuable feedback and gain knowledge. Over the years Pamela bred 21 horses, of which five were evaluated. Two received first prize and two second prize. Destiny Farm has since been retired, but many of these great horses live on to represent the Icelandic horse in the U.S.



Hamur from Mill Farm was shown as a four-gaiter, with 8.5 for tölt, trot, gallop, and spirit. He received 9.0 for general impression and slow tölt. Hamur is a son of Fjalar frá Hafsteinsstöðum (IS1983157018; total score 7.76) and Harpa frá Hrafnhólum (IS1987225083; 8.04). Both parents were offspring of the famous Hrafn frá Holtsmúla (IS1968157460). Ridden by Shannon Hughes. Photo by Martina Gates

THE BEST KIND OF STUBBORN

BY ALEX PREGITZER

Sometimes a horse moves from one continent to another, or simply from one barn to another, and his whole world is turned upside down.

Sometimes a rider and a horse do not seem like a good fit.

Sometimes you do everything you can, but it still does not work out as you hoped.

Sometimes you get scared and want to give up.

Sometimes it takes all you have to make things right.

This is the story of one stubborn woman and her wonderful horse: Kris and Ljúfur frá Hofsósi, aka Louie. I would like to share this story, because Kris and her family have been an inspiration to our small local Icelandic horse community—and because it has a happy ending.

Kris, her daughter Deb, and her son-in-law Adam live on their small farm in Metamora, MI. They love animals and own standard poodles, a cat, and currently three horses. All their animals are very well taken care of and treated as part of the family. Kris is 73 and has been riding all her life. After her beloved Paso Fino passed away, Kris was looking for a new horse. She had developed some health issues that required her new mount to be very solid. After an expensive hiccup with two untrained rescue Icelandics (a story in itself!), it was clear to Kris that she wanted an Icelandic horse. Deb owned an aging Percheron at the time, but was intrigued by the Icelandic horse as well.

Deb found the Icelandic mare Glinga Öskubuska from Sandstone at Beat 'n Branch in Ohio and kept dividing her time between her giant Percheron and her 13-hand Icelandic. It was a big change from a draft to a rather small Icelandic, but it quickly turned out that Glinga had a huge heart and an even bigger personality. She had big horseshoes to fill when the Percheron passed away, but she managed it.

In the spring of 2014, the family found a promising horse for Kris: a teen-



Deb enjoys a little moment with Sváfnir (left) and Glinga Öskubuska from Sandstone. Horses do talk—we just have to listen. Photo by Alex Pregitzer.

aged Icelandic gelding. He was all the ad said: tall, beautiful, sweet, strong, and very easy to ride. The test rides at the purchase site went very well, and Louie went home with Kris's family. He got some time off to adjust to his new situation, got acquainted with his new owners on the ground, and, after a few weeks, was slowly eased into working with his new rider in private riding lessons working on simple basics. I was the instructor.

OUT OF THE BLUE?

Everything seemed fine. Louie was a perfect gentleman. His work with his new partner was kept very slow, especially for a fully trained teenager known as a good “beginner horse.”

Then, a few weeks later, Louie exploded out of the blue. Kris was mounting, and everything seemed fine. The next second, we had a bucking bronco in the ring. There was no obvious trigger, nobody to blame, nothing to explain what had happened. We were shocked. There was no deer jumping out of a bush, no bee-sting, no faulty tack, no bumping him with the foot while mounting—nothing. He simply freaked out. Kris was bucked off and lucky that she did not sustain any

serious injuries.

Looking back with 20-20 hindsight, there were some subtle signs. The fact that Louie never quite looked 100% comfortable should have been a warning.

But he was so well behaved, had so much experience, and had carried tons of beginners at his previous home. It was easy to assume that his slightly worried look might just be part of his personality.

Wrong. Lesson learned. Listen to your gut feelings no matter what other information you have!

Kris, while lucky not to be hurt, was still scared by the accident. Because there did not seem to be any rhyme or reason to his behavior, she did not trust Louie enough to get back on. And, quite frankly, after witnessing what happened, nobody else wanted her to get back on either.

I rode Louie to make sure he was okay. He was well behaved, but I could feel his tension. He felt like a horse that might become overwhelmed any second—not a horse that Kris should even consider riding. So we decided to back off and give him some time. Kris was devastated. She had been so happy to find her dream horse and was now feeling discouraged.

In the following weeks, Louie received lots of love and attention. Deb, who is a very experienced rider, worked with him on the ground. For years, Deb has rescued abused animals and she has successfully rehabilitated a number of horses. In addition, she has taken lessons with me on a variety of different Icelandic horses and has learned about the breed and its gaits.

Kris, Deb, and I decided to work as a team, but it was clear that Kris would need to limit her activities to grooming and some TLC, as she was struggling with her own health issues and we were worried about her safety. Meanwhile, Deb and I worked on a training plan to try to figure things out.

HORSES DO TALK

It is so difficult to predict how horses will react to a change in circumstances. Many adapt without even flicking their ears—they just accept a new barn, new people, new pasturemates, and a new routine.

But one never knows.

My own horse, Kraftur frá Grafarkoti, taught me this lesson after our move from Wisconsin to Michigan in 2007. Kraftur was 16 when I took him from his big herd at Winterhorse Park to a barn without other Icelandics. At that point, I had known him for four years. This was the first time in his life that he was not living with other Icelandics. I did not think much about it, and many horses would not have minded. He did. After the move, I did not recognize my own horse.

Once I understood what was happening, I was able to react. It took a long time for him to regain his confidence—and this is a horse we showed in front of huge crowds at Equine Affaire, with spotlights and music and riders in long dresses, a horse that would go anywhere I pointed his nose and was not afraid of anything.

Leaving his herd was a game changer. I had never been in that situation before and didn't know what could happen. He taught me. I had never even heard about this sort of thing in a trainer course or a clinic. All I can say is that, whether you're a certified trainer or a newcomer to horses, there is so much more to learn all the time. The best we can do is to listen.

My vet and I had just that conversation recently. "Horses do talk," he said, "we just have to listen."



Deb on Glinga ponying Kris and Ljufur (Louie) down the road. Sometimes it takes all you have to make things right. Photo by Alex Pregitzer.

I find many people don't even try. Not because they are not good humans, but because they don't know how to. Icelandics can be very subtle in their expressions, even if you're used to listening to other breeds. Said Kris, "We did not realize how stoic Icelandics are. They are very different from the American stock horses that we are used to working with. A lot more consideration needs to be made for their emotional states."

THE KEY? ROUTINE

With Louie, we decided to go back to Square One. Kris and Deb worked on building trust with Louie at home. Deb brought Louie to me, and we ponied him off my horses to keep him fit and in a regular work routine. We wanted him to be trailered, to have to work, to get out and about—but at the same time we didn't want to put too much pressure on him.

I made some phone calls to his previous owners and trainers and asked about their experiences. We began to understand Louie's personality better. One thing we learned was that he had never been fond of working in an arena (indoor or outdoor) and he had had some difficulties with lessons and clinics in the past. It was one of the reasons he had been sold after being imported to the U.S. Understanding his past experiences and his personality better really helped us make him more comfortable.

It was not long before we started riding Louie again. I either ponied him

and Deb off my horse, or I rode him side-by-side with Deb on her Icelandic horse. Eventually we progressed to riding him out and about on long trail rides. He was always brave, never spooked at anything. He was comfortable with any kind of footing, with wildlife, with traffic, he was unflappable—aside from the insecurities that were inside him. I felt I could trust him 100%.

Deb and I brainstormed ideas on how she could work with him without my help. I recommended ponying Louie, but Deb's Glinga was not trained to pony and she was a highly competitive horse with a bit of an attitude. She did not want Louie so close to her. However, Deb did not give up easily. We worked together to teach Glinga to pony Louie and, after a relatively rough start, she finally got the hang of it.

The winter months passed. Deb ponied Louie off Glinga, working the horses as often as possible. When Deb and I met, I rode Louie or we ponied one another riding, just to switch things up.

Things went really well. The key to success with Louie was giving him a routine: same people, same horses, same trails. As he gained more and more confidence, we started making little changes. At the same time, it was amazing to see how much Glinga learned through this experience. She matured and took on the role of being Louie's safeguard.

In the meantime Kris felt left out and, though she never complained, we all knew she was sad to not ride her own horse. Louie was doing great, but Deb and I were both confident riders and we were able to pass our confidence on to him. After all Kris had been through with her health problems, we were unsure how confident a rider she would be and how Louie would handle it if she was not confident or if she lost her balance.

Instead of riding her own horse, then, Kris started taking lessons at a local therapeutic riding facility. There she had access to schooling horses and was able to get back into riding shape, slowly building up her stamina, strength, balance, and confidence. She was determined to make things work.

Did Kris ever think of giving Louie back or selling him? Absolutely. Kris tried to return Louie right after the accident, but gave up on that idea quickly. He was advertised for sale for a while but, once

we understood him better, Kris was concerned that yet another move and change of ownership might really throw him off. What if somebody tried him and liked him, but then took him home and had the same bucking bronco experience? That risk just seemed too high.

THE HAPPY ENDING

Mostly, though, the whole family had gotten so attached to Louie's sweet personality that they never followed through on a possible sale. Every time somebody called and was interested, Deb did not have time to show Louie or told me he was really not in shape. Uhuh. The ad was really just a cover-up.

We all knew that Louie was not going anywhere, especially once Kris's son-in-law, Adam, started riding Louie too. Adam is an extremely confident rider. He and Louie became a great team, and Adam noticed that his back pain, which had kept him from riding his own Tennessee Walking Horse, did not bother him when he was riding Louie. Louie helped Adam get back into riding, and Adam's not-a-worry attitude helped Louie lighten up.

When Kris was fit enough to start riding Louie again, we started by ponying her. Louie had gotten so used to being ponied that he was pretty much on autopilot, so long as he was next to either Glinga or one of my horses.

For more than a year, Deb ponied Kris all over the place. They rode in county parks, state parks, alone in small groups, and alongside carriages. They went horse camping, rode in parades—everything. On their family rides, Adam and Kris took turns riding Louie.

With all this exercise, Louie's tölt developed very well. While it had been fairly easy to get before, it was now easier to cue him into it for riders with less experience, and he developed great stamina. His form and beat improved and, overall, he is now doing great.

Kris got off the lead line in the winter of 2018-2019—over four years after she had purchased Louie and brought him home. Perhaps she could have ridden independently earlier, but it worked well for her and Deb—and nobody wanted to risk a setback. Kris is now walking, trotting, tölting, and sometimes even cantering. She continues her lessons at the therapeutic riding facility, but has added some

tölt lessons on her own horse. Having learned that a classic lesson situation is stressful for Louie, we do all our lessons on the trail.

Kris is also working with a personal trainer to develop good muscles and balance. She hates it, but she knows it is important to stay in good riding shape and to keep on top of her health issues. Adam loves riding Louie, but steps back whenever his mother-in-law wants to go on a ride. He is just as happy (he says) walking next to her in the local parade. Deb prefers conditioning just one horse, but she is always willing to take Louie along and to compromise on the length or speed of her ride to accommodate whoever is riding him.

In the summer of 2019, the family took their two Icelandics to Mackinaw Island and split up the riding. They are now looking for another gelding to add to their family, so that all three of them can ride their Icelandics together.

STUBBORN IN THE BEST WAY

Knowing Louie now, it is very clear that he was overwhelmed and struggling to adjust. He did not do well with the move to a new barn. He is a textbook introvert: stoic on the outside, calm and unflappable, with a serious work attitude. Yet his confidence does not come from inside himself. He finds it through his rider, his companion horses, and his daily routine. That routine was out of balance, and so was Louie. We can only imagine how he must have felt when his whole world changed.

I asked Deb and Kris what their expe-

rience with Louie taught them.

"I still don't feel we did anything wrong with him," Deb said. "Not every horse suffers such a terrible setback with a move. I have rescued many horses, dogs, and cats, and never had one that had such a bad setback. I wish we had been better informed of his absolute dislike for doing ring work, particularly lateral work. The owner just said he didn't like ring work. But when we looked at him, we rode him in an arena and he seemed relaxed and fine.

"I have learned to read him and Glinga now," Deb continued, "and I know when they are stressed or nervous. Louie now looks to me, when he is unsure of himself, no matter who is riding him. I now have his trust. When he is scared on the trail, he will come to me while I'm on Glinga and put his head on my lap for reassurance."

What I saw was Kris, Deb, and Adam working together as a team. How often do you see a mother, daughter, and son-in-law supporting each other this way? They were open to following advice, willing to be patient, willing to put in hard work, and willing to be consistent.

They were not too proud to get help, and they were happy to put in the hours necessary to follow through—not over days or weeks or months, but years.

They are providing a loving home to their Icelandics and have been rewarded with perfect horses in return. They are stubborn in the best way possible—they just refuse to give up!



Stubbornness pays off: Now Kris and Louie can enjoy a nice trail ride with Deb and Glinga.

HANDS-ON TIPS

As a trainer, I learned some things from Louie too. Each horse is an individual and each situation is different. The best way to approach moving a horse from A to B, or bringing home a new horse, is to consider the circumstances: What is the horse's personality? What are its past experiences? If the move is with the same owner, what is the owner's personality? A confident rider can help their horse and be quite bold, while a rather timid rider may have to choose a different path.

"It's really important for people to know how hard it is to predict how a horse will adapt," said *Quarterly* editor Nancy Marie Brown when we first discussed my writing this article. "People just don't understand how being taken away from a herd can be traumatic for a horse, and how the rider has to be able to give the horse confidence. I didn't understand it, until we got our mare Saedis and saw how much trouble she had adjusting. And she was sold as a beginner horse. She was bombproof in Iceland, for sure." Nancy continued, "I've been talking this week to a woman who just bought her first Icelandic and is wondering how much time he needs to 'settle in.' I said, 'Until he trusts you.'"

I think Nancy hit the nail on the head!

If you can, take an experienced trainer with you when you go looking at horses to

purchase. An experienced trainer may be able to judge the personality of the horse better than you can. She can also put the horse into everyday situations that may trigger a response, letting you see how the horse is likely to react when you get it home.

Said German A-level trainer Janine Koehler, "I would always recommend taking along a professional you trust. Most of my clients whom I helped select horses had a much better outcome than those who went by themselves." She also said, "The extra expense of paying for a professional to help with the purchase is well worth it, considering the many years of joy with your new horse." Having a trainer with you is not a guarantee for success, but it can be very helpful.

If you have access to regular lessons with an experienced Icelandic horse riding instructor (or any other experienced riding instructor), it can be hugely beneficial to help you get to know your new partner. "Especially in the beginning," said Janine, "regular lessons are very important. The riders often need much help. After a while, the lesson frequency can be reduced."

Whether you owned the horse before the move or just bought a horse, give your horse ample time to settle in. But remember that "giving him time to settle in" does not equal "not doing anything with the

horse." It can actually be counterproductive to let the horse rest and not do anything. The horse may settle in much better if it gets into a routine quickly. Think of "giving time" as "getting to know each other," which is a prerequisite for a trusting relationship.

Some great ways for getting to know one another (for new owners) or helping a horse get familiar with his new surroundings and settle in (if both horse and owner move to a new place) are long grooming sessions, perhaps including some Tellington TTouch work. All kinds of ground work is good, including hand walking your horse close to the new barn, perhaps with other (confident) horses if he or she is not confident, and slowly adding distance to your walks.

The huge advantage of ground work and hand walking is that you can watch your horse and see his facial expressions. This way you can get a good feel for his comfort level.

Watch out for subtle signs of stress. Icelandic horses may not whinny or prance or sweat, but they may still be stressed. Excessive yawning, a worried facial expression, flicking ears when being tacked up, running away in the paddock—all of these are signs that the horse is not comfortable.

Listen to those subtle signals, and try to figure out how you can help your horse become more comfortable. Educate yourself about horse communication and signs of distress. If you don't have access to lessons, try taking some online classes about horse communication.

I have found ponying to be of huge importance in my work, and any experienced trainer or riding instructor will agree that ponying is an important basic tool in the training of horse and rider. But a rider who knows how to pony and a brave, friendly riding horse for ponying off of are of the utmost importance. If you already have a calm, steady riding horse, ponying is a great way of exploring new trails and building up a new horse's confidence.

If the horse is new to you, talk to his previous owners and find out as much as you can about him. Not all information may be useful, and some may be simply wrong, but often you will learn something that can help you understand your horse better.

And finally, be the best kind of stubborn. Don't give up.



With his "slightly worried expression," Louie was trying to explain that his whole world had been turned upside down. Photo by Alex Pregitzer.

WHEN “OUT TO PASTURE” ISN’T ENOUGH

by Jess Haynsworth

We live in a country where it can be said that every good horse is just one bad sale away from slaughter. The American market is saturated with horses who cannot find suitable homes due to age, injury, health, or behavioral issues. Each year, thousands of horses are shipped over our borders for slaughter, after running through traumatic sales and bouncing around from location to location, scared, stressed, and poorly cared for in the interim.

The scale of the problem is immense, and for many owners the message is clear: Keep your horse. Keep the old horse you can no longer ride. Do not try to re-home into situations where the horse leaves your control and may be mistreated, passed around, injured further, or ultimately end up on a truck to a slaughterhouse.

It seems very simple: You’ve made a commitment to care for an animal, and so that commitment should be for life. However, horses are complex creatures with very nuanced needs. Particularly when it comes to “easy keepers” like our beloved Icelandic horses, we must consider exercise and movement as basic needs. Movement is necessary for healthy circulation, hooves, digestion, posture, blood sugar management, and mental/emotional health. Equines have evolved to forage and eat steadily throughout the day, and must do so in order to have healthy digestive systems, to avoid (or manage) metabolic issues, and to maintain a sense of comfort and wellbeing.

Fulfilling these basic needs presents a challenge when we are faced with caring for an Icelandic horse that can no longer be exercised by riding, longeing, or driving. Many “retired” horses spend a lot of time simply standing around, either grazing all day, or in a dry-lot. This puts them at risk for metabolic issues, boredom, depression, obesity, stiffness, and an overall worsening of their health and quality of life.

What happens to our horses when we can no longer ride them is a sensitive topic and, for many owners, a painful one. Therefore, I felt it best to broach it from a position of personal experience. The fol-



Jen White and her father move one of the feeding stations to a new location in the Paddock Paradise track. The multiple, movable feeding stations let the horses forage throughout the day. Photo by Jess Haynsworth.

lowing is the story of two mares that I own, love, and can no longer ethically ride.

GLÆTA

Glæta frá Brekku is a beautiful first-prize mare. I purchased her as a competition horse in 2013, when she was 10 years old. She was known for being a somewhat complicated ride, but she was fully trained and already very successful on the sport track. To this day I have never scored higher in competitions than I did with my sweet Glæta, and when she carried me it was hard not to feel like the sky was the limit.

In 2014, less than a year after Glæta came home to me in Vermont, that limit crashed down on us. She fell ill and was ultimately diagnosed with Cushing’s disease, but because of her young age her diagnosis was delayed, as we chased symptoms and missed the overarching cause. We simply could not believe that our new, young, athletic mare had developed this awful condition normally associated with elderly horses.

By the time we figured it out, her suppressed immune system (a symptom of Cushing’s) had caused her to develop secondary infections including Ehrlichiosis and Lyme disease. We gave her all of the best veterinary care and medication available, and I spent years pursuing all sorts of therapies ranging from traditional to alternative, as well as giving her the best care and biomechanically correct R+

training possible (she was the first horse who sparked my interest in clicker training, and my first foray into bridleless riding and liberty work).

We did have a few more good years together and ultimately returned to the competition track, but over time Glæta let me know that she did not enjoy being ridden anymore. She did everything I asked, but I could feel that she wasn’t comfortable. The Cushing’s and chronic Lyme combination made it hard to build her topline normally, and meant she sometimes had aches and pains that she told me about with a meaningful look. On those days, I knew not to bother her. I felt that there was no reason to push a horse who had done so much for me, so I made the decision to stop riding her.

I took to ponying her in the forests a few days a week, but it was not really enough exercise or stimulation. She could not retire onto lush pastures, given her metabolic condition (horses afflicted with Cushing’s disease should ideally not be given grass or sugary, starchy grains, and should instead be fed a high forage, low-sugar diet to help keep their blood sugar stable throughout the day). Due to the hormonal component of her disease, she became infertile, dashing our dreams of breeding her. Her days consisted of standing around in our paddocks, munching from hay nets and napping, while her herd



Tinna frá Hrafnhólum on the 30-acre track with her herd. Photo by Jen White.

mates went out for rides and enjoyed time on the pastures. It didn't seem like a great life, and she began to lose muscle and gain weight, even on a low-sugar, slow feeder diet and no grass. In autumn of 2017, I knew that I had to make a change to her program—even if it meant that she couldn't stay with me.

TINNA

Tinna frá Hrafnhólum came to me in spring 2016 as a bit of a rehab training project. She was seven years old at the time, and was a horse I had trained in the past but hadn't seen for two years. In the interim, she had stopped offering trot and had become quite tense under saddle. Once she arrived home and I was able to have her thoroughly examined by a vet, we found a rope of scar tissue beneath her skin, running from her elbow to almost her withers. Our vet suspected that at some point she had had quite the injury and had torn her tricep, possibly out in the pasture where it was never noticed. The scar tissue had shortened that side of her body, and when it pulled or stretched the wrong way, she was very tense and reactive to the pain.

Using clicker training, classical dressage techniques, regular bodywork, and scar tissue massage daily, I was able to retrain her to trot and to move harmoniously and comfortably. I even began to ride her again, and got her up to walk, trot, canter, some tölt, and basic lateral work. Unfortunately, she was only able to tolerate light work, and

no matter how carefully I conditioned her, once we got past a certain point of exercise, she began to express discomfort. She was not suitable for my students or interns to ride, because she was so sensitive and reactive. A poorly timed leg or rein aid could send her into a spiral, and since she had thrown qualified trainers before coming to me, I felt it was important that I be the only one to ride her, being careful to listen to and respect her subtle signs of discomfort before situations could escalate.

Ultimately we found that Tinna, too, tested positive for Lyme disease, and based on the numbers, our vet guessed that she had had it for a long time. (We now test every new horse for this condition, especially those who come to Vermont from further south in the U.S.). Treatment did make her more comfortable, but she was still not able to be exercised normally. The amount of exercise that we were able to do with her was not enough to keep her fit, and she began to gain some weight. I knew that, without increasing her exercise, she would develop metabolic issues if she were allowed to graze on pasture, but that put her in the same position as Glæta—spending a lot of time standing around in our paddocks. Granted, she had her herd and 24/7 access to slow feeder stations to nibble on throughout the day, but it still struck me that this was not a very interesting future for an eight-year-old horse looking ahead at a long life.

I found myself in a frustrating position. I love my horses, and I had the means to keep these two mares forever. More importantly, I wanted to keep them—but keeping them meant that their health needs were not being met. They were not getting adequate exercise or stimulation at my training stable, and “putting them out to pasture” was not an ethical option, as it would have resulted in inflammation, obesity, and the further decline of their health. Neither one of these mares could be ethically rehomed, as they both required rather special care and handling, and were not suitable as pasture pals or riding horses, even for light riding. Gradually, I realized that if I wanted to do the best thing for my horses, it might mean sending them to live somewhere else.

NATURAL HORSECARE

I got lucky. I found MeadowRidge Farm, which is a fabulous natural horsecare facility in Ontario that provides a stimulating

lifestyle for herds on Paddock Paradise track systems. The horses roam all day on miles of tracks, where they have slow feeder hay stations instead of grass to graze. Their hooves largely self trim, and their body condition stays fit and healthy as they move around so much.

The farm is owned and managed by Jennifer White, a French classical dressage instructor who is very skilled in equine nutrition and husbandry. She feeds the horses mineral-balanced diets, trims and balances their hooves if they fail to self trim adequately, and provides them with any medication they may need. She has put an immense amount of research into medicinal plants, and has planted diverse forage all around the tracks for the horses to pick and choose. She has even turned the center of one of the tracks into a medicinal herb garden for horses, which she harvests and uses to treat common ailments. I continue to own both of my mares, but I board them with Jen.

Tinna, who is young, healthy, and pasture-sound lives in a mixed-sex herd of about 10 horses, of which she is the smallest and by far the bossiest. Together, the herd roams a whopping 30 acres of tracks, which take them up and down steep inclines and over all sorts of footing, ranging from rocky ledge, gravel, sand, and mud. They have access to ponds and streams. Slow-feeder hay stations, which Jen has designed to be movable by tractor, are rotated to different locations throughout the tracks so that the horses must continually roam.

When I visited the farm this past autumn, I was stunned to see how fit Tinna looked, and how well-developed her topline was, even without structured exercise. She hurried right up for cuddles, as friendly as ever, and seemed genuinely relaxed and happy in her herd.

Glæta requires daily medication, and so lives on a smaller track with a few of Jen's prized lesson horses kept closer to the stable for easier access—one of which is also an Icelandic mare. This track spans two acres and includes multiple shelter, feeding, mineral, and water stations. Despite its smaller size, it still includes steep inclines and all of the footing variation seen on the larger track, condensed into a smaller area.

Best of all, the track merges into a set of cleverly designed standing stalls, which the horses trot into on command to receive their evening grain rations. This allows Jen to administer any special medications or supple-

ments that the horses might need, including Glæta's daily dose of Pergolide. Glæta has done so well on this program that Jen has been able to reduce her Pergolide dosage by half, and she has suffered no ill effects.

EMOTIONS AND EGO

The decision to send Glæta to MeadowRidge was an emotionally fraught one for me. The night before we left with her, I sat in the stable and cried while I brushed her forelock. I was frustrated with myself and with the circumstances that I couldn't control. I had poured enough money into this mare that I could have bought several mares, but the love and emotional energy I had poured into healing her felt even greater. Initially, realizing that I couldn't meet all of her needs made me feel like a failure.

I recognize now that those feelings stemmed from a place of ego, and that perhaps my stubborn determination to find that magic combination of things that would restore her to her former vigor caused me to keep her in a situation where she wasn't thriving for longer than I should have.

Almost as soon as she left, I realized how much better off she was at MeadowRidge. Her hooves stopped chipping, which had been a chronic problem despite excellent farrier care on a four-week cycle in my program, and her topline returned, showing me that her blood sugar and nutrition had all stabilized. I sent Tinna to join her one year later, and had a much easier time with that decision.

I have learned, through these mares, that it is okay for us to admit when we can't give an animal what they need—even if, like me, you're a professional with a program in which most horses are objectively thriving at a high level. It was a painful lesson to learn, but ultimately I know that Glæta and Tinna are better off, and that I am a better horse owner for letting go of my ego.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

While the stories of Glæta and Tinna are deeply personal for me, I know that I am not the only horse owner who has grappled with these issues. For those who cannot access a farm like Jen's, the question of what to do when a horse can no longer be adequately exercised or ethically re-homed becomes even more complicated. Some horses can go out to pasture for retirement, but many shouldn't, especially easy-keepers or horses with metabolic issues who cannot tolerate a lot of grass. Some people can build paddock



Tinna frá Hrafnhólum at MeadowRidge Farm. The tracks provide a variety of terrain and footing, allowing her to maintain fitness through her day-to-day activities. Photo by Jess Haynsworth.

paradise systems of their own, but many, like me, do not have a suitable property for a track system like Jen's.

It is possible, however, to recreate many elements of what works at MeadowRidge, and to incorporate them into more traditional training stables. That is what we have begun to do at my farm. We have created paddocks that are irregular shapes, embraced slow feeder systems and taken up arranging them strategically with water and shelter stations to encourage movement in our herds. We built our stable on a hill and each paddock contains inclines, and we provide as much footing variation as we can by adding different types of gravel. The horses live outside 24/7 in herds and have constant access to forage. That said, we do not have enough land to build the kind of tracks MeadowRidge has, and I feel there is no shame in admitting that what works best for a training stable may never meet all the requirements of what works best for a retirement facility.

HARD CHOICES

Although it can be controversial to discuss, I feel there is no shame in humanely euthanizing horses which can no longer be adequately managed. If the choice is between the horse merely surviving (not thriving) with compromised welfare, or being sold into uncertainty, or being put to sleep while comfortable in a happy, safe environment before he begins to suffer, I feel that I would always prefer to see a horse put to sleep.

It is my hope that, as veterinary medicine continues to improve and we all continue to learn more about our equine partners, retirement boarding facilities like

MeadowRidge Farm will become more common and accessible. Until then, I try to stay open-minded and compassionate when people run into the problem of what to do with a horse they can no longer ride. It's an emotional subject, and if we want to help solve the problem of unwanted horses in our country, we've got to change the way our community has these conversations. It is only too common to see snarky comments on social media derail what could have been a helpful thread on the subject, with guilt-tripping quips such as, "You shouldn't have bought the horse if you only wanted it for riding." As I found with my two mares, things are simply not always so cut-and-dried.

Horses require exercise to stay healthy. They need to move constantly in order to have healthy digestion, balanced blood sugar, good circulation, joints, hooves, etc. When that becomes impossible, for a myriad of reasons, it creates a complex ethical question for the person who loves the horse. It's not about riding (or throwing the horse away when it can no longer be useful), it's a question of exercise and adequate welfare for the animal.

There is no one-size-fits-all solution. Different horses have different needs, and deciding what comes next for a horse who can no longer be exercised normally may prove very complicated. Sometimes, there is no happy solution. At the end of the day, I do believe that most people want what is best for their animals. My hope is that, by discussing these difficult topics honestly and openly, we may be able to help each other find the best possible solutions for our animals.

TINNI GETS HIS MOJO BACK

by Alys Culhane

Much has been written about the life lessons that older horses impart to us. All these writers have noted that our long-term interactions with these pals culminates in our becoming more adept riders and trainers. However, little has been written about how attending to their geriatric-related concerns broadens our medical knowledge. A recent, routine veterinary visit recently brought this realization to mind.

It was a blustery November morning. Zach Kaiser, DVM, parked his mobile veterinary unit in our Alaskan driveway. He and his assistant Sarah hopped out and greeted Pete and me warmly. Their visits are lengthy because Zach and Sarah enjoy imparting information, and Pete and I enjoy being on the receiving end. This day was no exception.

Zach did a blood draw on Stormy the Goat because we wanted to know if she was pregnant. He provided us with fecal sample collection containers. After, we climbed into the back of the van and chatted. I mentioned that I was finishing up a year's course work in Wilderness Medicine/Emergency Medical Technician training and had a request. I'd been wondering if there were similarities inherent in human and equine medical exams, and I added that human health care professionals follow set protocols.

Zach said that he wasn't sure how human exams are conducted, but that he'd be glad to show me the steps he follows when he does large animal exams. We agreed that Tinni, age 30, would be an ideal research subject by virtue of his being the oldest member of our four horse herd.

THE PHYSICAL EXAM

I retrieved Tinni from his enclosure, tied him to the hitching post, and put a flake of hay in his feed bucket. He occasionally flicked his ears, but for the most part remained oblivious to us. Zach explained to me that he generally does his exams in a similar fashion, of course taking into account the owner's perceived chief complaint. I watched as he made a visual left-to-right circuit, in which he assessed



Pete Praetorius and Tinni won the Novice Division of the 2014 Bald Mountain Butt Buster Competitive Trail Ride. Four years later, a routine vet examination explained why Tinni had lost his "mojo."

Tinni's mental and physical condition. He then did this circuit a second time, beginning by lightly resting his hands on Tinni's back and then reintroducing himself to his long-time friend. A hands-on exam followed. As would an EMT, he checked Tinni's airway, breathing, circulation, vitals, and lung and gut sounds. He ran his hands over the horse's body and legs, and in this way determined there were no deformities, contusions, puncture wounds, burns, tenderness, lacerations, or swelling, the abbreviated term being DCPBTLS.

EMTs ask patients questions related to their chief complaint and their medical history and, this way, come up with a field assessment. This assessment enables them to provide immediate emergency medical care. It also provides the hospital staff

with potentially life-saving information.

Zach has been Tinni's primary care physician for seven years, so he was quite familiar with Tinni's past medical history. I suspect that had Tinni been a new patient, his questions would have followed the more formal EMT format. I also had observations to contribute, which was why in this particular instance our subsequent conversation was both informal and context-driven.

I have always likened my conversations with equine veterinarians to playing tennis with professionals. Over the past 15 years, I've worked at holding my own on my side of the court, in part by taking semester-long courses in large animal anatomy and physiology, veterinary technology, and human anatomy and physiology. The acquisition of scientific knowledge

has never come easy to me; this was why I majored in English. My current area of interest surfaced when I took the local college's course in large animal behavior. This complemented my more cognitive leanings, and was why I was subsequently asked to teach the course.

PAST ISSUES

I knew that I'd once again be able to converse about the signs, symptoms, and treatment of Tinni's multiple health issues. COPD was the first order of business. In a nutshell: COPD stands for chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. It is an umbrella term used to describe upper respiratory infections, and specifically bronchitis and emphysema, but not asthma. Tinni had previously been diagnosed with bronchitis, an inflammation of the bronchii within the lungs.

COPD is brought about in horses by environmental problems such as dusty or moldy hay, dust and mold in bedding, or pollen, dust, and other environmental irritants. When airborne allergens get down into the airways, they irritate the cells and cause mucus secretion, which triggers snorts and coughs. COPD is characterized in equines by chronic coughing, an increased respiratory rate, forced abdominal breathing, and exercise intolerance. Treatment often includes the combined use of bronchodilators and corticosteroid drugs. Bronchodilator drugs (for instance Clenbuterol) are often given to horses who are experiencing acute attacks of heaves.

I reminded Zach that, 11 years ago, Tinni came to us with heaves. His symptoms abated when I watered his hay and provided him with a dust-free environment. I then noted that this past summer we went on a pack trip in the Lower 48 and left him in the care of a friend, a very knowledgeable horse person. It was a smoky and hot summer. In our absence, Tinni resumed coughing. His coughing ceased when, in September, the weather cleared. On the basis of this information, and also on the basis of discernable lung sounds, in this case rhonchi, low-pitched wheezing sounds that occur on the exhale and sound like snoring, Zach prescribed an expectorant to be given for three days or until the symptoms abated.

We continued to volley the tennis ball back and forth across the net

in talking about Tinni's arthritis. Arthritis most commonly occurs in the weight-bearing joints of the legs and in the hooves. Extra stress or injury to any joint can exacerbate this condition. Pain occurs as the cartilage thins, resulting in inflammation, stiffness, and, in time, lameness. Upon Zach's recommendation, we'd been giving Tinni once-a-month intramuscular injections of Summit, a chondroitin-4 sulfate. This medication promotes healthy, thick synovial fluid, decreases inflammation in the joints, and improves the cushioning properties of the cartilage pads. I'd also been supplementing his daily beet pulp ration with Cosequin and glucosamine/MSM.

CURRENT CONCERNS

Our health-related conversation next took an unexpected turn, with me inwardly conceding that, in terms of our metaphorical tennis game, Zach was a pro and I was an amateur. He again rested his hands on Tinni's back, paused, then noted that there had been some muscle loss on Tinni's back since his last visit, six months previously. I freely admitted that I hadn't been doing much lately to improve the situation. The veterinarian suppressed a smile when I said, "Tinni takes a dim view of carrot stretches, core strengthening exercises, and agility, so I've instead been ponying him and going for long walks."

I added that Tinni seemed to have lost his mojo—his confidence, energy, and enthusiasm. He now left the mares after eating, walked over to the far gate,

and stood there staring out into space.

Zach put his hands in his pockets. "His coat condition is good. And he's holding his weight. His coat is lengthy, but not curly. But given his age, and the fact that he has muscle loss on his back, I suspect that this fellow might have a mild case of Cushing's disease."

I felt my shoulders grow heavy—the weight was like that which had previously accompanied Tinni's being diagnosed with COPD and arthritis. Then, as now, I didn't envision Tinni heading to that great pasture in the sky. Rather, history would repeat itself in that I'd again have to put considerable time and effort into doing research on yet another unfamiliar medical topic. My cold winter nights would again be spent at the kitchen table, with a medical dictionary in one hand and an anatomy and physiology text in the other. If I failed to do this, I'd remain a mere bystander when it came to my beloved horse's ongoing medical care.

Zach attempted to explain the intricacies of Cushing's disease to me. Attempted. All I was able to discern was that Cushing's Syndrome had something to do with the endocrine system and the pituitary gland and the hypothalamus. Our conversation concluded with his doing a blood draw, one that would let us know how severe Tinni's condition might be.

CUSHING'S SYNDROME

Here is what I subsequently discovered. Equine Cushing's Syndrome is one of the most common diseases of horses 15 years of age and older. It is called Equine



Hrimmi waits for her buddy Tinni on their snowy exercise track. A diagnosis of Cushing's disease is by no means the end of the road for 30-year-old Tinni.



Alaska's sub-zero temperatures don't slow Tinni down, nor do his multiple age-related health issues. But they do require his owners to educate themselves to be able to provide the appropriate care.

Pituitary Pars Intermedia Dysfunction (PPID) because this term most accurately pinpoints the affected location within the brain. In humans, Cushing's disease affects a different location within the pituitary gland; this is why veterinarians prefer this more specific term.

The primary clinical signs of PPID are abnormally elevated hormone concentrations in the blood, with cortisol playing a key role. Cortisol is a steroid that regulates a wide range of vital processes throughout the body, including metabolism and the immune response. It also plays a role in helping the body respond to stress.

The pituitary gland is located at the base of the brain. In horses with PPID, the middle lobe of the pituitary gland (pars intermedia) becomes enlarged and results in an overproduction of hormones. The growth of the middle lobe of the pituitary gland compresses the adjacent structures in the pituitary and hypothalamus, and this results in a loss of function.

Clinical signs of PPID vary depending upon the stage of disease. The average age of horses diagnosed with PPID is 20, with over 85% of the horses being over 15, but PPID has been diagnosed in horses as young as seven. All breeds can develop PPID; however, ponies and Morgan horses have a higher incidence of the disease than do other breeds.

The most classic symptom of PPID is hirsutism, which is a long curly hair coat that fails to shed properly. Other

symptoms include excessive drinking and urination (polyuria/polydipsia), lethargy, excessive sweating, muscle mass loss, sole abscesses, tooth root infections, sinusitis, infertility, and bulging eyes. If untreated, horses with Cushing's Syndrome may develop laminitis and be insulin resistant.

A blood test is key to diagnosis, even though no single test is 100% accurate. The tests most commonly used in the field are the dexamethasone suppression test and the measurement of resting plasma ACTH concentration. Tests used in research settings include the TRH (thyrotropin releasing hormone) test and the domperidone test. These tests have not been critically analyzed in a large number of horses and their ability to accurately predict PPID in early or late courses of disease has yet to be determined.

Treatment seldom achieves complete resolution or disease remission. The most important reason for treatment is to improve the horse's quality of life. Infertility may be temporarily overcome when treating older broodmares with confirmed PPID.

Pergolide is currently the medication of choice for horses diagnosed with PPID. The dose can be adjusted based on response to therapy or after repeated testing. Preventative care should include regular deworming, ongoing dental care, and consistent farrier work. Clipping excess hair may make the horse more comfortable.

Some horses with PPID have been found to be insulin resistant, which then

necessitates a special diet. Insulin sensitivity can be improved by reducing body fat and avoiding feeds high in starch and sugar. Horses that have both insulin resistance and PPID should be fed hay that is less than 12% non-structural carbohydrates. If the hay can't be tested, soaking it for 30 minutes in cold water will lower the sugar content. Pasture access should be limited to one to two hours a day, and sugary treats should be avoided.

Affected horses can also be fed a commercially prepared low-starch diet. If the horse is thin, the addition of fat in the form of rice bran or corn oil will provide added calories. Not all horses with PPID are insulin resistant. This is an additional consideration in a complete diagnostic evaluation, especially if the horse has laminitis.

TINNI GETS HIS MOJO BACK

In the two months following Zach's visit, we communicate by phone and email. The pregnancy test indicated that Stormy the Goat was barren. The fecal sample tests indicated that our horses were parasite-free. We acted upon Zach's suggestion that Tinni be given 0.25 ml doses of Pergolide once a day for a week, with the dose upped to 0.50 ml the second week, 0.75 ml the third week, and 1.0 ml the fourth and subsequent weeks. We've scheduled another visit in which Zach will do a second blood draw to determine if it's the right dosage.

I'm now inside, looking out the kitchen window. December is the darkest, coldest time of the year in Alaska. The sun is low in the sky, and the temperature is well below zero. I can see the horses from where I'm standing. Tinni, who is wearing a blanket, is standing next to his buddy Hrimfara. Both are eating the remains of the morning hay. He has regained some of the muscling in his back, and when I take him for walks or pony him, he again moves with a decided bounce to his step.

I've finished my EMT training and am continuing to draw upon it in making horse/human medical connections. This, I think, will further enable me to keep the game going when interacting with the equine health care professionals on the far side of the tennis net. Remaining proactive with regards to my horse's health care needs is what having an older horse is all about.

CAN YOU GUESS YOUR HORSE'S WEIGHT?

BY NANCY MARIE BROWN

How fat is your horse, really, under all that winter hair?

Unless you have an equine scale in your barn (and a horse trained to stand still on it), you have three ways to keep track of your horse's weight: by measuring the horse's girth with a commercial weight tape, by measuring one or more body parts in inches and using a scientific formula to calculate the weight, or by eye.

One of these methods is much better than the other two.

In the 1990s, researchers in the U.K. weighed 600 horses, of different breeds, heights, and ages, on a portable weigh-bridge scale at barns, shows, and Pony Club camps. They compared the scale's results to those given by two different weight tapes and by a scientific formula developed in 1988. They also asked 100 of the horses' handlers to eyeball it.

"All of the methods," they reported in *The Veterinary Record* in 1998, "gave estimates which were significantly different from their actual weights measured on the weigh-bridge." One tape consistently overestimated the weight, while the other tape, the 1988 formula, and the eyeballs consistently underestimated it. The eyeballs were so far off that the researchers branded them "inaccurate and unreliable."

In 2011, researchers at Auburn University redid the study, weighing 145 horses, of various breeds and body types, on a veterinary equine scale and comparing the results to those given by a weight tape and the 1988 formula. They didn't bother estimating by eye: That's a carnival game, they said, not science.

As they reported in the *Journal of Equine Veterinary Science*, both the tape and the formula said the horses weighed less than they really did. The weight tape was the most inaccurate, underestimating by about 145 pounds. The formula, which calls for measuring both the horse's girth and its overall length, was better, underestimating by 38 pounds or more, depending on how you measured the horse's length.



Who's calling who fat? The author's mares in their sleek summer coats—and after their diets and exercise regimens were adjusted. Photo by Rose Breen.

WEIGHT TAPES

Weight tapes, of course, are based on scientific formulas too. To translate a horse's girth measurement into pounds they use an equation. But each brand of tape has its own secret, proprietary method—there's no standard formula—so each weight tape will give a different result.

Which tape is most accurate for Icelandics? No one knows. And there are quite a few tapes to choose from. At Amazon.com, for example, you can buy a Best Friend, Sure-Measure, Win Tape, Easy-Measure,

Equimeasure, Equi Life Weigh Tape, Coburn Horse & Pony Weigh Tape, William Hunter Equestrian Horse & Pony Weighing Tape, Horze Weight Measuring Band, or the retractable Shires Horse Measuring Tape. None of them advertise the formula they are based on.

Mine, now 23 years old and apparently no longer on the market, is a Val-A Horse and Pony Height-Weight Tape with Feeding and Conditioning Guide. It has a convenient blank space under the (extremely small) weight numbers, and suggests you

mark the date and horse's name below the weight each time you take a measurement. Sadly, I have not done so for 20 years: The latest marking on my tape is dated June 2001. I wasn't too conscientious before that either: The only other markings are from 1997, the year I brought my first horses from Iceland.

Why did I give up? I trusted my ability to keep track of my horse's weight by eye or by how the girth on the saddle fit. Plus, we all know weight tapes were not designed with barrel-shaped Icelandics in mind. They are designed for the "average horse"—16 hands and 1,000 pounds—not a 13.2-hand Icelandic that weighs somewhere between 660 and 880 pounds, according to the Icelandic breed standard.

I didn't even wise up when my vet warned me, about eight years ago, that my retired mare was at risk for Cushing's disease she was so fat. "She's not walking, she's waddling!" We called her the hippo-

potamus and put her on an exercise plan. (She looks much better now.)

Nor did it occur to me to start tracking my horses' weights when I took my young mare down to an Icelandic trainer for a clinic last spring and the trainer started laughing. "What have you been feeding her? She's huge!" (Poor mare tells me she's starving now, but she looks much better.)

Apparently, I'm not the only long-time horse owner whose eye needs recalibration. According to veterinary scientists, equine obesity is "a major health issue on the rise."

TRACKING WEIGHT

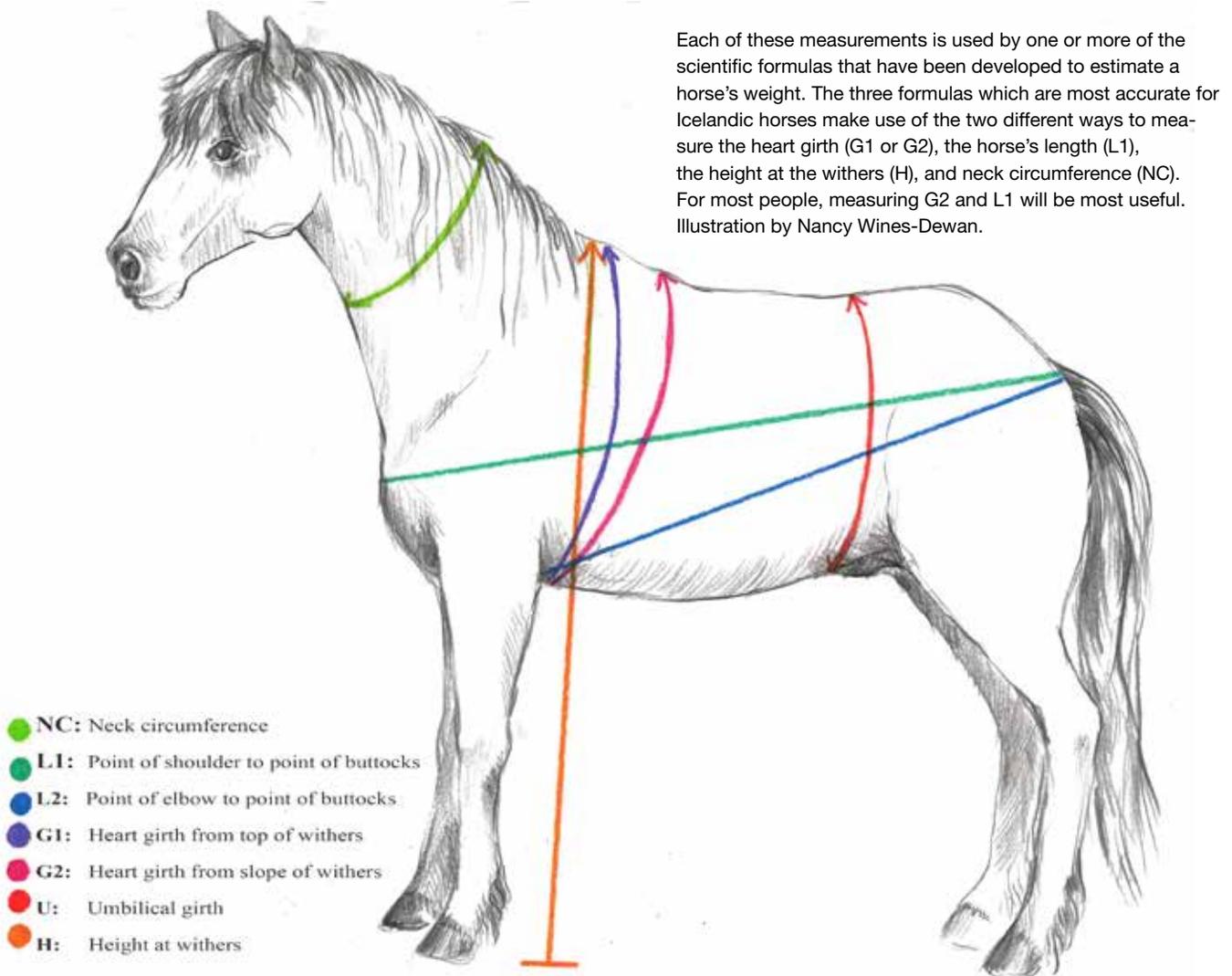
A weight tape can be a useful tool. The directions on mine clearly state, "Use this tape to keep track of your horse's condition. Don't let him get too fat or too thin. ... You don't have to be an expert to 'weigh' horses with this tape. You can always get a good, practical estimate..."

The key word is *estimate*. By measuring

frequently, I would know how much my horse changes between her heavy winter coat and her sleek summer uniform. (A friend who has done this says it's about 30 pounds.)

A skinny horse may be genetically skinny or she may be suffering from a poor diet, either because her diet is nutritionally inadequate, too little is offered, or because other horses are chasing her away. Loss of weight may be a sign of disease or parasites, a hormone imbalance, tooth problems, or old age. A fat horse, likewise, may be genetically fat or she may be suffering from a poor diet (either because it's nutritionally unbalanced or simply too much), a disease or hormone imbalance, or lack of exercise. (To learn more about horse fitness, see "Nutrition for Icelandics" in Issue Four 2013 of the *Quarterly*.)

Knowing what's normal for your horse is important when calculating how much dewormer, antibiotics, or other drugs to



Each of these measurements is used by one or more of the scientific formulas that have been developed to estimate a horse's weight. The three formulas which are most accurate for Icelandic horses make use of the two different ways to measure the heart girth (G1 or G2), the horse's length (L1), the height at the withers (H), and neck circumference (NC). For most people, measuring G2 and L1 will be most useful. Illustration by Nancy Wines-Dewan.

give. If her weight goes up or down at an unusual time or by an unusual amount, you know to adjust her feeding or exercise routines, or to call a vet to find out what else is going on.

Some experts say you should weigh your horse every month, others say weekly or, for horses with unusual weight gains or losses, even daily. You should measure at the same time of day (either before or after feeding) and when your horse is standing still and square. Since “still and square” may be hard to achieve, experts recommend taking the measurement three times and averaging your results. “Consistency is key!” they say, and “Practice and observation will improve your accuracy.”

To measure the “heart girth,” you wrap the tape around the horse’s belly, from just behind his elbows up and over his withers. Some tapes want you to pass over the very highest point of the withers (G1 on the illustration), others suggest crossing the slope of the withers (G2), so read the directions that come with your tape. Wait until your horse exhales, pull the tape so it’s snug (but not uncomfortable for the horse), then read off the number where the “zero” end overlaps the rest of the tape. This number, according to the secret formula the tape’s manufacturer uses, is your horse’s weight.

Is it really the horse’s actual weight? Probably not. But it’s close enough to tell me I was overfeeding my mares. And, until now, there wasn’t any reason to believe that any other method of weighing your horse—short of using an actual equine scale—was more reliable.

A BETTER FORMULA

Last December, three researchers from Denmark and Norway published a scientific paper in *Acta Veterinaria Scandinavica* on how best to estimate weight in Icelandic horses.

They measured 43 Icelandic horses (along with 38 Warmbloods), then used 10 different scientific formulas to translate those measurements into weights. Then they weighed the horses on equine scales and applied a complicated statistical analysis to the results.

They found that three of the 10 formulas gave reasonably accurate estimates of the weight of an Icelandic horse. The other seven did not work well for our breed. In the journal, the measurements are in cen-

timeters and the results are in kilograms. I asked my mathematician son, Will Fergus, to translate the formulas into inches and pounds; he also explained a little of the math behind them.

The simplest formula of the three works like a weight tape, translating the heart girth measurement (G2, in inches) into pounds. “In mathematical terms,” said Will, “it treats your horse as though it’s roughly a cube with a certain density.” Published by D.P. Willoughby in the book *Growth and Nutrition in the Horse* in 1975, this formula has long been a standard. It comes in two forms, one for males (both geldings and stallions) and one for females:

- Male weight = $(0.14475 \times G2)^3$
- Female weight = $(0.14341 \times G2)^3$

The second formula that worked well for Icelandics is the one that was tested in both the 1998 and 2011 studies mentioned above. This formula, mathematically, “treats your horse as though it’s a cylinder with a certain density,” Will said. It was developed by C.L. Carroll and P.J. Huntington in 1988, and requires you to measure both the heart girth (G2, in inches) and the body length (in inches). To measure the length you need two people. To use this formula properly, you measure it from the point of the shoulder horizontally along the horse’s flanks to the point of the buttocks (see L1 in the illustration). Then you feed those figures into this formula:

- weight = $(G2^2 \times L1) / 328.7546$

(The divisor is usually rounded up, in practice, to 330.)

The third formula is much more complicated. Published by D.N. Catalano and several colleagues from the universities of Minnesota and Kentucky in 2015, it involves four measurements: H (height, using a stick), NC (neck circumference halfway along its length), G1 (heart girth; see the illustration for the difference between G1 and G2), and L1 (body length). Although developed for draft and Warmblood breeds, it gave the best estimate of any of the 10 formulas for an Icelandic’s weight. The math, however, is “obnoxious,” my son agreed. “This formula is taking a lot of data and telling a computer to figure out an equation that makes them all work. Unfortunately, it can’t really be very easily simplified because of the complicated exponents—yes, those are exponents. This is very likely an equation that was derived with a graphing program that was told to draw a best-fit line

from a lot of data using an exponential function.”

The original formula, with measurements in centimeters and the output in kilograms, is:

$$\bullet \text{ weight (kg)} = (G1 \text{ (cm)}^{1.528} \times L1 \text{ (cm)}^{0.574} \times H \text{ (cm)}^{0.246} \times NC \text{ (cm)}^{0.261}) / 1209$$

If you’ve got a great calculator, but no centimeter measuring tape, here is the conversion into inches and pounds:

$$\bullet \text{ weight (lb)} = ((G1 \times 2.54)^{1.528} \times (L1 \times 2.54)^{0.574} \times (H \times 2.54)^{0.246} \times (NC \times 2.54)^{0.261}) / 548.3938$$

The 2019 researchers acknowledge, “As complexity increases it might be more difficult to apply formulas to practice, e.g. measuring body length accurately might be difficult if a person is alone, and more measurements require more sophisticated calculations.”

But, they conclude, their study has shown that both “simple and more complex formulas can be used for Icelandic horses even though they were not developed for this breed.”

Even mathematically challenged as I am, I should be able to calculate Willoughby’s or Carroll and Huntington’s formulas at least once or twice a year and use the results to check the accuracy of my Val-A Horse and Pony Height-Weight Tape. Anything’s an improvement over eyeballing it.

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RIDING BADGE REWARDS by Keziah Dunn

I am a freshman in Schenectady High School. I live on a farm in New York and take care of my three Icelandic horses. I remember being around horses since I was about five years old. Naturally, since I was always around them, my passion for horses knew no borders.

For many years, I was taught riding by one of my older sisters. Then she got a job with an extremely talented trainer. This connection opened a door to a world I had barely glimpsed before, and once I saw it, I couldn't tear my eyes away. After seeing what wonders this trainer could do with horses, I was thrilled when my sister was able to get me an internship at the farm. It was there, at Mad River Valley Icelandic Horses in Vermont, that I was introduced to the USIHC Riding Badge Program.

The summer of 2018 I received the opportunity to complete my USIHC Competition Riding Badge under the direction of my mentor, Jess Haynsworth. I won't forget the feeling of being rewarded for all my hard work, and I am so thankful for the chance to further my education through the Riding Badge program.



Keziah and Munkur frá Steinnesi were the Youth 12+ Division Champions at the 2019 NEIHC Open. Photo by Jess Haynsworth.

It all started two years ago, when I was helping Jess on her farm. She mentioned how beneficial it would be if I read the Riding Badge booklet, so I did. After reading the booklet I became interested in the whole program, and after getting more involved with horses, I decided to take my first test. I definitely learned a lot of quality information. I studied very hard and worked with Jess and her horses. I started with the basics of grooming, and continued up to the level of being able to get smooth and beautiful gaits. After completing my test, I received my first badge: Basic Riding Badge, Level 2. This inspired me to continue working towards the next levels of the Riding Badge Program.

This past summer, I spent several weeks interning with Jess. While helping her facilitate a day camp, I took time to study the program materials. I learned how to care for the horses in many new ways, such as how to take basic health tests, how to recognize when horses were unwell, and how to help them in such circumstances. I learned what healthy hooves should look like and how they should be taken care of. At night I studied digital textbooks and questions on Icelandic horses. Every day, I learned something new about how to ride and how to treat my horses well both in and out of competition. The most important thing I learned was that we should treat horses like the friends they are.

Then came testing day. I was tested and evaluated on everything from bringing the horse in from the field, grooming, tacking up, riding four gaits and the transitions to each, as well as putting the horse away. Afterwards, I was asked a few questions, such as why one grooms a horse, and how to get a smooth transition from one gait to another. The hands-on, ridden, and questionnaire portion of my testing concluded, I was then presented with a Competition Riding Level 1 badge.

The experience was slightly nerve wracking, but thoroughly amazing at the same time. I learned an exceptional amount in just a few weeks, and I hope to continue working with horses and completing more and more Riding Badge Tests.



My favorite part about this whole experience was being able to work with one horse for a majority of the training over the past two summers. This horse, Munkur frá Steinnesi, and I formed a bond that I had never before felt with a horse. After we grew to know each other, something just clicked and we became best friends. We are both very dramatic and stubborn, so we hit a few bumps in the road, but these experiences just made our friendship grow. I really loved that horse, and he encouraged me to continue riding and to prolong my time in the equestrian field. Together we worked to improve our skills, and I definitely learned so much and grew as a person and a rider while working with that beautiful horse.

Editors' Note: Keziah Dunn is the winner of the 2019 Spaeri Youth Essay Award. Spaeri is the registered name of the Icelandic endurance horse known as Remington, famous for his determination, passion, and indomitable will. This award is intended to inspire and encourage these same qualities in young riders. The recipient of the award is chosen from USIHC youth members who submit essays for publication in the Quarterly during the calendar year. For more information, see icelandics.org/youth. For more about the USIHC Riding Badge Program, see <https://icelandics.org/riding-badge-program>.

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www.caroldopkin.com

Hestar Ranch
Monika Meier-Galliker
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m.meier@hestar-ranch.us
www.hestar-ranch.com

Lough Arrow Icelandics
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www.coloradoicelandics.com

Tamangur Icelandic Horses
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Larkspur, Colorado 80118
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coralie@tamangur-icelandics.com
www.tamangur-icelandics.com

Tolt Mountain Ranch
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dowdingtom@gmail.com

IOWA

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www.harmonyicelandics.com

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lucybexpress@yahoo.com

VERMONT

Lunar Hill Icelandic
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Mad River Valley Icelandic Horses, LLC
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1268 Fuller Hill Rd
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Vermont Icelandic Horse Farm
Karen Winhold
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VIRGINIA

Montaire Icelandic Horses
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www.montaire.org

WEST VIRGINIA

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Icelandic Thunder
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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 at 3 days old
Kvikur from Beat N' Branch
 F.: IS2007187661 **Strokkur frá Syðri-Gegnishólum**
 M.: US2010204585 **Kvika from Four Winds Farm**



July 14, 2019 Filly - Photograph at 3 days old
Sólhvít from Beat N' Branch
 F.: IS2007187661 **Strokkur frá Syðri-Gegnishólum**
 M.: IS1999237400 **Glóð frá Brimilsvöllum**



US2017205263
Hríma from Beat N' Branch
 F.: IS2005137340 **Sporður frá Bergi**
 M.: IS1998225081 **List frá Hrafnhólum**



US2016205158
Eldrottning from Beat N' Branch
 F.: IS1998186693 **Hjörtur frá Holtsmúla 1**
 M.: IS1999237400 **Glóð frá Brimilsvöllum**



US2018105318
Þorinn from Beat N' Branch
 F.: IS2001187041 **Þróstur frá Hvammi**
 M.: IS1999237400 **Glóð frá Brimilsvöllum**



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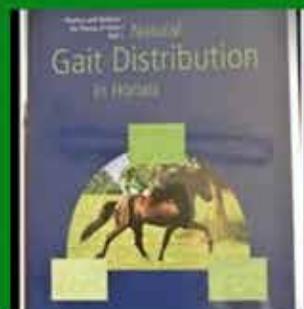
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