

Issue One

THE

2025

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)



Finding peak performance in balance

Álfadans Equestrian Arts is a full service Icelandic Horse focused facility run by award winning Icelandic, Liberty and Bridleless trainers Alexandra Venable (FEIF Trainer Level 1) and Caeli Cavanagh (Hólar Graduate, FEIF Trainer Level 3). We strive to create a welcoming, inclusive community of Icelandic Horse riders that fosters growth, education and joy in all riding goals.

Our Services

- Training
- Lessons
- Online Courses
- On and Offsite Clinics
- Adult and Kids Summer Camp
- Sales (Onsite or Imported for You)



802 299 5468



alfadansequestrian@gmail.com



www.alfadans.com



HARMONYICELANDICS.COM
TRURO, IOWA • VIRGINIA@HARMONYICELANDICS.COM

LESSONS • TRAINING • SALES • BREEDING • IMPORTS

Mark your calendar!

Join us in 2025! With more than 1,000 acres of trails and natural beauty, these events are an experience you won't want to miss!

SPRING/SUMMER 2025

June 11-12: Breeding Assessment
June 12: Young Horse Assessment
June 13: USIHC Breeding Seminar
June 14-15: National Ranking Show
June 22-29: USIHC Youth Camp

FALL 2025

September 29-October 5

A Week in Icelandic Horse Paradise!
Clinics, Trail Riding, Fun Day, World Ranking Show

LEARN MORE AT [HARMONYICELANDICS.COM](https://www.harmonyicelandics.com)



We can't wait to see you!



- KARLSLUND - ROECKL - FLECK - TOP REITER - WERKMAN - FAGER BITS - ARIUS- G-BOOTS - EQUES - HRÍMNIR
 REITER - WERKMAN - FAGER BITS - G-BOOTS - EQUES - HRÍMNIR - ÁSTUND - FEATHER WEIGHT - KARLSLUND - R
 - ROECKL - FLECK - TOP REITER - WERKMAN - FAGER BITS - ARIUS- G-BOOTS - EQUES - HRÍMNIR - ÁSTUND - FE
 REITER - WERKMAN - FAGER BITS - ARIUS- BACK ON TRACK - G-BOOTS - EQUES - HRÍMNIR - ÁSTUND - FEATHER W
 MAN - FAGER BITS - ARIUS- G-BOOTS - EQUES- HRÍMNIR - ÁSTUND - FEATHER WEIGHT - KARLSLUND - ROECKL -



161 Ásta D. Bjarnadóttir-Cove
 US Dýnjandi frá Dalvík

WWW.FLYINGCTACK.COM

FREE SHIPPING TO US AND CANADA ON ORDERS OVER \$250 *

ONE STOP SHOP FOR EVERYTHING YOU MIGHT NEED
 FOR YOU OR YOUR ICELANDIC HORSE

TACK SALES - TRAINING - HORSE IMPORT - LESSONS - CLINICS - SHOWS - STALLION SERVICE

*EXCLUDING USED SADDLES

www.tolttack.com

www.tolttack.com



TÖLT TACK

The US Supplier of Icelandic Tack





TRAINING



LESSONS



SALES & IMPORT



EVENTS



BOARDING



TRIPS

TAMANGUR ICELANDIC HORSES

Coralie Denmeade | FEIF Certified Trainer | USIHC Sport Judge B
2019 World Championship Qualifier



TAMANGUR
ICELANDIC HORSES

FIND ICELANDIC HORSES IN COLORADO



Barn address
13311 Spring Valley Rd
Larkspur, CO 80118

719-209 2312
coralie@tamangur-icelandics.com
www.tamangur-icelandics.com

JUNE 12-18, 2025

KNITTING & RIDING

Knit under the midnight sun and tölt through stunning landscapes.

Workshop guests enjoy scenic trail rides, expert knitting instruction tailored to their skill level, and visits to local knitting hotspots, including Iceland's "Woollen Circle."

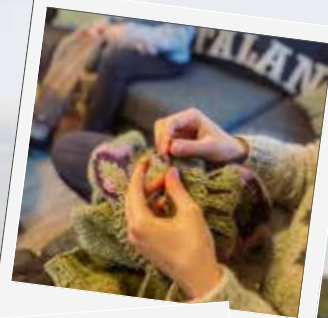
Creativity, culture, & breathtaking scenery. All levels welcome.



HESTALAND

www.hestaland.net

info@hestaland.net



JUNE 2-8, 2025

WRITING & RIDING

Hestaland invites writers of all levels on a noncompetitive, encouraging journey of skill-building and self-discovery.

Enjoy stimulating horseback riding and thoughtful, open-hearted guided writing sessions led by Jennifer Browdy, an award-winning author and veteran college professor of literature and writing.

www.hestaland.net

info@hestaland.net



HESTALAND





TRIPLE *World Ranking* SHOWS

ONE WEEKEND • THREE CHANCES TO RIDE ANY CLASSES • TRIPLE ICE CHAMPIONSHIPS • FIVE JUDGES

MAY 23-25, 2025 • SHELBYVILLE, KY

WWW.LETTLEIKIICELANDICS.COM
MAGGIE@LETTLEIKIICELANDICS.COM • 502.541.4590



MERRIMACK VALLEY ICELANDICS

We offer Empowering Education for all levels



**Lessons
Training
Competitions
Imports
Treks
Breed Demos
Clinics**



282 Main Street, Boxford, MA 01921



Contact us
Tel: 781-521-0841
email: ebbameehan@me.com
www.merrimackvalleyicelandics.com



ICELANDIC HORSE

Q U A R T E R L Y

ISSUE ONE 2025

12 NEWS

- 12 USIHC News
- 16 FEIF News
- 18 Club Updates

25 FEATURES

- 25 The National Team *by Jana Meyer and Nicki Esdorn*
- 28 Meet the Judges *by Lynn LaPointe Wiese*
- 32 A Visit with Mummi *by Nancy Marie Brown*
- 36 Creative Magic in Iceland *by Jennifer Browdy*
- 37 Conflict or Harmony? *by Nancy Marie Brown*
- 41 Letters From Our Readers

On the cover: Our charming cover boy, Tristan from Thistlefinch, is a brave and boldly colored buckskin dun tobiano colt, born in May of 2024. Friendly and confident from birth, he has already proven himself to be an excellent breed ambassador, having participated in a farmer's market, a local school festival, and a holiday horse parade. Tristan's dam, Fifla from Kaldakur, is a domestically-bred buckskin mare owned by Kat Payne. His sire, Óðinn frá Grenstanga, is a blue dun tobiano stallion owned and bred by Andrea Brodie of Lough Arrow II Icelandics in Aguilar, CO. Photo by Kat Payne.

ABOUT THE MAGAZINE

The Icelandic Horse Quarterly is published by the United States Icelandic Horse Congress (USIHC), a member association of FEIF (International Federation of Icelandic Horse Associations), as a benefit of membership. Renew online at www.icelandics.org. © 2025 All rights reserved. **Article Submissions:** USIHC members and non-members are invited to submit feature articles and photos for publication. Send them to co-editors Nancy Marie Brown and Nicki Esdorn at quarterly@icelandics.org. All submissions are reviewed by members of the Quarterly Committee. We reserve the right to edit or reject any submission. **Affiliated Club News:** Contact your club to submit news items and photos for the Club Updates section. **Letters From Our Readers:** All readers are invited to submit letters commenting on articles previously published in the magazine or on topics of general interest. Send them to quarterly@icelandics.org. All letters are reviewed by the committee. We reserve the right to edit or reject them. **Advertising:** See <https://icelandics.org/advertising-in-icelandic-quarterly-magazine> for ad rates and sizes. For page availability, contact ad rep Jean Ervasti (917-648-8824 or jean.ervasti@gmail.com). We reserve the right to reject any ad. **Deadlines:** January 1 (for Issue One, mailed in March), April 1 (Issue Two), July 1 (Issue Three), and October 1 (Issue Four). **Quarterly Committee:** All USIHC members are invited to join the Quarterly Committee to review submissions, vote on the cover, and help edit, illustrate, and distribute the magazine. Sign up at quarterly@icelandics.org. **Committee Members:** Carol Andrew, Margot Apple, Andrea Brodie, Nancy Marie Brown, Jean Ervasti, Nicki Esdorn, Amy Goddard, Em Jacobs, Kate Kalan, Constance Kollmann, Gabriele Meyer, Anne Owen, Alex Pregitzer, Emily Potts, Chris Romano, Sara Stewart, Judy Strehler, Lynn Wiese, and Nancy Wines-Dewan. **Graphic Design:** James Collins.

DISCLAIMER

All articles and letters represent the opinions of their authors alone. Publication in the *Quarterly* does not imply an endorsement of any kind by the USIHC. Ads are accepted with the understanding that the advertiser is authorized to publish their contents and agrees to indemnify the USIHC and the *Quarterly* against any loss or expense resulting from their publication.



THE USIHC 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 Debra Benanti

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 12 regional clubs; activity clubs can also be formed.

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 8 points of conformation and 9 ridden abilities. The USIHC helps organize 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

USIHC CONTACTS

Committees

Affiliated_clubs@icelandics.org
Jeff Rose (608-438-9435)

Breeding@icelandics.org
Virginia Lauridsen (515-556-3307)

Education@icelandics.org
Caeli Cavanagh (802-299-5468)

Leisure@icelandics.org
Janet Mulder (907-351-4473)

Promotion@icelandics.org
Ebba Meehan (781-521-0841)

Quarterly@icelandics.org
Nancy Brown (802-626-4220)
Nicki Esdorn (914-826-5159)

Sport@icelandics.org
Ásta Covert (805-688-1393)

Youth@icelandics.org
Lucy Nold (831-332-5328)

Directors

President@icelandics.org
Virginia Lauridsen (515-556-3307)

Vice_president@icelandics.org
Jeff Rose (608-438-9435)

Secretary@icelandics.org
Janet Mulder (907-351-4473)

Treasurer@icelandics.org
Shelby Walker (978-270-6447)

Caeli Cavanagh (802-299-5468)
Ásta Covert (805-688-1393)
Ebba Meehan (781-521-0841)
Lucy Nold (831-332-5328)

Registry

c/o Ásta Covert (805-688-1393)
PO Box 1724
Santa Ynez, CA 93460
Toll free: 866-929-0009
registry@icelandics.org

Main Office

United States Icelandic Horse Congress
c/o Sabrina Bateman
156 Coon Club Road
Bristol, VT 05443
Toll free: 866-929-0009
info@icelandics.org

Website

www.icelandics.org
webhelp@icelandics.org

ELECTION RESULTS

This year, Leslie Chambers, Emily Potts, and Janet Mulder were up for re-election to the USIHC Board of Directors. Janet Mulder opted to run for re-election. Leslie Chambers and Emily Potts declined to run and have retired from the board. We thank them for their many years of service to the Icelandic horse in America.

In accordance with Section 2 of Article IV (Voting and Elections) of the Constitution of the USIHC, the Election Committee accepted nominations until October 30, 2024 and concluded voting on December 15. Thank you to all USIHC members who agreed to stand for nomination and to all who cast their votes. In addition to Janet Mulder, who was re-elected, Ebba Meehan and Shelby Walker were elected to serve for terms of three years beginning on January 1, 2025.

Janet Mulder has served on the USIHC Board since December 2019. She has been the Leisure Committee chair and organized the S2SS ride for the past

five years. Janet began riding Icelandic horses in 1993. She participated in the FEIF Youth Cup (2002), became an intern judge (2007), FEIF Trainer Level 1 (2008), and has organized events for her local Regional Club (the Alaska Icelandic Horse Association) since 2013. She has also been the leader of the Tölt Alaska Youth Group since 2015. Janet became a Tölt in Harmony Instructor in 2018. Janet lives in Anchorage, AK, with her husband and two children, where they operate a small riding school and breed a few foals each year. Beginning in January, Janet will be serving as secretary of the USIHC.

Ebba Salvör Meehan grew up in the beautiful region of Borgarfjörður in West Iceland. She was fortunate to live in a country that reveres its equestrian culture and maintains the purity of the Icelandic breed. The Icelandic horse was a constant presence throughout her childhood, and horseback riding was something her entire family enjoyed. From working in stables to competing, the Icelandic horse



Susan Gibbons of Rhode Island is the December Leisure Rider of the Month. Here she and Falki enjoy the beach. Photo by Amy Keeler.

has always been a part of Ebba's existence. For the last 10 years, Ebba has run Merrimack Valley Icelandics, a horse farm in Boxford, MA. She has offered training, lessons, sales, international clinics, trekking, kids camps, shows, and breed demos. Ebba is passionate about promoting the breed on a grand scale and in offering education more broadly over the country. In the US, Ebba served on the board of her local Regional Club (the NEIHC) for two terms as the Education and Promotion Chair. For the USIHC, Ebba will be chairing the Promotion Committee. Contact her at Promotion@icelandics.org.

Shelby Walker writes, "In 2021, I had just retired from another competitive sport after 10 years and was looking for a new challenge. I decided I wanted to learn to ride, and that is when I discovered the Icelandic breed. Over the past three years, I have immersed myself in the sport and in learning everything I can about how to care for Icelandic horses. We now have our own farm in Boxford, MA, with four Icelandics (two imports and two domestic-bred) and train regularly with Merrimack Valley Icelandics. I also enjoy trail riding and always look forward to the annual Sea 2 Shining Sea challenge. Most recently, I competed at the World Ranking show in Kentucky and am excited to have placed into the intermediate level. When not riding, I am the Chief Legal Officer for an AI-focused biotechnology company, with multiple degrees in biology. I also love spending time with my four kids and four dogs. I am very interested in helping the USIHC promote the breed and want to become more active in the community." For the USIHC, Shelby will be serving as treasurer.

ANNUAL MEETING

The 2025 USIHC Annual Meeting was held on Zoom February 22. The Board officers and committee chairs presented their annual reports, after which guest speaker Freija Thye, an IPZV Trainer and National Sport Judge A, spoke on "Healthy Management of the Icelandic Horse."



Janet Mulder of Alaska was re-elected to the USIHC Board of Directors. Two new directors were also elected in 2024: Congratulations to Ebba Meehan and Shelby Walker.

MEMBERSHIP

As of December, we had 909 members in 713 households, continuing our steady increase in membership since 2017, when total membership was only 653.

VIRTUAL EDUCATION

The USIHC Education Committee is sponsoring four webinars this winter and

spring. On January 18, internationally renowned breeder, trainer, and rider Olil Amble spoke on "How to Read a Breed Assessment: Look Beyond the Numbers." On February 15, Brett Sponseller, chair of the Veterinary Science Department at the University of Kentucky, spoke on "How Transport Affects Horses—Both Short and Long Hauls."



Madie Richenstein of Oregon is the November Leisure Rider of the Month. Here she and Hnokki from Windsong rest at a stream.

On March 15, Guðrun Stefánsdóttir of Hólar University in Iceland, will speak on “Feeding the Icelandic Horse.” On April 19, Jen Verharen, mindset and performance coach for equestrians, will speak on “Riding Psychology on the Trail and the Track.”

Each webinar is an interactive session lasting 1.5-2 hours, with the presentation followed by a Q&A. Attendees have access to recordings of the presentations for seven days after the event. Webinars cost \$35 each (or \$100 for all four) for USIHC members, with higher rates for non-members. To register, see <https://icelandics.org/virtual-education-series>.

SHOW SEASON

The Merrimack Valley Vormót National Ranking Show, with FEIF international judge Hulda Geirsdóttir, will open the 2025 show season on March 29-30 at Springtide Farm in Boxford, MA. Contact Ebba Meehan (ebbameehan@me.com) for more information.

Solheimar Icelandics in Tunbridge, VT is planning to host five Ice Cup national ranking shows in 2025. Dates are May 3-4, June 21-22, July 26-27, August 30-31, and September 27-28. Contact Sigrún

Brynjarsdóttir (sigrunbry@gmail.com) for more information.

The National Ranking is based on scores from virtual and live National Ranking or World Ranking shows from the past two years. See the rankings at <https://icelandics.org/national-rider-rank-listing>. Check the USIHC Events calendar (<https://icelandics.org/events/>) for future show opportunities.

AMERICAN YOUTH CUP

2025 North American Youth Cup will take place June 22-29 at Harmony Icelandics in Truro, IA. The application is posted on the NAYC website at <https://sites.google.com/view/na-youth-cup/apply?> and is due April 1. For more information, contact Lucy Nold at Youth@icelandics.org.

JUDGING SEMINAR

A USIHC judging seminar will take place April 10-13 at Léttleiki Icelandics in Kentucky, led by FEIF International Sport Judge Þórgeir Guðlaugsson. The seminar is an excellent opportunity for anybody interested in learning more about judging and competition riding, the gaits of the Icelandic horse, and the basics of biomechanics. Participants will dive deep into the guidelines that judges use to assess riding skills, connection, beat, balance, suppleness, relaxation, movement, outline, and execution of a performance. Þórgeir will discuss the psychological aspects, as well as the ethics of judging. A big part of the seminar is actual judging, using both videos and live horses, to develop a feel for the scores, as well as hands-on learning about equipment checks, mouth checks, and more. On Saturday, the Léttleiki team will host a schooling show so seminar participants can gain life judging experience. For those who feel confident about their skills, exams for becoming a USIHC National Sport Judge level C or B will conclude the seminar. The exams include theory questions, as well as video judging. Participation in previous USIHC judging seminars or in the USIHC webinar “Introduction to Icelandic Horse Sport” is a prerequisite for this seminar. For more information, and to register, contact Alex Pregitzer (alexandra.pregitzer@gmx.de).

BREEDING SHOW

An official FEIF Breeding Horse Assessment is in the works for June 11-12, followed by a breeding seminar on June 13, at Harmony Icelandics in Truro, IA. Mock evaluations, which follow the same format as a full assessment without the scores being recorded in the WorldFengur database, will be held at the same time, with a young horse assessment planned for June 12. Notes Breeding Leader Virginia Lauridsen, “Nothing is confirmed with FEIF until the breeding judges have been assigned, which I’m hoping will happen in the near future.” Contact Virginia (breeding@icelandics.org) for more information. As Carrie Lyons-Brandt of Taktur Icelandics wrote about a previous assessment, “Evaluations are one of the most important things we can participate in. From the measurements to the conformation and ridden assessments, the data and knowledge collected gives us valuable information on our American-bred horses and horses we plan on using in our breeding programs. Breeding judges are some of our most educated, knowledgeable, and experienced judges, and therefore the ability for these events to include extensive continuing education for trainers, breeders, and horse owners in general is simply incredible.”



Judy Skogen of Washington is the October Leisure Rider of the Month. Here she poses with Freya from Extreme Farm.

SEA 2 SHINING SEA

The 2025 Sea 2 Shining Sea Virtual Ride opened on January 1. This year, the 4,000-mile route takes riders to visit 13 Icelandic horse farms in the US. Each farm checkpoint counts for 330 miles, or about 82 hours of riding. For complete rules, and to register, see: <https://icelandics.org/sea-2-shining-sea-ride>

Each month the USIHC Leisure Committee randomly chooses one of the 100-plus riders taking part in the Sea 2 Shining Sea Virtual Ride (S2SS) to be the Rider of the Month. This quarter's featured riders are Judy Skogen, Madie Richenstein, and Susan Gibbons.

Judy Skogen lives in Quilcene, WA with two Icelandics: Týr from Hestar Icelandics and Freya from Extreme Farm. She joined S2SS because she enjoys being part of a team and having a sense of comradeship. "Taking my horse out on the trails has always brought me great joy. If I was struggling with a problem, it would disappear when we were out exploring. I could ride the same path through the woods or along the seashore every day, and it would always be unique and new: the scents, the multitude of little creatures, the mood of my horse, the weather—so many factors change the experience." A rider from a young age, Judy was first introduced to the Icelandic horse, she says, "when I picked up Freya from the feedlot. I took home a wild, frightened, untouched three-year-old and began my journey of learning about the Icelandic horse. She is now 17 years old, and I will never go back to the 'normal' horse!"

Madie Richenstein lives in Portland, OR. She owns a 10-year-old gelding named Hnokki from Windsong. "After a 40-year break from horseback riding to raise my family, I was introduced to Icelandic horses by my good friend Shanna Flanigan. I'm grateful to have Caeli Cavanagh and Alex Venable, the trainers at Alfadans Equestrian Arts, guiding me on this incredible journey. They inspire me to improve as a rider, and I deeply respect their work ethic and calm demeanor. I always look forward to my time at the barn; riding is my happy

place! Whenever I have a free moment, I can't resist saying yes to riding on the trails. My stress of the day is forgotten as I focus on the moment and become one with my surroundings. I really enjoy the connection with nature."

Susan Gibbons lives on Block Island, RI. She owns Falki, age 13, and Odinn, age 22. "My goals are always to have a strong connection with my horses and to keep them fit and happy. I love riding both with friends and alone. I rode as a child, then took many years off while raising a family. We moved to Block Island in 2001, and that got me thinking about the possibility of having horses again. Then two friends and I did a 'girls weekend' at the Vermont Icelandic Horse Farm. I had almost no knowledge of Icelandic horses at that point, but I climbed off the surefooted tölter who had taken me up and down muddy mountain trails wondering how I had missed this wonderful breed! I bought my first Icelandic about three years after that, and have never looked back. My horses add so much depth and joy to my life."

TRAINER OF THE YEAR

For the second year in a row, the USIHC has nominated Jana Meyer for the FEIF Trainer of the Year award. Jana has served on the USIHC Trainer Certification Committee, helping to develop a system to certify American trainers according to the FEIF matrix. She was a trainer at the 2019 and 2023 North American Youth Cups, and was the USIHC team leader at the 2023 World Championships in the Netherlands. She has led several educational seminars for our community, including co-leading a judging webinar in 2024 and 2025. In addition to her FEIF Level 2 certification, Jana holds a USIHC Sport Judge B license and has judged national and world ranking shows throughout the US. She is also licensed as an equine massage therapist and a Centered Riding instructor. She runs Lunar Hill Icelandics in Chelsea, Vermont.

BOARD MEETINGS

The USIHC Board of Directors met by Zoom call on November 12 and Decem-



Ásta Covert, shown here with her stallion Gigur frá Ketilsstöðum, ranked third in the world on the 2024 FEIF list of Good and Harmonious Riders. Ásta was singled out for her fine riding style six times at three events. Photo by Heidi Benson.

ber 10. Meeting minutes, including the monthly Treasurer's report, committee reports, and the annual budget, can be found online at <https://icelandics.org/minutes>. USIHC members are encouraged to listen in on board meetings. The agenda and information on how to connect are posted on the USIHC website.

In addition to the topics reported on above, the Board discussed requiring SafeSport training for USIHC representatives at events, how to fill unused spots on the World Championship team, a code of conduct for sport judges, additional marketing efforts, a lack of interest in the Policy 31 funding for club events, changes to the virtual show format, the lifetime achievement awards program, and coordinating the show calendar.

HORSE WELFARE SEMINAR

The 2025 FEIF combined seminar for sport judges and trainers/instructors, to be held March 7-9 in Aarhus, Denmark, will focus on horse welfare. Internationally, horse welfare in sport is increasingly being scrutinized, with demands for modern standards and for objective assessments of horse behavior that align with societal expectations. Presentations and discussion topics in this seminar will include conflict behavior in Icelandic horses, showing how behaviors such as head shaking and mouth opening can indicate welfare issues. Another focus is on the correct use of tack and equipment, emphasizing the importance of fit and the rider's role in horse movement, illustrated through practical, research-based demonstrations. Presenters include Janne Winther Christensen, associate professor, department of animal and veterinary science, Aarhus University; Russell MacKechnie-Guire, associate professor in biomechanics, HE Equine, Hartpury University; and Mette Uldahl, chief consultant for horse and animal welfare at Animal Protection Denmark.

WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS

The Board of FEIF has appointed the chief judges for sport for the World Championships 2025, which will be held in Birmenstorf, Switzerland. Halldór Gunnar Victorsson will be chief judge at the event; he will be assisted by Stefan Hackauf as deputy chief judge.

The chief judges are appointed by the Board of FEIF upon recommendation by the FEIF Sport Committee at least 10 months before the start of the World Championships. Those with the right to nominate the chief judge and the deputy chief judge are the member countries, the Sport Judges Committee, the Sport Committee, and the FEIF Board.

The selection of the World Championships' 2025 sport judges is also complete. The following judges will be judging the sport tests in Switzerland next summer (in alphabetical order): Alexander Sgustav, Andreas Windsio, Anna Andersen, Anne Fornstedt, Birgit Quasnitschka, Bram van Steen, Christian



Reischauer, Inga Trottenberg (reserve), Katharina Konter, Lena Lennartsson (reserve), Lise Galskov, Malin Elmgren, Peter Häggberg, and Pjetur N. Pjetursson.

EDUCATION

At the FEIF Education Committee meeting in Frankfurt in October, several items were on the agenda. First, the committee welcomed Mathilde Ladefoged as a new young member. Then the different systems of rider education, with tests and rider badges, that are used in the member countries were compared. The committee discussed ways to share the available systems and ideas between countries, as well as the possibility of using the Icelandic "Knapamerki" system.

A thorough evaluation of the recently held and very successful Education Seminar, "Harmony before Performance," held in Wängen, Sweden, gave rise to new ideas for the future. The committee looked forward to the program for the combined seminar of Education and Sports Judges, to be held in Århus and Vilhelmsborg, Denmark, on March 7-9, 2025. The program will contain both topics on science and practical work at the most up-to-date standard, contributing to a better understanding of possible actions regarding horse welfare.

An important issue was the need to update the trainer matrix in the different countries. Several items need an updated wording reflecting modern standards, for



instance, with regard to aspects of horse welfare and legislation. This task will be an ongoing project.

In a joint meeting with the Youth Committee, ideas were exchanged to search for better ways to design a system of competitions that support young people in their development as riders. A joint meeting with the Leisure Committee gave rise to searching for possibilities to use the exchange of knowledge of professionals in the field of training and instructing as a platform for leisure riders to increase their knowledge and experience as well.

SPORT

A productive meeting of the Sport Committee and the Sport Judges Committee was held during the 2024 FEIF committee meetings. This joint meeting of the committees laid the foundation for important improvements, demonstrating the value of collaboration in shaping and developing our sport.

As every year, the Sport Judges Committee proposed improvements to the sport judging guidelines, which are the basis for all judges judging Icelandic horse sport events. A central discussion point was the significance of the different warning cards used by the judges. The discussion around the meaning of these cards, the consequences, and the possible publication of the riders' names showed that further work is required, but that some approaches were promising.



Proposals from the annual Sport Leader meeting were also on the agenda, some of which will be submitted to the next Delegates Assembly or the next Sport Leader meeting. These include a proposal to allow additional riders from the World Ranking list to participate in the World Championships, a point that was raised previously. The rules for withdrawals from competitions and inquiries about the use of barefoot boots in competitions were also discussed and prepared for the Annual Sport Leader meeting in February 2025.

LEISURE RIDING

The Leisure Riding Committee discussed a large number of topics at the FEIF Committee meetings. It decided to hand out a "Leisure Riding Country of the Year" award at the annual FEIF Conference. The first one will be presented at the 2025 FEIF Conference in Vienna, Austria. The purpose of the award is to draw attention to leisure riding activities within FEIF and to honor activities that have contributed to leisure riding within the national associations. The Leisure Riding Committee is also working on promoting the virtual ride "Bring on Birnenstorf" to engage Leisure Riders all around the world to participate. Another important topic during the meeting was to find ways to implement topics regarding horse welfare in the work of the leisure committee.



BREEDING

In the joint meeting of the Breeding Committee and the Breeding Judges Committee, the primary emphasis was on clear representation of Icelandic horses across various contexts, including breeding, sports, youth events, and leisure activities, to ensure a consistent portrayal of the breed in all its dimensions.

Several topics were discussed in a joint meeting with the Sport Committee to find possibilities to unify procedures, especially regarding disciplinary actions. The aim is to make these procedures transparent and standardized and to establish clear guidelines for all events. Youth engagement was also a significant focus, with programs developed to inspire young people to get involved in breeding and horse presentation—an essential step for the future growth of Icelandic horse breeding.

The committees also discussed improvements to the WorldFengur (WF) database with the intention of enhancing the accuracy of global Icelandic horse registrations, including the introduction of a five-digit color code. Additionally, the role of DNA analysis in breeding programs was emphasized and discussed.

The annual review and refinement of the breeding guidelines was also a priority. These guidelines are continuously updated, based on insights gained from the current season. Education and training for ringmasters, breeding leaders, and judges were key components discussed, with sem-

inars designed to maintain our high evaluation standards. Further information and dates for these seminars will be announced as soon as they are available.

Proposals were discussed to adjust the criteria for evaluating tölt and conformation, including a proposal to make repeated conformation assessments optional for horses over five years old. The different topics underscore FEIF's commitment to promoting Icelandic horse breeding worldwide, focusing on youth involvement, high educational standards, and transparent processes.

WELFARE WORKING GROUP

In November, representatives from 11 FEIF member countries met online to discuss issues related to horse welfare and the Social License to Operate (SLO) in their respective countries. It was a stimulating and informative meeting, with lively contributions from all the participants, including the members of the FEIF Horse Welfare working group. The group consists of one member from each FEIF committee, and their job is to make sure that horse welfare concerns stay on top of the agenda at every meeting. Members of the FEIF Horse Welfare working group are: Eyvindur Hrnannar Gunnarsson (Breeding), Anne Sofie Nielsen (Education), Katja Schütz (Leisure), Lisa Kroon (Sport), Sirpa Brumpton (Youth), and Barla-Catrina Isenbügel (Administration).

FEIF can make a difference in horse welfare by revising the FEIF Rules and Regulations in the light of current research and by raising awareness of topical issues via the Leisure, Education, and Youth committees. When it comes to the Social License to Operate, the work is better done by the individual countries' Icelandic horse associations, as the focus on particular issues varies in different parts of the world. However, the exchange of resources and information about addressing common questions has proved to be a valuable tool for all who participated in the meeting. The FEIF Welfare/SLO working group will meet every two months, with the next meeting in 2025. For more information, contact barla@feif.org.

CLUB UPDATES

CLUB UPDATES

There are 12 Regional Clubs affiliated with the U.S. Icelandic Horse Congress. To find the one nearest you, see the USIHC website at www.icelandics.org. The following clubs filed updates on their activities this quarter.

ALASKA

by Ellen Halverson

Winter allows us time to reflect on the past season of training and riding our horses. We appreciate what went well, and set goals to move forward and begin the process by working on the foundations to move us toward those goals. I also feel that winter allows for some space to just hang out with our Icelandic horses and share time with them. To all those with Icelandic horses in their lives, I hope 2025 will be a great year of connection, growth, and riding .

It is going to be an exciting year up here in Alaska for AIHA members and their horses. Our club had a meeting in November to begin planning for the upcoming summer. Opportunities for learning, trying new things, a schooling show, and other activities will give us time together and time with our horses. In December, we came together to celebrate the holidays with a fun gathering with lots of food and a book exchange at Dawn and Stormi Nugen's home in Chugiak. A pleasant time was had by all.



Above, attendees at the CIA's clinic with Olil Amble (left to right): Alexandra Montan Gray, Virginia Lauridsen, Bella Covert, Gigur frá Ketilsstöðum, Ásta Covert, Olil Amble, Heidi Benson, Laura Hahamian, Frida Rökaas, and Nahanni Riversong. Below, youth rider Bella Covert and Skuggi from Windsong at the CIA Open show. Both photos by Will Covert.

CALIFORNIA

by Ásta Covert

The California Icelandic Association held its annual CIA open at Flying C Ranch in Santa Ynez in November, rescheduled from the spring. Our judge was Lutz Lesener from Germany, and we had riders from all over California. Some riders came all the way from Oregon. Riders of all levels and ages joined the fun.

In December, Olil Amble, the USIHC National Team trainer, taught a three-day clinic, also at Flying C Ranch. It was an inspiring weekend, with so much learning.

Our next CIA event will be a Triple WorldRanking show to be held at Flying C Ranch on April 4-6.



Left, Freyja frá Kálfsstöðum out for an Alaskan winter walk. Photo by Ellen Halverson. Above, Cascade members Dani Rae on Falki, Deb Mathieu on Steffnir, Lori Birge on Snillingur, Diana Harris on Skuggi, and Lisa Roland on Krakatindur at the Oregon Horse Center's indoor trail.



Hestafolk members Karen Caldwell on Tobbi from Alfasaga (left) and Kirsten Peterson on Áradis from Wind Mountain enjoy a fall trail ride. Photo by Klaus Dirscherl.

CASCADE

by Lisa Roland

We are looking forward to a busy riding season in 2025! As 2024 came to an end, some of the Cascade Club members took advantage of visiting the indoor trail set up at the Oregon Horse Center in Eugene. With different levels of difficulty, every rider can find something there to challenge themselves and their mount with. From riding

behind a waterfall to crossing ditches, you are bound to find something of interest.

Between day rides and camping trips, the Pacific Northwest offers so many opportunities for horse and rider. Cascade Club member Diana Harris went on a Christmas Eve ride at Chehalem Ridge Nature Park with her friends. Lisa Roland took her stallion Krakatindur to a meet-and-greet at a senior center in The Dalles before Christmas.

HESTAFOLK

by Lisa McKeen

What a year 2024 was! Such weather, that we never knew whether a ride or even indoor groundwork would work!

RJ Argenzio has been organizing our club's Sea 2 Shining Sea teams for the year. We feel so happy to have three from Washington area. We cheer each other on and are inspired by that Central Team, whose members put in so many hours on the trails! The North Hestafolk and Central Hestafolk teams worked hard to get in the top ten. We are rebalancing so that our South Hestafolk team will have more riders in 2025, but we are proud that they kept adding hours in 2024.

Our club is creating a sharing library. Many of us are avid readers, and it's such fun to share what we are reading with one another. *Communication Training* is a favorite book to recommend, as is *Horse Brain, Human Brain*. We are also following the Education committee's USIHC Book Club to be on top of what trainers are reading.

We have hooked up with Custom Ink for more bling this year. We wanted to have club jackets, vests, t-shirts and hats. It's hard to do that with a club as spread out as ours, but Custom Ink has helpful staff who allow for group orders, so there's no more collecting money! Yeah from me!

We held our annual Zoom/in person meeting at Lauren's house again this year. The food and friends are well worth the trip. At the meeting, went over the results of our membership survey. The survey was conducted online and was a great way for members to give feedback or to redirect the board as to what activities they would like to see. One of our topics of discussion has been what value does a club membership hold? We all agree that the importance of having conversations with other Icelandic owners is invaluable. We learn and support and commiserate! Nothing is better than having horse friends who get you!

September saw Lauren Murphy and Andi from Evans Farm at the Washington State Fair in Puyallup. They always do an amazing job of sharing information with the crowds. Andi, unlike many horses,

loves the attention and will sleep at the front of his stall, so as not to miss any words of praise.

In 2024, we also had a great trip to the ocean and tried a new place out. Several other very nice events happened this fall, including a three-day Fall Colors Camp & Ride held by the BCH Tahoma & Ellensburg chapters and a trail ride in the Teanaway Community Forest near Cle Elum, Washington, which is a beautiful place to ride with interesting rock formations, river crossings, and several horse camps.

The weather has us turning to indoor training now as 2025 begins. Lots of good advice is available online for clicker or R+ training, so your horse doesn't become a cookie monster. We are also continuing our Zoom sessions with trainer Freya Sturm. We just finished up a session on hooves. It was so helpful to look at hooves with a trainer and farrier. We learned lots. Those of us who don't see dozens of hooves a day really need to look at a variety of well-trimmed horses so we can work with our own farriers. We are our horses' only advocate in many cases and have to be able to have input with our trimmers.



Rebekah Godek and Maple (aka Mimir from Pangaea) at Equine Affaire in Massachusetts. Photo by Jennifer Bechard. Right, youth riders Finja Meyer Hoyt (left) and Kamilla Brickner take a victory lap at the Solheimar Show in Vermont. Photo by Ona Kwiatkowski



Rose Terami and Óskadís from Mill Farm were one of seven Icelandic horse-rider pairs in the Wassail Parade in Woodstock, VT. Photo by Kathi Terami.





Katrín of Mill Farm (age 22), owned by NEIHC member Jennifer Bergantino, entered the Annual Myopia Horse Show with Susanna Colloredo-Mansfeld. The pair competed in the Century Class, where the combined age of horse and rider must exceed 100. Photo by Shawn Tinkham Photography.

NEIHC

by Emily Potts

This quarter, members of the Northeast Icelandic Horse Club (NEIHC) celebrated a season full of exciting events, learning opportunities, and festive traditions. From competitions to parades, these events provided opportunities for members to connect and come together from across our region New England and New York region.

Sigrún Brynjarsdóttir's Solheimar Farm in Tunbridge, VT, hosted the final two National Ranking Shows of the Solheimar Pentathlon Show Series. The September 28–29 show was judged by Hulda Geirsdóttir, and Alex Dannemann judged the October 26–27 show. Both shows had over 50 horse/rider entries, and members from around the northeast came to watch and ride. In 2025, Solheimar Farm will host five more National Ranking Shows as part of their Ice Cup Show Series.

This quarter also provided members with several opportunities to deepen their knowledge and skills through clinics. In

October, West Wind Farm in Delhi, NY, hosted a clinic with Herdís Reynisdóttir, while Farm Jibe-It in Redding, CT, held a clinic with Stefán Sigurðsson. In December, Vibeke Thoresen, a Hólar graduate and FEIF Trainer Level III, led a clinic in Byfield, MA. Riders worked on groundwork, ground driving, and riding, gaining fresh ideas and strategies to advance their training goals.

The annual Equine Affaire in Springfield, MA remains an important promotional event for the Icelandic horse and the NEIHC. Held from November 7–10, the NEIHC booth and riding demos attracted significant interest from attendees.

This event wouldn't have been possible without the dedication, time, and energy of our volunteers. The booth crew included Leah Greenberger, John Prenosil, Maren Prenosil, Grace Greenberger, Emily Potts, Margot Apple, Becky Hoyt, Hilary Houldsworth, Nancy Rohlf, Andrea Smith, Mouse Hedrick, Amelie Brewster, Kate Kalan, Ebba Meehan, Rebekah Godek, and Jennifer

Bechard.

Breed demo riders included Mouse Hedrick, Leah Greenberger, Becky Hoyt, Aleece Hoyt, Rebekah Godek, Finja Meyer-Hoyt, Maren Prenosil, and Amanda Malone.

We also had the privilege of having Guðmar Pétursson conduct an in-hand demonstration. His presentation on the Icelandic horse and NEIHC, followed by a Q&A session, gave attendees the opportunity to ask questions and learn more about the breed.

As the season turned colder, NEIHC members embraced the holiday spirit with several festive events. A team from Farm Jibe-It in Redding, CT, participated in the Frost-on-the-Pumpkin Hunter Pace, proudly showcasing six Icelandic horses and their riders. Sporting traditional Icelandic sweaters, the team included Karen Crape on Vepja, Ashley Bishop on Cjafar, Karleen Oosterwal on Klerkur, Wendy Balinski on Stoltur, Patrice Passaro on Draumur, and Wendy Malcy on Skerpla.

NEIHC hosted its first Holiday Member Trail Ride & Social on December 1 at Bradley Palmer State Park in Topsfield, MA. After a scenic six-mile ride through the park's trails, members gathered to share lunch, enjoy each other's company, and celebrate the season.

The Jingle Bell Jog in North Salem, NY, on December 8, brought small-town holiday charm to life. Barbara Sroka and Xenia Von Lilien represented the Icelandic horse community with their horses, Náttfari and Valdís. The event featured a costume contest, where Xenia and Valdís placed second, and a cheerful ride through the streets, complete with Christmas caroling and bell-adorned horses. Local residents came out to watch, take photos, and share in the festive atmosphere.

On December 13, Woodstock, VT, held its 40th annual Wassail Parade, featuring seven Icelandic horses out of approximately 40 participants. Members, Rigel Kemp-Haynsworth, Jess Haynsworth, Rose Terami, and Emily Potts donned festive decorations and costumes to join this cherished Vermont tradition.



At the Sirius Club Retreat at Lettleiki Icelandics, Cindy Gray-Stanley rides a pattern to music.

SIRIUS

by Janet Kuykendall

The Sirius Icelandic Horse Club members in Ohio and Kentucky have outdone themselves with equine diversity this quarter. So many activities, so many new friends (and admirers)!

The Archers of Arvak wowed the crowd with their excellent marksmanship once again at the annual Fenrir Viking Festival! This year, the archers banded into two teams, the Ravens and the Wolves, and competed against each other in ground and mounted shootouts. Team Raven won Saturday and Team Wolf won Sunday. None other than the mighty warrior Chris Marks hosted the show, with her charismatic emcee skills, her extensive knowledge of Viking lore, and her witty humor!

The ground archers opened the show with a comical and entertaining display of antics and competitive skills. Lindsay Hillyer added to the fun by riding in on a stick horse! She later proved her archery expertise by shooting a foam skull from atop Peter Heinigar's head (of course, foam-tipped arrows were used and Peter wore an armored helmet). Our

Master Craftsman Will Wells showed off his superior hunting skills by shooting moving targets out of the sky, prompting the crowd to cheer, "We feast!"

The mounted archers battled it out in a high-speed shootout that had the audience fully captivated and cheering for their teams. Daniel Zaayer made his flawless mounted archery debut in the shootout and in the beer tölt on Sólon frá Sörlatungu. Peter and Sarah Heinigar performed like true warriors, each of them shooting multiple shots down the lane at a high-speed canter, including the very difficult and impressive Jarmakee shot (shooting behind the head). Sarah also showed off her amazing non-dominant hand shots at a canter. Shari Wells rode the fast and fearless warrior horse Reykja frá Svaðilfari, AKA Roxie, who belongs to Chris and Jeff Marks. Of course, the mighty Roxie gave a stellar performance with her smooth canter and beautiful Viking adornments.

After lots of intense training, these archers have proved to be capable of executing a showstopping and efficient performance that you do not want to miss. You can catch them again at next year's Fenrir Viking Festival in Eminence, KY.

A new offering for our members was the Club Retreat on August 24-25

at Lettleiki Icelandics in Eminence, KY. Member Maggie Brandt suggested the retreat as a replacement for our annual show, and it was a real hit. Also attending were Jane Coleman, Laura Glaza, Cindy Gray Stanley, Shellie Greyhavens, Lindsay Gunzburger, Lindsay Hillyer, Paetra Henninger Jakubowski, Ron and Sherry Hoover, Chris Marks, Colleen McCafferty, Jill Schermacher, Jalen Sheehan, Molly Stotts, and Carly Zaayer.

Chris Marks started off the weekend with an informative presentation on WOW saddles. Then, members participated in a Tölt in Harmony Clinic, a fun combination of musical freestyle, drill team, and gait training. The demo and lessons provided a basis for a performance, either solo or with a team, using the rider(s) choice of music. Cindy Gray Stanley said this was her favorite part of the retreat. After a quick lunch, members attacked the new obstacle course in the indoor arena. Colleen McCafferty loved the challenges. A potluck followed. Bright and early the next morning, the group participated in a trail ride and scavenger hunt. Lindsay Gunzburger, a new member from Tennessee, loved the retreat. This was her first club activity. She's new to Icelandics, and her young horse did great. Lindsay also mentioned



The Sirius Club Retreat at Lettleiki Icelandics upped the ante for beer tölt competitions with some serious obstacles. Here, Colleen McCafferty negotiates the poles.



Daniel Zaayer rides a beer tölt after performing with the Archers of Arvak at the annual Fenrir Viking Festival.

that she took her horse to the Equathon at Biltmore Estate, prior to the flooding from Hurricane Helene.

Sirius member Carrie Lyons-Brandt, trainer at Taktur Icelandics, headlined a Liberty Clinic sponsored by the club. Cindy Gray Stanley hosted the event at her beautiful Oak Ridge Farm in Mt. Vernon, Ohio. Day 1 started with the history of Liberty and the importance of creating the conversation between you and your horse, followed by individual Liberty lessons. Day 2 continued individual Liberty sessions with your horse. Everyone loved the magic of you and your horse communicating together. Day 2 also included each member choosing something s/he may not have ever attempted or trying to fix a problem. Ron Hoover learned the beginning steps of bridleless riding. Others chose to work on moving a horse through an obstacle, perfecting their canter, and working on communication skills with their horses. The clinic was great—as are all of Carrie’s clinics.

Member Shellie Greyhavens was able to tuck a Nashon Cook Clinic into her schedule on October 5-6. Shellie recently retired her horse Bjarmi and found a new one named Frey. Of the clinic, Shellie says, “I’m still processing what this man shared with me and all of us. In my short

time spent with him, I was able to open a line of communication without using words, hands, or legs with my horse Frey, and it’s beyond amazing. It’s still a work in progress but we are having so much fun together on this amazing journey.” Nashon Cook has a background in dressage and a very special connection to horses that is almost magical. Shellie continued, “I had read and heard about riders having that deep connection, but I wasn’t sure how to get there. If you want a deeper bond with your horse, I highly recommend going to one of his clinics or auditing. They fill up fast and I know why. This man has been blessed with a true gift.”

On November 2-3, the club sponsored a Gait Clinic with trainer and Sirius Club member Maria Octavo of Thorlak Icelandics. This clinic was postponed multiple times (our fault, not Maria’s), but we finally managed to pull it off. Maria was an outstanding instructor—patient, kind, encouraging—a real rock star. Cindy Gray Stanley was once again a generous and gracious host. Lisa DesJardins opened her home and her barn to guests of the human and equine variety. In our case, it takes a village to have a clinic. Maria taught Ron Hoover how to cue his young gelding Andvari for the trot. Then she worked with Ron’s grandson Avery to be more precise with Andvari for the tölt. Avery also learned how to ask Agnar for the canter. Sherry Hoover learned how and when to transition Eldrottning from fast speed tölt into slow tölt for competition. Additionally, Maria helped Sherry with the pattern for a tölt class. Everyone had a great time, full of laughter and learning. We all enjoyed Maria’s patience with the riders and horses. She answered lots of questions! We’re looking forward to Maria’s return next year. Added Nancy Radebaugh, “Thank goodness I had friends record my lessons so that I could continue practicing on my own.”

October 12-13 was a spectacular weekend in Hocking Hills for the Sirius Icelandic Horse Club’s annual trail ride. We racked up about 26 glorious miles in two days, with lots of tölting and cantering down the trails. Nancy Radebaugh remarked, “It’s funny. Gunnar is a completely different horse when he’s with other Icelandics. He wanted to go and go fast!” Nancy admitted that she and Shellie

Greyhavens did enjoy the hot tub at the end of the day. The Sirius Club teamed up with the Lorain County Ohio Horsemen’s Council Club for an amazing potluck. Nancy commented, “I loved riding the trails with my Sirius Club peeps. We were lucky to have perfect weather and dry trails—a rarity at that time of year. We all had a great time tölting down the trails and got lots of smiles and questions from other equestrians who had never seen an Icelandic before!”

And last, special thanks go to Sirius member Colleen McCafferty. Colleen volunteered—that’s right, she volunteered—to write an article spotlighting a different Sirius member every month. The articles are on our Facebook page, and Colleen has done an excellent job.

ST. SKUTLA

by Andrea Barber

When I began working on last year’s renewal with the USIHC, it struck me—our beloved St. Skutla Club had reached its 20th anniversary. This year, we celebrate 21 years, and it’s hard to believe how quickly the time has passed. Reflecting on this milestone made me think about how we started, what we’ve achieved, and where we are now.

The club began when my husband



Sirius Club member Sarah Heinigar shows off her tricky behind-the-head shooting at the annual Fenrir Viking Festival.



The Saint Skutla Club's founding members enjoying a trail ride in Mendon Ponds Park, NY (L to R): Steven Barber on Kalman frá Lækjamóti, Larry and Stephanie Sher driving Flygill from Vesturbaer (son of Saint Skutla), Cordy Sullivan on Lýsingur frá Úlfsstöðum, and Andrea Barber on Víkingur frá Götu.

Steve and I moved to Mendon, NY, in the picturesque Finger Lakes region of New York State. Our dear friends and longtime Icelandic horse enthusiasts, Stephanie and Larry Sher, guided us to this area. They lived in Naples, NY, while another Icelandic horse devotee, Cordy Sullivan, was in Penn Yan, NY. At the time, I chaired the USIHC Regional Club program, and together with Stephanie, Larry, Cordy, Steve, and myself, we had just enough people to form a small regional club. Our primary goal was simple: to organize clinics and create educational opportunities nearby. We were tired of having to drive for hours to get the Icelandic-specific information we craved.

We named our club after the remarkable “Saint” Skutla frá Þverholtum, an elderly Icelandic mare owned by Stephanie and Larry. Skutla was one of the original Icelandic horses brought to Long Island in the 1970s for a therapeutic riding program. Although that program sadly didn’t last, Skutla’s incredible temperament and character left a lasting impression on all that knew her, truly embodying the best qualities of the breed. Naming the club in her honor felt like a natural choice.

In the early years, Stephanie and Larry hosted annual clinics at their beautiful Blasted Rock Farm. Later, Steve and I continued the tradition at our own

Sand Meadow Farm, hosting more than a dozen clinics and organizing other events like young horse evaluations and online lectures. Along the way, the club enjoyed a vibrant culture of trail riding, with weekend group rides at the many scenic state and local parks in our area followed by fun potluck lunches. In winter, we’d gather for tack-cleaning parties and training video marathons—a perfect blend of productivity and camaraderie.

Over the years, the club grew beyond our expectations. Today, we’re proud to have 40 members, mostly from western and central New York, but also from Pennsylvania and even further afield. Some members who’ve moved far away still stay connected because of the bond they feel with the club. I believe our casual, no-dues, no-board, no-formality approach has been a key factor in our growth. Communication is limited to a low-volume email list and occasional events, which keeps things simple and accessible.

Of course, like any club, we’ve faced challenges. While members love attending events, few are eager to organize them. Even within a “regional” club, distances can be a hurdle—not everyone wants to travel long hours for a clinic or trail ride. Some members lack trailers, and finding farm care to get away can

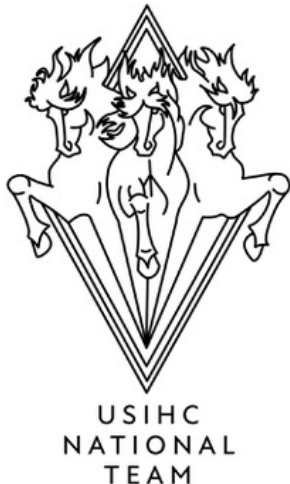
often be an issue. For many, joining the USIHC feels unnecessary when the local club already provides the connection they seek. And then, as always, life happens—work, family, and other priorities can take precedence over horses.

Time has also brought change. Saint Skutla has been gone for many years, along with most of the original horses. Stephanie and Larry Sher are no longer with us, though their Blasted Rock Farm is now owned and beautifully maintained by club members Deb and Dave Callaway. Cordy Sullivan has been unwell for several years and is no longer riding. As for Steve and me, while we remain active, our energy and capacity to organize and host events have naturally waned with age and competing commitments. Though for now we’re still keeping the torch burning!

Looking ahead, I hope younger members will take the reins (pun intended!) and continue the club’s legacy in their own way. Twenty years have gone by in the blink of an eye, but it’s been an incredible journey. Serving as the club’s USIHC representative and being part of this amazing community has been a true privilege. I often say that one of the best things about these horses is the people you meet through them, and members of the St. Skutla Club are no exceptions.

THE NATIONAL TEAM

by Jana Meyer
and Nicki Esdorn



As the first term of the newly formed USIHC National Team comes to an end, we are excited to say that we have had a successful start. As reported in previous issues of the *Quarterly*, the USIHC established the National Team to support our top competition riders and horses. Hoping these riders will serve as role models for our broader community, a Code of Conduct was developed which includes guidance on the welfare of the horse, good horsemanship, and good sportsmanship.

Among other qualifications, all National Team members must have a minimum average score of at least 6.0 in our National Rankings in the individual, group open, and/or P2 Pace Race rankings. These scores may be obtained through our Virtual Shows (if a rider's horse is located outside the US) and through in-person competitions nationally. All riders must compete in one US-based show each year, but this can be in any class and there are no scoring qualifications.

In October, members of the team met at Harmony Icelandics to work with team trainer Olil Amble. Participants worked hard, learned a lot, and had a great time—and many successful rides followed at the Harmony Icelandics Triple World Ranking show the next weekend. Members have also been meeting with Jen Verharen, a performance coach, working on mental strategies to promote successful performances. Our executive strategic planning committee is working on fundraising, organizing sponsorships, and outfitting the team. Lala Benson and Mackenzie and Cameron Durbin have designed an awesome team logo!

Looking ahead, we are excited to welcome a few new team members (among them our first two young riders), continue the work with Jen, have more training sessions with Olil, and, of course, we are getting excited about the upcoming World Championships this summer.

The current members of the USIHC National Team are (in alphabetical order): Heidi Benson, Laura Benson, Carrie Lyons-Brandt, Sigrún Brynjarsdóttir, Caeli Cavanagh, Lori Cretney, Ásta Covert, Alex Dannenmann, Terral Hill, Virginia Lauridsen, Lucy Nold, Jeff Rose, and Alex Venable. The National Team Leader is Jana Meyer. The new team members are Richard Davis, Mackenzie Durbin, and Sue Sundstrom, as well as young riders Brynja Meehan and Samuel Warschawski.

Competing at the top level requires a very talented, fit, willing, and well-trained equine partner, so in Issue Three and Issue Four 2024 of the *Quarterly*, we asked Ásta, Alex D., Alex V., Caeli, Carrie, Heidi, Lori, and Jeff to tell us a little about how they work with their horses. For this issue, we spoke with Sigrún, Terral, and Virginia. We asked each one, “How do you get your horse physically fit and trained for the top

level of competition?” Then, “How do you prepare and motivate your horse mentally for consistently high performance?” Finally, we asked each rider, “What is the most fun you have with your horse?”

SIGRÚN

Training a horse entails a full assessment of the horse, correct feeding and nutritional program, a plan for training, correct shoeing, good health care, such as teeth rasping and chiropractor, correct tack, and everything the horse needs to become a top athlete.

The training plan should include the correct amount of rest or free time play, ponying, poles, free longeing, double longeing or passoa longeing, obstacle courses for mental stimulation and building up athleticism, short more-demanding rides, longer more-relaxed muscle-building rides with hill work, appropriate track time, indoor riding, and days off. To keep a horse fresh and happy, it is important not to overdo things and to keep the working time a happy time for the horse. This does not mean you can't ask the horse for high performance, but rather not to ask for high performance until the horse has the



Says Virginia Lauridsen, “Answering the question what is the most fun I have with my horse is tough for me. Every time I work with my horse, it feels like pure joy.”



"My favorite thing is figuring out where the horses like to be scratched," says Terral Hill. "It's fun to see them truly relax."

required mental and physical capacity to do so. Each horse is different.

The horse I am competing on, Markús, is more of a laid-back horse, so my approach for him is to be careful not to overdo the training. He does better with lighter training—which can be hard to do when building up stamina and muscle. I pony him a lot and try to work him a lot without a rider. I often wish I could send

him out on a couple of *rekstur* in Iceland, where horses run free and build up muscle without a rider. He also hates to be longed, especially on the line, so I try to do as little of that as possible.

I always tailor my training to the horse. Just because something would benefit a horse physically, does not mean it will benefit the horse mentally. Markús likes trail rides and only a little time in the indoor arena or on the track. Since I am already a trainer who favors outside riding over indoors or track, we suit each other well. I do work him in the indoor and on the track, but I keep it to a bare minimum, training in many short sessions with lots of rewards (cookies), rather than one heavy-duty session.

I use a lot of classical work in my training, and that can be done outside on the trails, as well as indoors. Most Icelandics benefit more from free riding to keep their spirits free, but of course indoor riding and track riding can also be very important. Balance in training methods is the key to success. Markús really enjoys group riding on the trails, so that is where we have the most fun, although it is also very fun for me when we are successful on the track.



"Markús is more of a laid-back horse," Sigrún Brynjarsdóttir says of her competition horse. "He likes trail rides and only a little time in the indoor arena or on the track"—with lots of cookies. Photo by Ona Kwiatkowski.

Above all, the horse always comes first. As much as I love showing and competing, the welfare of my best friend is always my first priority. I skip competing if my horse is not ready or if he is tired. You have to be able to read your horse. If in doubt, remember, your horse comes first always.

TERRAL

My first priority is to ensure that my horses are physically fit, in respect to their body condition, when they enter training. A horse that is overweight or underweight cannot be trained to a high level. Physical conditioning typically takes care of itself when you are training the horse to respond correctly to the aids and to move in correct self-carriage. For me, I focus most on the quality of movement when riding, not on training for long durations. It is most important that the horse learns to move in a high level of engagement and balance while carrying the rider, and I don't want my horses to burn out and lose physical capacity by pushing the training duration too long.

When it comes to long distance conditioning, I prefer to do this type of training without the rider. This is why I implement techniques such as ponying off my electric bike. Using my bike, I can build up the horse's physical stamina without the pressure of the rider and I can standardize the speed, distance, and duration as I build up their conditioning. In my experience, longer distance conditioning with a rider often comes at the sacrifice of correct movement and balance. In our sport, peak performance involves intense engagement and speed for short periods of time with a rider, so I want my horses to have the willingness and energy to give it their all for those shorter bursts and not expect to be ridden for hours at a time.

How I prepare my horses mentally depends entirely on the individual horse's character. If I have a more tense and reactive horse, then I try and simulate moments like what will occur during the competition and reward the horse anytime they offer a more relaxed state of mind. For a more energy-conserving or calm horse, I will typically demand high energy for very short periods of time and try to build up their mental endurance gradually in short bursts.

As for having the most fun, my favorite thing is figuring out where the horses like to be scratched. It's fun to see them truly relax and enjoy this type of mutual grooming, especially when they move their lips in



"I want my horses to have the willingness and energy to give it their all for shorter bursts and not expect to be ridden for hours at a time," says Terral Hill.

funny ways and try and return the favor.

VIRGINIA

I believe in a multi-faceted program for physical fitness. I usually begin preparing my horses for the show year in mid-February. The weather is so awful during Iowa winters that I give my horse time off from mid-December until early February. I begin preparing them with short daily sessions on my treadmill. It was designed by an Amish man and is powered by hydraulic fluid and rollers, rather than electricity. I can change the angle and speed (by increasing the hydraulic fluid). I find it is terrific for building muscle and increasing cardiovascular fitness. We start with a few minutes and work up to 10 or even 15 minutes over the course of a few weeks. It doesn't sound like a lot but it is!

After the horses have re-awakened to work, I begin training in earnest. For a competition horse, I will work with them six days a week, and vary the exercises and footing. One day is groundwork in the arena. I may longe or just do exercises and desensitization work. I am not big on extra tools like side reins or bands, but do own them. One day will be dressage work, usually in the indoor arena, which has a small amount of sand footing. I am a big fan of dressage and believe it helps any horse move better. It teaches horses to use their hind end for power and to move freely in the body. We may only do the exercises in walk at first, but at a minimum, they will learn shoulder-in, travers, renvers, and leg-yield.

One day will be in the outdoor arena, which has footing similar to the track. We might do dressage or work on transitions

and gait training. One day will be on the track. This is a good time to work on speed changes and gaits. One day will be out on the trails. You can train anything on the trails, but I like to do some hill work and maybe even go to the cross country course for a few jumps. The sixth day will be a casual trail ride. I think this is important for both of our brains!

To prepare and motivate your horse mentally for consistently high performance, I think it is important to reward your horse at the right time. For instance, if you are working on going forward, take the pressure off when they go forward. In general, don't keep asking after they have answered. Otherwise, they will think that it isn't what you want. I think people make a mistake in doing the same exercise over and over, after the horse has done it correctly. I believe that if you ask a question and the horse answers, you need to reward them by taking the pressure off and then ask a different question.

Answering the question what is the most fun I have with my horse is tough for me. Every time I work with my horse, it feels like pure joy. Anyone who has seen me ride will know that a huge smile never leaves my face. I'm not sure I can choose one single experience.

RESOURCES

Information on how to qualify for the team and the team's Code of Conduct is available in the National Team document on the USI-HC website (<https://icelandics.org>) under Ride—Competition.



Sigrún Brynjarsdóttir enjoys competing as a team with her daughter, Kamilla Brickner. Here they took first place in the pairs competition at a Vermont show.

MEET THE JUDGES

by Lynn LaPointe Wiese

The sport judges program in the US dates back to 1995, when FEIF International Sport Judge Pétur Jökull Hákonarsson judged a show in Spokane, Washington and took the time to give a presentation on judging to interested participants after the show. One of them was Bernie Willis from Alaska, who was then president of the USIHC. Pétur invited him to Iceland, where Bernie passed a test to become a local club judge.

Bernie thought having national judges was important to the Icelandic horse community in the US and implemented a judges education program. FEIF International Sport Judge Marlise Grimm was invited to the US to give judging seminars and conduct exams in several states. Those who passed the tests were certified as US “intern judges” and encouraged to scribe and judge schooling shows. Schooling shows became quite popular during that time, as people took advantage of having the intern judges available. At one point, the US had over 15 intern judges.

In 2015, FEIF formally adopted new judging guidelines that were developed primarily by FEIF International Sport Judge Þorgeir Guðlaugsson. These guidelines introduced the concept of “firewalls.” As Þorgeir explains, “Firewalls are limitations that exist to ensure that a score will fall within a certain (correct) range. One practical example could be that if a horse has beat problems, the score will ‘hit’ a firewall at 5.0 and cannot be higher, no matter how good the movement, riding, or suppleness may be.”

Katrin Sheehan, who was the USIHC Education Committee chair at the time, was instrumental in bringing Þorgeir to the US to teach the first USIHC judging seminar under the new guidelines. Those passing the exam were certified as USIHC national judges. Alexandra Dannenmann, who passed the exam, succeeded Katrin as the USIHC Education Committee chair and used her position to further develop the program in the US.

In 2021, Þorgeir and Martin Nielsen (then USIHC President and chair of the Sport Committee) discussed further improvements to the US program. A small team consisting of Þorgeir, Jana Meyer,



Says Coralie Denmeade, “Any time you can score a pair with what you know will be a high achievement for them is an exceptional experience to me.”

and Alexandra Pregitzer developed a new USIHC online seminar titled “Introduction to Icelandic Horse Sport,” which was first offered in the spring of 2024. The seminar offers detailed information for anyone interested in judging, scribing, and competition riding, and it also serves as a required first step in the national judges’ education process. The next seminar is planned for April 2025.

The USIHC judging exam can be passed in level C or B—the level determines which types of shows you can judge (see <https://icelandics.org/sport-judges> for the details). At the moment, there is no exam offered in the US to reach the higher levels and qualify as a level A national judge or an international sport judge. Currently, there are two FEIF international sport judges in the United States: Will Covert (who lives in California) and Alexandra Dannenmann (Florida). There are eight USIHC national judges: Debbie Cook (Minnesota), Coralie Denmeade (Colorado), Alexandra Montan Gray (California), Paetra Henningar (Kentucky), Jana Meyer (Vermont), Lucy Nold (Oregon), Alex Pregitzer (Michigan), and Freija Thye (who lives in Germany). Five of the ten had time to chat with us for this

article; we hope to catch up with the other five for a future issue. Debbie Cook and Coralie Denmeade are both USIHC Sport Judge Level C, and Alex Gray, Jana Meyer, Alex Pregitzer are all USIHC Sport Judge Level B.

Q: What sparked your interest in judging?

Debbie: Being a scribe at shows made me interested in learning more.

Coralie: I wanted to educate myself and be a better instructor by understanding the scoring in depth.

Alex G: I took my judge’s license in sport and gæðingakeppni as a part of my education at Hólar University in Iceland in the mid 90s. My interest in judging has always been part of my search for knowledge, and it was a good compliment during my competition career.

Jana: I came to judging by taking the judging seminar as one of my continuing education requirements for my trainer license. Initially, I had no intention of becoming a judge, but throughout the days I really enjoyed the work and so it came that I walked out of the weekend with my (totally unexpected) judging license.

Alex P: Between 2003 and 2007 I worked at Winterhorse Park in Wisconsin,

first as a barn manager and later as a certified trainer and riding instructor. Winterhorse Park hosted competitions regularly, and I was fortunate to be in a position to compete and scribe at those events. Working closely with the FEIF international judges was very interesting, educational, and fun. Every single one of the judges was happy to share their knowledge, and I think this is when I started developing a passion to learn more about sport judging.

Q: What are some challenging aspects of judging?

Debbie: At my experience level, and with the few opportunities I get to judge, it is necessary to refresh my mind's eye before doing any judging. I have to change from the mindset of "Oh, what a pretty horse" to actually analyzing what I am looking at.

Coralie: It's a challenge keeping the trainer's perspective out, when you can see how hard a pair is trying and how well they are doing, considering. Two things I find hard to judge are when you can tell things are not going well for the pair and when a horse is unhappy and stressed.

Alex G: I feel that it can be a challenge to be able to give a fair judging when there are more horses on the track. It is hard to see everyone all the time, and it is easy to miss something.

Jana: The biggest challenge for me is that I don't do it enough, so it is hard to feel really confident. It is not so hard to find a score, but I want to be sure that the score correctly reflects the performance. This takes lots of practice.

Alex P: Finding a fair assessment for the horse-rider combination is both a goal and a challenge. I find it more difficult when there are many horse-rider combinations on the track, as that means each one gets hardly more than a glimpse. It is easy to miss something while you're looking the other way. Therefore, I believe that having more than one judge, even just two, provides a much more accurate score and serves the riders better. I personally find that there are very limited ways to reward a wonderful and harmonious horse-rider team that has challenges in meeting the other judging criteria. I can provide a positive comment, but at times I wish I could give a score for great teamwork even if the gait quality just isn't there (yet), because there is also a value to harmony and happiness.

Q: How have the firewalls in the FEIF Sport Judges Guidelines affected your judging?

Debbie: The firewalls have the potential to make scores more uniform and they make it possible for judges to have more confidence in their scoring.

Alex G: It was a bit of an adjustment (when the firewalls were added in 2015), but overall I think it was pretty much in line with how we were judging already. There were a few changes, and they made it easier to pinpoint exactly why a certain score was given and also easier to explain and justify that score to the rider. The scoring system is still being adjusted, as we change and evolve our competitions and what we want to see, especially in the welfare department.

Jana: I think they have had a positive effect on unifying the judges in their scoring, but as they had already been in place when I took my judging exam, I cannot say how much they changed. They are definitely a significant help in educating riders and judges and are very helpful for finding the right score.

Alex P: My first judges training was in 2007, before the guidelines with the firewalls, but it was easy to adjust. The current guidelines are more structured and make sense to me. As judges and riders,

we are always aware that any assessment is merely a try to give a fair score. It comes together with the education we have, our experience, and the circumstances. Is the score always fair? Probably not. But I truly feel that the judges I know try to find a fair score. For a performance that is very subjective in the eye of the beholder, the judges guidelines provide a tool to form an assessment that hopefully, in most cases, does rider and horse justice.

Q: Do you think judges can have a positive influence on Icelandic riding/training methods and horse welfare?

Coralie: Absolutely, I think we have a huge responsibility. What judges tolerate, is being encouraged. Judges should be the guards of good riding and horse welfare.

Alex G: I think it happens all the time in judging. We make sure to follow the rules and regulations, as well as our judges' guidelines in, for example, riding skills and connection. In some cases, we might need to be clearer when we see something that is not up to standards, as well as always keeping ourselves up to date with new research in horse welfare.

Jana: Judges definitely can have a considerable influence on these topics, especially when acting collectively as a big group. Judges have the ability to give yellow and red cards, which allows them to



"What have I learned from horses? Oh, my ... so much," says Alexandra Montan Gray, "the biggest being intuition and being in tune with energy."

clearly point out unfair riding right in the moment. Correct and consistent judging and scoring also has the power to change behavior and riding, as the guidelines allow or demand that we take these points into consideration when finding a score. By rewarding good riding and horsemanship and giving lower scores when the riding skills are inadequate, we will hopefully encourage and motivate riders to improve their skills and show good horsemanship.

Alex P: The competition regulations, the judges guidelines, and the way we implement the guidelines all affect riding, training methods, and horse welfare. This influence is not limited to the show ring, but it only affects part of the Icelandic horse world. The judges can provide input to request changes to existing rules and guidelines. For example, how often a young horse is allowed to start at a competition or how many minutes a horse is allowed to perform at a fast tempo tölt or which bits should be allowed. Those rules are very important for horse welfare. We have a scoring system that, if used correctly, does not allow high scores for performances that show tense, stiff, nervous horses or uneven movement or an unhealthy form. In my opinion, there have been some very good and important developments in the last decades, but we still have to promote horse well-being and fair training even more.

Q: If horse welfare is compromised during a competition, what safeguards are in place that judges can use to mitigate the circumstances?

Debbie: Tack and mouth checks are done regularly, and judges can request vet checks.

Coralie: Firewalls and low scores can be a way to prove that a certain infraction is not tolerated.

Alex G: It depends on the situation and how severe it is. There can be some bad riding that can result in lower scores or there can be obvious abuse that can result in harsher punishments, ranging from a warning, i.e., yellow cards (published on the FEIF website or not), disqualification, or suspension. There are also safeguards in different countries where different laws are in place.

Jana: As mentioned above, the judges can show different colored cards (red: disqualification, yellow: warning, and blue: veterinary inspection) which will have an



How do you get to sit under the tents in the center of the ring and judge the show? Start by taking the USIHC online seminar "Introduction to Icelandic Horse Sport," then attend a judging seminar and pass the exam to earn your license.

immediate effect. Judges can also give riders warnings if they see unfair horsemanship anywhere on the competition grounds.

Alex P: There are some measures that judges have available to them. These measures are not only valid for the duration of the class, but from the rider's arrival at the event to their departure, for a breach of rules inside and outside the track, in the stables and on the whole property. For example, if riders show rough riding or treat a horse unfairly, they can receive a warning and get a score deduction or even be disqualified from the event, depending on the severity of the case. If the judges feel that a horse is not fit to compete (e.g., lame), they have the option to request a veterinary exam. Riders may receive warnings or be eliminated for mouth injuries, incorrect tack, or incorrect shoeing or trimming. Those are some examples where judges can act to promote horse welfare, good riding, and good training methods.

Q: Have there been any exceptional experiences in your career as a judge?

Debbie: I have had the opportunity to scribe and co-judge with extraordinary people who have generously shared their knowledge and expertise.

Coralie: Anytime you can score a pair with what you know will be a high achievement for them is an exceptional experience to me.

Alex G: I think being a part of the judging team at the Nordic Championships in 2018 was a highlight.

Jana: I enjoyed being part of the team judging the world ranking (WR) show at Harmony Icelandics in 2023.

Alex P: During the pandemic, the USIHC changed the rules to allow national

judges to judge world ranking competitions in the US alongside FEIF international judges, provided that the majority of the judges were international judges. Being part of a WR judging team is still as thrilling as it was the first time I was invited and I am grateful for these opportunities. Working closely with so many FEIF international judges is a huge learning experience, especially as they are always kind and happy to provide comments or to discuss performances. It is not only a super fun judging experience, but a terrific way to train. WR shows usually also include equipment, shoeing, and health checks, which are not yet part of most national ranking shows. It is very interesting to conduct those checks and to have a chance to talk to the riders.

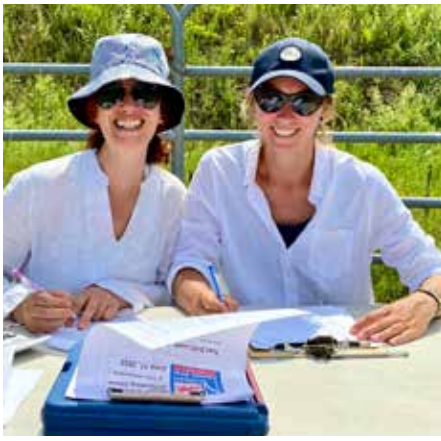
Q: Is there any difference in judging a show in person vs. a virtual show?

Debbie: I find it much easier to judge live horses, in part because it forces you to trust your judgment.

Coralie: It's huge. I find that virtual shows are much more "clinical." Certain pairs do better than live, others do worse.

Alex G: Absolutely! At an in-person show, you get a connection that is hard to get through the screen. Also, you see better in real life, as some videos can be tricky to judge. Sometimes the videos are filmed from far away or are shaky, and then it really is hard to make a good evaluation of the show. Also, in real life, you can have communication with the riders after the show, and that can be a really good thing for their development.

Jana: Yes, for me there is a big difference. It is much nicer to judge in person, as you get a better feel for the horse and rider and the competition atmosphere is a



Left to right, judges Alex Pregitzer and Jana Meyer at work, Alex awarding a thrillingly high score, and Debbie Cook in tune with her horse. Becoming a judge changes the way you think of riding and training, they agree. To judge fairly and correctly, says Debbie, “I have to change from the mindset of ‘Oh, what a pretty horse’ to actually analyzing what I am looking at.”

big part of what makes judging fun.

Alex P: Judging a virtual show is in many ways just like judging an in-person show: We have a judging team, we follow the same rules, and we see the same classes. However, judging a video on a screen feels very different. It is much more challenging, as the quality of the video can be poor or you may not be able to judge the speed as well as in person. The light and weather can play a big role in the quality of the video as well. Another aspect is that it is a somewhat lonely desk job, and each of us judges for hours or days at a time without talking to anybody or getting any feedback. For a less seasoned judge, that task can be mentally hard. I love the videos nonetheless. They are fun to watch—one gets to see lots of cool performances—and it is great to see the enthusiasm for the sport and the high participation numbers. I also love virtual shows for the huge practice opportunity that they provide for us national judges.

Q: How do you continue to learn?

Debbie: I take lessons quite regularly and attend shows, either as a scribe or doing Ictest.

Coralie: By taking lessons, watching riders, judges, and trainers. I also find I learn a lot from teaching.

Alex G: I attend seminars and keep myself up to date with the Icelandic horse world in general. I read articles and have interesting discussions with friends, family, and colleagues.

Jana: There are so many ways in which I continue to learn. By clinics I am attending, students I am teaching, horses I am riding, rides that I am watching, and conversations between colleagues. By keeping

an open mind and staying curious.

In terms of judging, I am lucky to be able to scribe at multiple shows each year for different international sport judges. This is always a great opportunity to learn more. Alex Dannemann also offers great continuing education sessions, in which we individually judge and then discuss the performances and scores. These sessions have proven invaluable to building my judging skills and confidence.

Alex P: The USIHC requires all national judges to provide proof of ongoing education, which I completely agree with and find very important. Our judges group is lucky to have regular online coaching sessions with FEIF international sport judge Alex Dannemann. Other great educational opportunities are sport judging seminars with Þorgeir Guðlaugsson, which take place regularly in the US. In 2024, Léttleiki Icelandics in Kentucky also offered a sport judging seminar with Alex Dannemann during one of their shows. It was geared toward people new to sport judging, as well as toward judges who wanted to brush up on their skills. FEIF offers a popular combined trainers and judges education course at various locations in Europe once a year. The German IPZV also offers judges and trainers education seminars; these are available to me through my membership in that organization, and I try to take advantage of them regularly. In addition, I scribe or intern with FEIF international sport judges regularly. At some of the shows, I judge some of the classes and work as a ringmaster doing equipment checks or as a scribe when I am not judging.

Q: What have you learned from horses that you can apply in daily life with humans?

Debbie: Be kind and listen.

Coralie: How much we let our heads take over and wonder why our bodies and mind can't follow.

Alex G: Oh my ... so much. The biggest being intuition and being in tune with energy.

Jana: Patience and taking a big breath before dealing with challenging situations.

Alex P: Horses have taught me much about patience and consistency, and I can apply that to all aspects of human relationships. I have learned to love the horses for who they are and to be accepting of their personalities, needs, imperfections, and limitations. I work part time as a teacher. While I don't know if all parents would love hearing me compare their children to horses, I truly believe that the horses have made me a better teacher. The kids also want to be seen for who they are. I feel horses and human students alike do better with loving support than with pressure and force. The horses have taught me to trust my feelings, and I very much act on them. Horses teach us to be honest and predictable, which also transfers into human relationships. I am a hundred percent convinced that horses have had a huge influence on how I interact with people.

RESOURCES

For information about becoming a judge, see <https://icelandics.org/sport-judges>

A VISIT WITH MUMMI

by Nancy Marie Brown



In 1997, I bought my first Icelandic horse, Birkir frá Hallkelsstaðahlið. He was chosen for me by a farmer named Haukur, with whom I'd ridden a few times in Iceland the summer before; Haukur was well-known for having "an eye for horses." We went to the farm, which I called "Hlid," one evening, in the rain. Birkir's breeder rode him down the driveway, beside a second horse. As I wrote in my book *A Good Horse Has No Color: Searching Iceland for the Perfect Horse*, which came out in 2001, "With the rain in my eyes, I couldn't see much beyond the fact of two horses tölting. One was a lighter bay than the other; he seemed to be the one for sale."

Haukur declared the horse to be very special. "He is soft, supple—"

"Very trustworthy, very calm, very easy to catch," added his breeder.

When I got on, he walked out nicely,

but I couldn't get him to go any faster—I was very much a beginner rider—until his breeder rode up beside me and handed me her whip. I gave him a tap on the shoulder.

As I wrote: "He picked up a nice slow tölt, as if he'd been merely waiting for me to ask. It was a confident gait: His back felt soft and rounded and comfortable beneath me, his head was high, and his neck arched. His forelock blew back past his ears, and his dark mane rippled over my hands. He seemed to be enjoying himself, glad to be about, though not in any great hurry. I must have been smiling too, for the woman looked at me and beamed."

Birkir was, indeed, the perfect horse in many ways, and I've kept in touch with his breeder, Sigrún at Hallkelsstaðahlið, ever since, even though Birkir died in 2015, of cancer. Through the years, I've

The spectacular view on the way to Hallkelsstaðahlið, where Guðmundur ("Mummi") Skúlason follows in his parents' footsteps as horse trainer and riding instructor. Photo by Nancy Marie Brown.

seen her son Guðmundur ("Mummi") Skúlason grow from the tow-headed boy in the background of my photos to a Hólar-trained FEIF Level III riding instructor who gives frequent clinics in the US. Mummi has taught in Oregon and in Washington, at the American Youth Cup, but mostly he works out of Virginia Lauridsen's Harmony Icelandics, in Truro, IA.

HARMONY ICELANDICS

One year when I visited Hlid, Sigrún had asked, "Do you know Virginia?"

A few years later, in 2018, I met Virginia at the USIHC Annual Meeting in Denver; she is now the president of the

Congress. For this article, I asked her to tell me the story of how she ended up buying a horse from Hallkelsstadahlíð.

In 2013, she said, she had accompanied her husband on a business trip to Iceland. One of his companies sources proteins for pet food manufacturers, so they had cruised the Breiðafjörður to visit an outfit that sold fishbones and seaweed. They had gotten married the week before, though they had been a couple for some time, so the trip ended up being their honeymoon. As Virginia remembers, “It was October. The weather was awful. The engine on the boat died. It was getting dark. We thought we were going to die. Someone came out in a Zodiac after a couple of hours and got us.”

Hallkelsstadahlíð is not far from Stykkishólmur, the town where they were staying. The organizer of the trip, a Danish colleague named Ove Hansen, knew Virginia was a horsewoman—in Iowa, she owned a 30-stall boarding barn and did show jumping, dressage, and fox hunting on her Belgian warmblood. She had enjoyed riding his Icelandics, during a previous visit to the Danish island of Rømø (“We rode on the beach. I never stopped laughing.”), so they had worked into their Icelandic schedule several stops at horse farms. The couple who sold fishbones and seaweed had their horses in training at Hallkelsstadahlíð, so the farm made Ove’s list.

Virginia was looking for a good horse, she told them; Sigrún showed her two stallions. One was Mummi’s favorite riding horse, Gosi frá Lambastöðum, the horse he had taken to Hólar University, where the students in the equestrian program are required to train a horse to a high level. “As soon as I sat on Gosi,” Virginia told me, “I knew. In my world”—the “big horse” world—“stallions were wacko. But Gosi was so much fun to ride and so beautiful. Everything I asked him to do, he did. I was in love.”

Mummi was giving a clinic in Sweden, he told me, when he got a phone call from his mother. “I’ve sold your horse,” she said. Mummi was a bit taken aback, but he felt better when he learned that part of the deal was for him to travel to Iowa to teach Virginia to ride Icelandic-style. He has returned once or twice a year since then to give clinics, helping Virginia establish Harmony Icelandics and supporting the

Toppur Club, a Regional Club of the USIHC.

“Gosi changed my life,” Virginia said. She soon sold her hunter-jumper barn to concentrate fully on Icelandics.

“And in many ways,” she added, “he changed our whole country. I built outdoor and indoor arenas, a breeding track, then an oval track. I organized fun shows and breeding shows and sport shows—now World Ranking shows—all because of this horse. I took him to the Iowa Horse Fair that first year, and Mummi rode him in front of thousands of people in the parade of breeds, among fifty-plus other breeds. The splash he caused! People were calling me, wanting to ride, wanting to buy an Icelandic horse. I joined the USIHC and within five or six years I was president. And it all started with Gosi.”

This year, Virginia started a riding school to encourage youth riders. Some lucky students might have Gosi as their school horse. “I have no problem putting a youth rider on him,” she said, “though at age 23 he might be a little fast for a beginner. He’s still fantastic. I put seven-year-old Bella Covert on him, and when she asked him to slow down, he did.”

Virginia bought three other horses while in Iceland, as well as tack; they and

Gosi arrived in Iowa in February 2014, and Mummi came for the first time in early April.

“I looked at all this tack—I was used to riding in a jump seat. I didn’t know what any of it was,” Virginia told me. “I’d brought the Icelandics to my home, not to my hunter-jumper barn. I had a tiny four-stall barn and one large paddock. Mummi shows up, and I could tell he’s really nervous. He’s very young, and had never been to the US before. He’s this huge Viking—about 6 foot 3—and he hardly speaks any English. We start setting up sticks and twine to make an arena. It’s raining. Then Mummi said, ‘It’s just like Iceland. Except in Iceland it’s raining sideways.’”

He tacked up Gosi, and Virginia got on. “And it was magic. I thought, ‘Here is the best trainer I’ve ever worked with!’ His whole aura was very calm.” She then watched him work with the other horses. “I watched how the horses responded, and they just loved him. His ability to take a horse from tense to relaxed—he’s better than any trainer I’ve ever met. And I’ve never seen anyone work with young horses that’s better than he is. He’s just a spectacular teacher and trainer. I’ve grown so much under his tutelage.”



Mummi and Dúr frá Hallkelsstaðahlíð in their new riding hall. Photo by Nancy Marie Brown.

STEP BY STEP

I've never taken a lesson with Mummi (it's now high on my list of things to do), but when I was in Iceland in May 2024, I visited Hallkelsstadahlið to catch up with him.

"I really like going to the US," he said. "In Iowa, when I first went, there were 11 Icelandic horses. There are a little bit more now." As of 2023, the Toppur Club had 40 members. Mummi's goal, however, is not to sell lots of horses, but to "find the right match for people, to find the right horse so they feel good and get interested in going to the stable every day. I want to see all the people again who buy horses from me and to help them keep that nice feeling, nice and relaxed, because they and their horses feel safe together."

Even if you're an experienced rider like Virginia, he noted, Icelandics are different. People need help to find the right one and to keep their relationship on track. "I base that on my own experience," he said, trying to ride hunter-jumpers in America. "They say a horse is just a horse, and I've taught a lot of big horse riders, in Denmark and Sweden and the US. But for me, if I were buying a hunter-jumper horse without any help—even though I am a horse trainer—I would be in danger! I would need a big horse trainer to guide me through it, to feel safe about it. Even though I've tried a lot of big horses now, and I'm getting better and better, the first time I rode one I felt like a beginner. They have different movements, bigger strides, you have to stay longer in the air when you are in trot or canter, and so on. So I think it's important for big horse riders like Virginia who are coming to the Icelandic horse world, to get help with their first steps into it. After that, it's always good to get more information to get even better."

As an instructor, he focuses on the rider first. "In the beginning, when my student's coming to a lesson, I'm not looking at the horse. I'm looking at my student, at how they walk in. Are they stiff? Are they scared? I watch their body language and the horse's body language. I see how they react to each other. A scared horse doesn't learn anything. A scared rider doesn't learn anything either. My mission is always to make the rider comfortable, so that I can start to explain to the horse what to do through my student. That's what we're doing when we're teaching, we are communicating to

the horse through the student. And the student hopefully gets some information along the way."

For the horse and rider to relax and feel safe with each other, the communication has to be clear. Mummi credits his own struggles to learn with teaching him the importance of breaking things down into small-enough steps. "When I was at school, up to 15 years old," he said, "I didn't speak a word in English or Danish, and I couldn't write correctly in Icelandic. I was really good at mathematics, but to read or write was something I just couldn't do." It was not until he went to trade school in Reykjavík, to learn carpentry, that he was diagnosed with dyslexia. The challenge was even greater when he went to Hólar University to learn to be a horse trainer and riding instructor, for not only was he expected to learn from textbooks, some of them were in English.

"I had to find another way to learn what other people could get by reading," he told me. "I had to break everything down into very small pieces and do it step by step until I understood it, and it made me feel so stupid. But if I get the information step by step, then I'm pretty quick to learn it. And that's the same way, I think, it is for horses.

"For example, when you ask your horse to go forward, what do you do?"



While in Iowa, Mummi gave seven-year-old Bella Covert lessons on Gosi frá Lambastöðum, the stallion his family sold to Virginia Lauridsen that inspired her to found Harmony Icelandics.

What is the smallest asking that the horse understands? It doesn't matter if it's a competition rider or a complete beginner, every one of my students gets this question in their first lesson: When you're in a still position and you want to go to walk, what do you do? Don't show me, you have to tell me. Because if you don't know what you're going to do, how you are going to do it, and what you're going to do when it happens, then you shouldn't start to do it. You have to know those three things first."

He continued, "People have got so many different answers to that question. There are a whole bunch of possible cues, in a whole bunch of different orders. None of them—maybe—are wrong. But if we want our horse to be sensitive to our cues, we have to do the same thing the same way every time. If we just squeeze or kick, and don't explain what they should do with this energy that we're putting in, they will try to do something—but it might not be walk. And if they have tried to do something, but they haven't gotten the reward for doing the right thing, they might just stand still. Because then we are just desensitizing them to squeezing and kicking, rather than rewarding them for doing the right thing. We have to explain to the horse, step by step, using our body language, what we want.

"Just from that, from watching people go from a still position to walk, I get a lot of information about their riding. And from how they stop. And if those basics are not good, the foundation, what you're building on top of it will be weak."

Studying the basics, he stressed, is not just for beginners. "I try to take lessons every third month, at least. The guy I go most to is a Portuguese instructor who comes here to Iceland. I do it because you always need someone. You get stuck in bad habits and you need a live mirror to tell you what you are doing. The funny thing is, we are all working on the same things. We all need help with the basics. Nearly all the riders in Iceland's Master League are taking lessons from this guy. The winner of Landsmót is working on the basics. They are not working on speed or on show gaits in their lessons, they're working on being balanced on a circle. People think sometimes that good riding is magic. But there's no magic if the basics are not good. So to keep me on track, I take lessons. I get critiqued on what I'm doing right, on what

I'm doing wrong, and so on."

Regular practice is also necessary. "A lot of people think they are experienced riders because they rode on the farm as a kid." Riding is not like that: It's not something you learn once and never forget. "I got my first horse when I was two. But when I have been teaching in the US for 10 days, and I haven't sat on a horse, when I come home and want to work with a horse, it takes me a whole lesson to just settle down and find my seat again."

A GOOD HORSE

Much has changed at Hallkelsstadahlíð since I bought Birkir in 1997. Where Birkir was trained by Mummi's father, Skúli, outside, in a red-gravel courtyard between three farm buildings, the recent Hallkelsstadahlíð youngsters are trained in a splendid new riding hall, with a glass-walled coffee room that looks out into the arena. In addition to the two houses on the property—one built in his grandmother's time, which Mummi is renovating for himself, his wife, and their two children, and the other built by his parents, Sigrún and Skúli, in the early 2000s—there are now two cabins for rent and an apartment upstairs in the riding hall for people who want to come and take lessons.

But other things have not changed at all.

The location is still one of the most beautiful, dramatic spots I know in Iceland, with its mix of steep green slopes, a placid lake, and a wild cluster of jagged-edged volcanic hills backed by snow-topped mountains. The farm is still primarily a sheep farm—there were over a thousand ewes and lambs on the premises when I visited, and lambing was in full swing.

The horses are still kept in big herds up in the mountains most of the year. "We take the foals and the pregnant mares and, if the winter is hard, the one-year-olds inside, so they're able to eat as much as they want." But in general the horses live outside in a herd of about 60 horses.

Each year, Hallkelsstadahlíð has five to 10 foals, sired by their own stallions and by stallions from all over Iceland that have, for one reason or another, impressed them that year. Mummi himself has bred two generations of first-prize mares out of the horse his father gave him when he was two years old. To keep current with research into the breeding standards, they invited the government horse-breeding advisor,



When Virginia Lauridsen bought Gosi in 2013, Mummi agreed to come to Iowa at least once a year to teach. Here he works on the lunge line with Justin Osborne.

Porvaldur Kristjánsson, to give a clinic at their farm last spring. "He talked about what they're looking for when they're judging conformation," said Mummi. "That was really helpful and a good reminder for me, because we went through all of that at Hólar."

As are most Icelandic breeders today, Hallkelsstadahlíð is looking for slightly taller horses (Mummi himself being quite a big man), though, he added, "We want to keep the good qualities of looseness and rhythm and so on in them. Some years ago, when you saw really tall Icelandic horses, they were just straight and stiff—they went like a train on train-tracks. We don't want that. But how tall do we want them to be? I don't know. We are not searching for a big horse." In the old days—days his great-aunt and uncle, people I met in 1997, remembered well—when there was no road to the farm, horses that averaged 130 centimeters (a little under 13 hands) were ridden the 35 miles to the nearest town, Borgarnes, for groceries and supplies. "If you know how to train a horse in the right position, to help them use their stomach muscles and back muscles in a nice frame, they are perfectly strong enough to carry a 100 kilo [220 pound] man who rides nicely."

But most important to him and his parents, as breeders, Mummi said, is to keep in their horses the qualities that attracted me to Birkir—and Virginia to Gosi—so many years ago.

"Our mission," Mummi said, "is to keep this friendly character in our horses.

Of course, we want them to be willing and spirited and sensitive and to have good gaits and so on, but we focus pretty much on character. We want to breed horses that trust people, that don't get afraid or stressed."

Asked how that character is expressed in a young horse, he replied, "It's really simple, if you think about the basics of horse training. It's the same as when you are figuring out if you want to be friends with another person. You can read it in their body language from the beginning, if this person wants to talk to you or not. With horses, it's how their attitude is, how quick they are to be with you, to want to work with you as a team.

"You still have to find the right match," he added. "I'm not saying a horse I feel great on would be a great horse for you. But we don't want our horses to work for us—we want them to work with us. There's a huge difference."

When I went to Iceland in 1997, "searching for the perfect horse," that was exactly what I was looking for. A horse who wanted to be friends with me and who would work with me to teach me, not only how to ride tölt, but how to be a good horseperson. I found that perfect horse at Hallkelsstadahlíð.

CONTACT

Guðmundur (Mummi) Skúlason
Hallkelsstadahlíð, 340 Borgarnes, Iceland
mummi@hallkelsstadahlid.is
icelandonhorseback.com
info@icelandonhorseback.com

CREATIVE MAGIC IN ICELAND

by Jennifer Browdy

The first time I visited Iceland, in August 2022, I made a beeline for Hestaland, “land of the horse,” a farm in western Iceland that drew me almost as though I were under a magical spell. I went for my very first ride in Iceland, a trail ride along the river, and felt the cleansing power of the energetic horse between my legs, the good sweet air, big sky and distant vistas of snow-capped peaks and seacoast, and the gentle camaraderie of my genial young guide.

I went back for more the next day and began to hear a little voice in my ear, whispering “Riding & Writing, Riding & Writing,” as though it were a mantra keeping time with the nimble hooves of my horse.

I am a college professor specializing in what I call “purposeful memoir,” personal narrative that seeks to make sense of the past in order to better understand the present, and to step more intentionally into the future we desire. I discovered this method in writing my own memoir, *What I Forgot...and Why I Remembered*, as well as the writer’s guide *Purposeful Memoir as a Quest for a Thriving Future*. Writing my memoir helped me remember how much I had loved horseback riding as a child, and I was moved to start riding again in my mid-fifties, a hobby that quickly became a passion equal to my lifelong love of writing.

Listening to the inner voice I heard in Iceland, I began to explore the possibility of leading “Riding & Writing” trips to beautiful places. To my delight, I found that there are other rider-writers like me, who enjoy balancing the physical stimulation of riding with the social, emotional, and intellectual stimulation of writing. Since then I have led four Riding & Writing excursions, at fabulous riding centers in Tuscany, Portugal, and Iceland, and I will be going back to Hestaland for another incredible week in June. I can’t wait!

One of the greatest delights of leading these trips is the amazing rider-writers who come with me. I’ve met artists, teachers, doctors, lawyers, therapists, businesspeople, and students, of a wide range of ages, from different parts of the US, UK, and Canada—some experienced riders and



Jennifer Browdy with Vindur, her favorite mount at Hestaland.

published authors, some novice riders and journal writers, all sharing that key common ground: a love of riding and writing.

At each retreat, I offer a variety of writing prompts that encourage personal reflection and imaginative play, and as we write and share, we drop down into a deeper kinship with each other, which carries over into warm, lively conversations over delicious meals, giving our group a special

cohesion as we head up to the barn each day for our rides.

I like to start out the week of riding and writing with this quote from Howard Thurman: “Don’t ask what the world needs. Ask what makes you come alive and do that. Because what the world needs is more people who have come alive.” This becomes an opening for reflective writing on what has “brought us alive” at different times and contexts in our lives—and often, as we are a group of rider-writers, leads to some interesting stories of horses and riding.

Before we head out for our first ride, I might share one of Mary Oliver’s poems, which are always so precise in their descriptions, as a way of encouraging the group to pay close attention so that when we return to our notebooks and laptops after lunch we can flex our writing muscles by writing up the morning’s ride in full sensuous detail.

I find that the magic of Riding & Writing in Iceland stays with me all year long, bubbling like pure Icelandic mineral water deep in my own creative core, fueling my continued growth as a rider and a writer and animating the friendships that I form as a result of this intense, beautiful week under the northern Summer Solstice sun.

RESOURCES

<https://www.jenniferbrowdy.com/>

<https://www.jenniferbrowdy.com/event/riding-writing-in-iceland-2/>



A happy group on the last day of Riding & Writing at Hestaland in 2024. From left: Jean Ervasti, Lark Ervasti, Katie Sargent, Jane Hamilton, Hestaland owner Christina Guzik and her children, Jennifer Browdy, Denise Cogle, and Christina’s husband Guðmar Pétursson.

CONFLICT OR HARMONY?

by Nancy Marie Brown

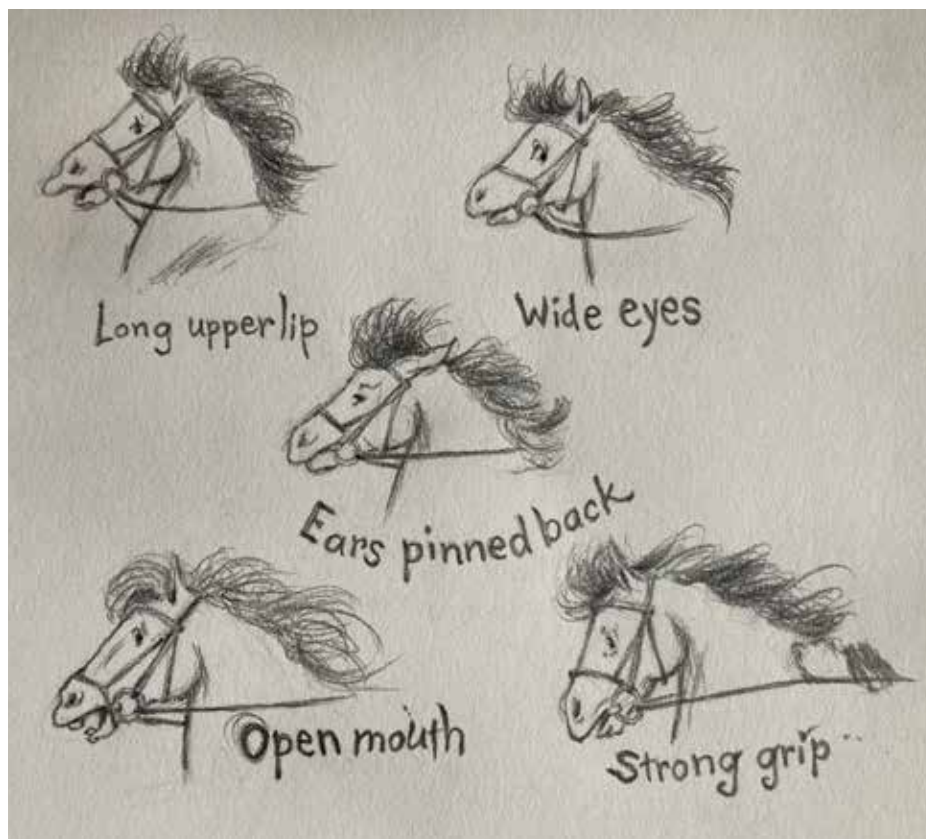
What do you think when you see a horse at a show—or on the trail—swishing its tail? Tossing its head? Running with a gaping mouth? Or—and this one can be hard to see—sticking out its upper lip? When a horse you’re watching—or riding—suddenly stops, turns, or changes gait, without being asked, how do you register that action? Is that horse being obstinate? Uncooperative? Naughty?

According to a group of researchers from Denmark and Germany, these “conflict behaviors” are all signs of discomfort, stress, or pain—and horse organizations like ours need to work harder to reduce them. If not, as a report from the Danish Animal Ethics Council recommended in 2023, “stricter legislation for the use of horses in sports should be implemented.”

Protecting the welfare of Icelandic horses has been central to the mission of the USIHC and our parent organization, FEIF, for at least 10 years, and it’s a high priority for those of us on the *Quarterly* committee. We carefully screen all photographs that are submitted and choose not to print shots in which a horse does not look comfortable in its tack. We want to show happy, healthy horses and harmonious riding. We know the riders in our photos are role models for our readers, and we try hard to only show “best practices.” One of the horse behaviors that routinely makes us reject an otherwise beautiful photograph is an open mouth. But it was not until I read a recent research paper on conflict behavior that I realized an open mouth might mean the horse is more than just “unhappy” or not “in harmony” with its rider. That horse could be in pain.

THE RESEARCH

In January 2024, Janne Winther Christensen of Aarhus University, Dehlija Jensen from the Aarhus Educational Centre for Agriculture, and Uta U. König von Borstel from the Justus-Liebig University in Germany, published an article on “Conflict Behaviour in Icelandic Horses During Elite Competition” in *Applied Animal Behaviour Science*, which is the official journal of the International Society for Applied Ethology. The society was created in 1966 with



What are these horses trying to tell us, with their open mouths, wide eyes, or elongated lips? This and the other illustrations accompanying this article were drawn by Margot Apple based on the slide, “Signs of Discomfort,” supplied by Þórgeir Guðlaugsson from the USIHC Sport Judging Seminar. Remember, the slide explains, these expressions are indicators, not evidence. Judges need to look for the cause of the behavior and be aware of the context in which it occurs.

a focus on “human-animal interactions such as farming, wildlife management, the keeping of companion and laboratory animals, and the control of pests,” according to its website. Its mission is to help “create a better balance between animal welfare and the requirements that humans have of other animals.”

In the last five years, the journal has published more than 50 peer-reviewed papers on horses. Among the topics covered are identifying pain, how horses become fearful or frustrated, the effect of different training styles on the horse-human relationship, the effect of multiple handlers or owners on a horse’s well-being, and riders’ ability to interpret their horse’s body language, as well as articles, like the one that came to my attention because it focused on Icelandics, on conflict behavior.

Two of the authors of “Conflict Behaviour in Icelandic Horses During Elite

Competition,” Janne Winther Christensen and Uta U. König von Borstel, are editors of *Equitation Science*, 2nd Edition. According to its publisher’s description, this “new edition of a highly respected textbook and reference in the rapidly emerging field of equitation science ... incorporates learning theory into ethical equine training frameworks suitable for riders of any level and for all types of equestrian activity.” It continues, “the welfare of the horse and rider safety are primary considerations throughout.”

The third author, Dehlija Jensen, describes herself on LinkedIn as having “a big passion and interest in the Icelandic horse.” She has worked on Icelandic horse farms in Iceland, Germany, and Denmark, including a year spent at Hestheimar, a breeding farm and training facility owned by the well-known Icelandic competition rider Sigurður Sigurðarson (aka Siggí Sig).

It was Dehlia who compiled the data for the researchers' report, by studying the on-line videos, recorded by Alendis TV, of two events in the Meistaradeild Lifflands 2022, the 2022 Masters Competition (sponsored by the Liffland company) in Iceland. The two events were the F1 Five Gait competition, which included 25 horses (ridden by 20 men and 5 women), and T2 Loose Rein Tölt, with 24 horses (ridden by 17 men and 7 women). Dehlia watched the videos in slow-motion, at one-quarter their regular speed, to enable "a detailed recording of the horse's behavioural expressions."

Conflict behavior is a catch-all term. It encompasses anything a horse does to show it's frustrated, uncomfortable, or in pain. Bucking and rearing are extreme forms of conflict behavior. But just because Icelandic horses are stoic, and rarely buck or rear (especially not in competition, with master riders), doesn't mean they're not trying to communicate their frustration in more subtle ways.

The international rules for Icelandic horse competitions, which the Meistaradeild follows, are written—and updated yearly—with the welfare of the horse in mind. According to the FEIF Code of Conduct, the "welfare of the horse must never be subordinated to competitive or commercial influences." Certain bits or bit-and-noseband combinations have been banned as being painful or uncomfortable for the horse. Crops or whips are not allowed in some events. There are strict rules about the trimming of hooves and the weight of shoes and boots, to avoid harming the horse's legs. The judges are required to check tack and shoeing at every world ranking show. At the larger events, veterinarians perform pre- and post-test checks to make sure the horse has no mouth injuries. If they see rough riding, judges are allowed to raise a yellow card and deduct points from a performance; they can also raise a red card and have the rider disqualified.

According to the FEIF Judging Guidelines, "The prime judging criterion should be the harmony between horse and rider. The rider must handle the horse with fairness, delicacy, and respect; be its true leader rather than its dominator. At all times the rider must put the horse's welfare paramount and guard its health and safety. The horse should be able to fulfil its tasks with pleasure; be calm and supple,



These examples of rough riding are the direct opposite of the light and harmonious riding judges (and spectators) hope to see at an Icelandic competition. Illustration by Margot Apple.

but also confident, attentive, and keen."

And yet, as the Danish researchers point out, most Icelandic horse competitions take place on a 250-meter oval track (either outdoors or, as with the Meistaradeild, indoors), with the judges sitting in the middle of the ring. "Due to the speed of movement and the distance between judges and the horse, subtle conflict behaviour is easily overlooked."

SIGNS OF DISCOMFORT

Based on previous work by other researchers on elite-level dressage and show jumping warmblood horses, the researchers defined four behaviors to look for in the Icelandic competitions: (1) Does the horse open its mouth wide enough to show its teeth or for an observer to glimpse the wall of the arena through the horse's mouth? (2) Does the horse raise, lower, or toss its head, clearly changing from the head position requested by the rider? (3) Does the horse swish its tail (with swishing defined as any motion "that interrupts the rhythmical waving motion of the tail corresponding to the gait")? (4) Does the horse change gaits when not requested to do so?

By slowing the videos dramatically, Dehlia was able to calculate the frequency, per minute of performance, of these behaviors "that the eye could not catch

at full speed." She found no effect of the rider's sex or whether they rode with a snaffle or a curb bit.

Change of gait seemed to show no consistent pattern, except that it occurred more frequently in loose-rein tölt than in regular tölt—which everyone who has ever ridden loose-rein tölt would have expected. It takes a very good rider to keep a horse in clean tölt with no rein contact. There was also a correlation between the rider's score and the occurrence of undesired gait changes, showing that this conflict behavior is one that our current judging rules fully take into consideration.

In the F1 Five Gait class, however, Dehlia found that all the horses occasionally showed open mouths and head tossing, mostly in tölt and pace. Eleven of the 25 horses also showed tail swishing.

In the T2 Loose Rein Tölt class, again, all the horses showed open mouths and head tossing. Open mouths were more frequent in the regular tölt sections, ridden with rein contact, than when the horses were performing loose-rein tölt. Head tossing was also more frequent in regular tölt. Tail swishing was shown by 14 of the 24 horses in the class (though 4 of these 14 only swished their tails once), and it made no difference whether they were being ridden with rein contact or not.

Dehlia also observed a fifth conflict behavior that she had not been primed to

look for: lip elongation, defined as the upper lip extending several centimeters from the lower lip for more than three seconds. “Half of the horses showed an elongated upper lip when ridden in tölt with short reins,” the researchers write, “whereas none of the horses showed the behaviour when ridden in the same gait with loose reins.”

This expression is not the same as the long upper lip a horse will show when it is enjoying being groomed or scratched. It is also not merely a sign of mild frustration with the rider’s conflicting cues; it is closer to the lip shape researchers have interpreted, in other breeds and other situations, as a sign of fear or stress.

Lip elongation, the researchers wrote, “to the best of our knowledge has not previously been described by a scientific study as a potential oral conflict behaviour in ridden horses,” although they note that “based on casual observations, lip elongation is also commonly seen in horses performing dressage.” Both situations, they add, involve high levels of rein tension. “It remains to be investigated in further detail whether the

intensity of upper lip elongation and/or the degree of angularity are valid indicators of the degree of tension or stress, or if the intensity of this facial expression is specific to certain situations and/or varies at an individual level.”

In the Icelandic horse world, riding in harmony and the welfare of the horse, as I’ve noted above, are already high priorities. Judges are urged to reward feather-light riding, as well as to penalize rough riding, and FEIF keeps an international list of riders singled out for their harmonious riding style. You’ll find several US riders and trainers on that list.

But do we need to do more? According to the current FEIF judging rules, only a performance that shows “Harmony,” “Very good connection,” and/or “Excellent riding” can score above an 8.0 (out of 10). But scores in the range of 6.0 to 8.0 are possible with the horse “generally submitting to the riding aids”—which allows for some moments in which harmony is lacking. To become a member of the USIHC National Team—and be acknowledged as one of our

very best riders—an average score of 6.0 is sufficient.

MODERN SPORTS?

“Sport horse welfare is currently under scrutiny,” the authors of the *Applied Animal Behaviour Science* study note. “Among other issues, it has been pointed out that behavioural signs of discomfort are frequently overlooked during training and competitions.”

Overlooked, that is, until those signs of “discomfort” appear at a media-saturated event like the Olympics—and the people who should have been looking out for the horse’s welfare instead blame it for being uncooperative.

The news coverage of the equestrian events at the 2024 Paris Olympics was dominated by accusations of animal abuse, after a video showing an Olympic dressage rider whipping a horse in training was posted to the internet, causing the rider to apologize for an “error in judgment” and drop out of the competition. As a headline in the *New York Times* put it, “Equestrian Is Having an Uncomfortable Moment” as “accusations of mistreatment cast a shadow over dressage and other events.” The story concludes, “Being associated with allegations of animal abuse hardly helps the sport make a case for its continued presence” at the Olympics.

A similar shadow was cast over an event at the 2021 Tokyo Olympics, when the coach of Germany’s pentathlon team was disqualified, as National Public Radio (NPR) reported, “because she punched a horse” that was “obstinate” and “refusing” the rider’s commands. The coach—a former Olympic pentathlete—yelled for the rider to hit the horse harder and, when it sidled close to the rail, punched it herself.

Unlike dressage, Modern Pentathlon is not really an equestrian sport. In 2021, the human athlete also competed in fencing, swimming, shooting, and running. They didn’t ride their own horses, but were assigned a horse—which may have already run the course at least once. They had 20 minutes to “bond with” the horse, as the NPR reporter put it, before taking it through a show jumping course with 4-foot fences. As the anonymous writer of the blog “Breed-Ride-Event” summed it up, “the format is insane.”

It has nothing in common—let me repeat, nothing in common with an Icelandic sport competition like the Meis-



Is this horse lashing his tail in frustration at the rider, or simply because the task is difficult and he is trying his hardest? Or is it a mare reacting to a stallion in the ring? Tail movements can indicate conflict—but they can also mean something else. Illustration by Margot Apple.

taradeild events. Except, as the blogger points out, to the general public “riding horses is riding horses” and “now there are a hell of a lot of comments on social media about how using horses for sport is cruel.”

The Union Internationale de Pentathlon Moderne responded by eliminating the equestrian portion of the sport. After the Paris 2024 Olympic Games, the pentathlon will no longer include horses. They will be replaced by “ring swings and rope mazes,” according to a November 2022 report by the Associated Press, in an attempt to “modernize the sport” and make it attractive to a younger audience. The new pentathlete will compete in fencing, swimming, laser shooting, running, and an “American Ninja Warrior”-style obstacle course.

THE FUTURE OF OUR SPORT

The take-home message is clear: If we want equestrian sports to have a future—to be considered “modern”—then we must make certain that everyone can see how highly we value our wonderful steeds and how seriously we take their welfare. Following up on research like that published by Dehllia Jensen and her colleagues in *Applied Animal Behaviour Science* is a good next step. Among their recommendations are that riders, trainers, and judges learn to better recognize the various forms of conflict behavior our horses express, and that our judging rules continue to evolve.

That long upper lips and open mouths are “common behavioural expressions in Icelandic horses competing at elite level,” the researchers conclude, suggests that we need to change our judging rules and procedures to consider what the horses are trying to tell us. One way, they suggest, could be to incorporate “short, standardized video sequences played at slow speed” into competition judging, as well as into our daily training, to enable the judge or rider to become more aware of what the horse is trying to communicate. Only when we listen to our partner can we truly ride in harmony.

Porgeir Guðlaugsson, the head judge of the last four Icelandic Horse World Championships and one of the chief architects of the current FEIF judging system, agrees. In August 2024, I had the opportunity to spend some time with Porgeir and to discuss this study, which he was very familiar with. While he noted that he was speaking for himself, and not

officially for FEIF, he said, “I welcome the criticism. I hope people will keep asking questions like these.”

Although he’s not ready to recommend the use of video when judging live competitions (though it is an excellent idea to incorporate video into daily training), he agrees that the judging rules must continue to evolve in response to new insights and knowledge. “In the old days,” he said, “a lot of what riders called ‘willingness’ in an Icelandic horse was really just fear and tension. We don’t reward riding like that any more. What we are looking for in competitions today is a willingness to work with the rider.”

When judging—and when creating study materials to train future judges—Porgeir makes a conscious effort to notice conflict behaviors. “The detection of riding related signs of discomfort will be included in the newest version of the FEIF Sport Judging Guidelines,” he said. “Those issues are being highlighted in the judges’ education programs in most FEIF member countries, including the US. We look for any movement that is made to get rid of pressure or other discomfort: a waving tail, a shaking head, a gaping mouth—and, after reading this study, I have also been looking for the elongated upper lip, which was new to me. But when deciding how to react to those signs, we also need to identify their causality.”

Is the horse reacting to a fly, or to the noise of the crowd, and not to the rider’s hands? Is the mare that is swishing her tail reacting to being in a small arena with a stallion? “Horses also swish their tails when they are being asked to do something really hard,” he noted, “just as a human athlete might grimace or grunt when lifting heavy weights, running fast, or jumping high. The level of collection needed for high-scoring slow tölt is physically very demanding, especially in the T1 finals, where collection is required on a long stretch and for a long time. Next to questioning our judging practices, therefore, we also need to ask if the set-ups of some of the tests are fair, or do they need to be designed in a different way, one that better reflects modern insights into the horse’s welfare?”

“Horses are not born to run around with a piece of metal in their mouths and they should be allowed to open their mouths once in a while when ridden,”

Porgeir said. “As such, there’s nothing wrong with an open mouth. You just need to know why it is open.” You can’t see why in a photograph (so he agrees we shouldn’t publish those photos in the magazine), but a practiced judge should be able to tell, in competition, if the horse is tense or afraid or responding to pain by opening its mouth.

He concluded, “We must regard the horse as a partner in the sport, not just as a tool to realize our own ambitions. The Icelandic horse world is better prepared than some other equestrian sports are, but we have to continue to be responsible—or else, how long will we have a social license to use living animals in sport?”

RESOURCES

Janne Winther Christensen, Dehllia Jensen, and Uta U. König von Borstel, “Conflict Behaviour in Icelandic Horses During Elite Competition,” *Applied Animal Behaviour Science* (2024): <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.applanim.2024.106166>

Danish Animal Ethics Council, “Statement on the Use of Horses for Sports” (2023): https://detdyreetiskeraad.dk/fileadmin/user_upload/Dyreetisk_Raad/Publikationer/Udtalelser/Oversaettelser/Statement_on_the_use_of_horses_for_sport_2023.pdf

FEIF Sport Rules and Regulations (April 2024): <https://www.feif.org/sport-dept/documents/>

New York Times (August 3, 2024): <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/08/03/world/olympics/equestrian-horses.html>

National Public Radio (August 7, 2021): <https://www.npr.org/sections/tokyo-olympics-live-updates/2021/08/07/1025814959/german-modern-pentathlon-coach-disqualified-for-punching-a-horse>

Associated Press (November 14, 2022): <https://www.cbc.ca/sports/olympics/summer/modern-pentathlon/modern-pentathlon-votes-to-swap-horse-riding-with-american-ninja-warrior-type-obstacles-1.6650840>

Breed-Ride-Event Blog: <https://breedrideevent.com/2021/08/10/the-modern-pentathlon-debacle/>

LETTERS FROM OUR READERS

LOSING WEIGHT

I was disappointed by the article entitled “How To Lose Weight” (Issue Four 2024), and was honestly surprised that USIHC would publish such a poorly researched and out of date piece on a topic which is so important for the welfare of Icelandic horses. If I read this as an opinion piece from an Icelandic horse trainer who has no background in equine nutrition or veterinary medicine, I can perhaps read it with a different frame of mind, but I worry that *Quarterly* readers are looking to this as an answer to the article’s title question for their horses. First of all, no *Quarterly* reader’s veterinarian is going to be using the body condition scale which is described in this article. Icelandic horse owners need to be aware of the Henneke Body Condition Scoring system, which is used by US veterinarians and competitive equine disciplines which assess body condition, and scores horses on a 1-9 scale. Additionally, there

are a variety of strategies and management systems which aim to enable horses to eat consistently throughout the day, as is appropriate for their species—none of which are mentioned in this piece. Restricting access to forage is one of the best ways to increase cortisol, making it more difficult for horses to lose weight, not to mention contributing to a host of other behavioral and health consequences. I found it particularly disheartening to read, “It is difficult for me to be accurate about a normal amount of hay.” Really? There are well-established nutritional guidelines for how much forage to feed equines, if one is to be measuring the amount fed rather than providing 24/7 forage (1-2% of bodyweight). I appreciate the author’s encouragement to test hay, as well as balance intake with exercise, but I am concerned that the article is mis-titled, to say the least. I would strongly encourage the USIHC to endorse education on the topic of feeding and body condition for Ice-

landic horses from equine nutritionists and veterinarians. There is so much information available at this point, there is really no excuse not to promote best practices in the *Quarterly* magazine.

I refer you to these articles:

<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC10135103/>

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1558787820300605?via%3Dihub>

<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC10093336/>

<https://gettyequinenutrition.com/pages/forage-deprivation-keeps-your-horse-fat-the-research>

Getty, J.M. 2014. Restricting forage is incredibly stressful. Choose a different approach to weight loss.

—Katherine Forrest, New York



**USIHC
JUDGING SEMINAR**

April 10-13, 2025 | Léttleiki Icelandics, KY

UNITED STATES
ICELANDIC
HORSE
CONGRESS

Led by FEIF International Sport Judge Þorgeir Guðlaugsson, this seminar is perfect for those interested in learning more about judging and competition riding, the gaits of the Icelandic horse, and the basics of biomechanics.

Prerequisite: previous USIHC judging seminars, "Intro to Icelandic Horse Sport" webinar or other suitable judging seminars



For more information and to register: alexandra.pregitzer@gmx.de



MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

New Membership Application **Membership Renewal**

Individual Individual Three Year Individual Lifetime Family Junior Junior Lifetime

Name:

Address:

City: State: Zip Code:

Phone: Email:

I am a United States Citizen and/or my primary residence* is the United States.

**Primary Residence - must reside in the US for a minimum of 6 months and one day per calendar year to be eligible.*

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

Regional Club (optional):

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

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

Farm Listing Paid members of the USIHC may opt to include a farm listing on the Congress' website (www.icelandics.org) and printed in *The Icelandic Horse Quarterly*. There is a \$110.00 annual fee for the farm listing in addition to your membership fee.

Farm: Owners:

Address:

City: State: Zip Code:

Phone: Email: Web:

Membership Fees & Restrictions	
Individual	\$60/year \$150/ Three Year Membership \$1200/ Lifetime Membership
Family	\$80/year Two adults and unlimited children (under 18 years) living in the same household. Adults can vote.
Junior	\$50/year or \$280/Lifetime membership One child (under 18 years). Not eligible to vote. Lifetime membership is valid until 18.

Membership Fee:	\$.....
Farm Listing Fee:	\$.....
W/C Fund Donation:	\$..... <small>(optional support for the World Champion team)</small>
Youth Fund Donation:	\$..... <small>(optional support for youth programs)</small>
Breeding Fund Donation:	\$..... <small>(optional support for Breeding Evaluations)</small>
Total:	\$.....

Please make checks payable to "USIHC" and mail to the address below:

USIHC c/o Sabrina Bateman

156 Coon Club Rd Bristol, VT 05443

(866) 929-0009 [ext 1]

info@icelandics.org

Your membership expires on the anniversary of your payment except for Individual Lifetime Memberships.



SOLHEIMAR 2025

5 NATIONALLY RANKED SHOWS
WINNERS COMPETE IN ALL 5 SHOWS

ICE CUP SHOW SERIES

MAY 3-4

JUNE 21-22

JULY 26-27

AUGUST 30-31

SEPTEMBER 27-28

TUNBRIDGE, VERMONT

SIGRUNBRY@GMAIL.COM

Riding & Writing at Hestaland

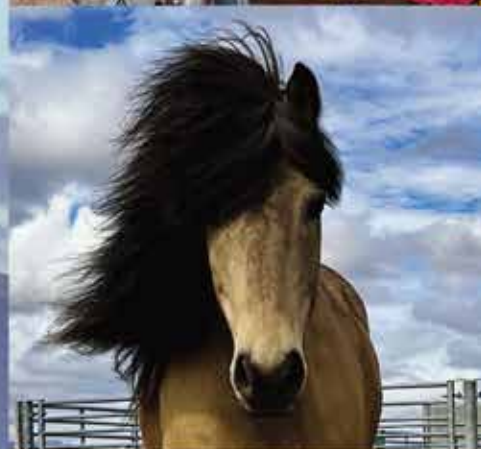
Borgarnes, Iceland

JUNE 2 – 8, 2025

Treat yourself to a stimulating creative elixir, led by veteran writing teacher and enthusiastic rider Jennifer Browdy, PhD.

All-inclusive and suitable for any level of riding/writing, this trip is pure magic!

Space is limited; find out more at JenniferBrowdy.com/events and email info@hestaland.net to reserve your spot!





All natural products for Summer Eczema, insect bites and itchy horses



**30 DAY
Money Back
GUARANTEE**



1. Summer Eczema Oral Powder

Marshmallow, lemon peel, celery salt, spirulina, ginger, rosehip, kelp, raspberry, dandelion, sage, willow, nutmeg

2. MAP Shampoo

Glycerin, essential oils, citric acid, disodium edta, aloe vera

3. Quadrabiotic Eczema Ointment

Gentocin, pyrilamine, polymyxin, edta



Equine Medical & Surgical Associates, Inc.
325 Westtown Road, Suite 15
West Chester, PA 19382
610.436.5174
equinemedsurg@equinemedsurg.com
www.equinemedsurg.com



4-beat^{llc}

- training
- riding instruction
- clinics
- shows

Alexandra Pregitzer - IPZV Trainer C - USIHC Sport Judge B
www.4-beat.com email: alexandra.pregitzer@gmx.de



USIHC PARTNERS



FLYING C RANCH TACK SHOP



These partners contribute to USIHC membership benefits.
visit www.icelandics.org/partners for more information.



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

ALASKA

AK Ice Farm
Janet Mulder
Anchorage, AK 99507
(907) 351-4473
akicefarm@gmail.com
www.akicefarm.com

True North Farm
Cindy Wallace-Bonine
46892 Lake St
Kenai, Alaska 99611
(541) 517-2878

CALIFORNIA

Flying C Ranch
Will & Asta Covert
3600 Roblar Ave.
Santa Ynez, California 93460
(805) 688-1393
asta@tolt.net
<https://www.flyingctack.com/>

Violet Nova Ranch
Violet Nova Ranch, LLC
2763 E Westfall
Mariposa, California 95338
(707) 486-8733
lauraelinstrong@gmail.com

COLORADO

Granite Peaks Ranch
Melissa & David Lunsford
25080 CR 501
Bayfield, Colorado 81122
(970) 442-0256
mlunsford101@gmail.com
www.yakswoolorado.com

Hestar Ranch
Monika Meier-Galliker
30420 C.R. 500
Pagosa Springs, Colorado 81147
(970) 883-2531
m.meier@hestar-ranch.us
www.hestar-ranch.com

Lough Arrow Icelandics
Andrea Brodie, DVM
22242 County Road 46.0
Aguilar, Colorado 81020
(719) 680-2845
fiddlinvet@gmail.com
<https://www.coloradoicelandics.com/>

Tamangur Icelandic Horses
Coralie Denmeade
13311 Spring Valley Road
Larkspur, Colorado 80118
(719) 209-2312
coralie@tamangur-icelandics.com
www.tamangur-icelandics.com

Tolt Mountain Ranch
Thomas R Dowding
1200 Quannah Road
Westcliffe, Colorado 81252
(619) 977-4975
dowdingtom@gmail.com

FLORIDA

Saddle One Farm - Icelandics
JO PAYNE
29167 SE 152nd Place
Altoona, Florida 32702
(540) 910-0899 call/text
musxit@aol.com

IOWA

Harmony Icelandics
Virginia Lauridsen
3273 Rustic Trail
Truro, Iowa 50257
(515) 556-3307
virginia@harmonyicelandics.com
www.harmonyicelandics.com

KENTUCKY

Lettleiki Icelandics
Maggie Brandt
6105 Eminence Pike
Shelbyville, Kentucky 40019
(502) 541-4590
maggie@lettleikiicelandics.com
<https://lettleikiicelandics.com/>

Taktur Icelandic Horses
Terral Hill & Carrie Lyons Brandt
4209 Dana Rd
Crestwood, Kentucky 40014
(502) 409-1924
carrieandterral@gmail.com
taktur.horse

MAINE

Fire & Ice Icelandic Horses
Alicia Flanigan & Nikkisue Flanigan
32 Putnam Ridge
Limington, Maine 04049
(207) 615-8556
icelandics17@gmail.com
<https://fireandice.horse/>

MASSACHUSETTS

Four Winds Farm
Lori B. Leo
703 Hanover Street
Hanover, Massachusetts 02043
(617) 827-2001
loribleo@gmail.com
www.fourwindsicelandics.com

Merrimack Valley Icelandics
Neil and Ebba Meehan
282 Main Street
Boxford, Massachusetts 01921
(781) 521-0841
ebbameehan@me.com
<https://www.merrimackvalleyicelandics.com/>

MICHIGAN

Chippewa Acres
Kristina Simmons
8465 S Airport Rd
Dewitt, Michigan 48820
(517) 749-1671
kristinahorses3@yahoo.com
www.chippewaacres.com

MINNESOTA

Aslan, Åds Country Icelandics
Kydee K. Sheetz
5380 Ugstad Junction Road
Proctor, Minnesota 55810
(218) 349-2209
acicelandics@yahoo.com

Cloudberry Acres
Nilla & Jeff Rypka
2615 County Road 5
Carlton, Minnesota 55718
(907) 394-5961
pillan_e@yahoo.com

NEW JERSEY

Tolt Farm
Anne Owen
791 County Road 523
Whitehouse Station, New Jersey 08889
(908) 968-0292
toltfarm@yahoo.com
<http://toltfarm.com/>

NEW YORK

EasyGait-Farm LLC
Bettina, Jana and Stephan Wagner
4694 Clark Road
Cincinnati, New York 13040
(607) 592-2372
bettina@easygaitfarm.com
<https://easygaitfarm.com/>

Sand Meadow Farm
Steven & Andrea Barber
300 Taylor Road
Honeoye Falls, New York 14472
(585) 624-4468
toltstar@yahoo.com
www.sandmeadow.com



OHIO

Beat'n Branch Icelandic
Ron & Sherry Hoover
4709 Beat Rd
Litchfield, Ohio 44253
(330) 635-5623
890hoover@gmail.com

OREGON

Alfadans Equestrian Arts
Caeli Cavanagh and Alexandra Venable
34260 NE Old Parrett Mountain Rd
Newberg, Oregon 97132
(802) 299-5468
alfadansequestrianarts@gmail.com
www.alfadans.com

Five-Gait Farm Icelandic
Lucy Nold
86623 Central Road
Eugene, Oregon 97402
(831) 332-5328
fivegaitfarmicelandics@gmail.com
fivegaitfarm.com

Mountain Icelandic Farm
Annette Coulon
90375 Hill Rd
Springfield, Oregon 97478
(831) 331-0442
mountainicelandics@gmail.com
www.mountainicelandics.com

SOUTH CAROLINA

Black Creek Farm
Sarah C. Elkin-Marsh and Michael P. Marsh
449 Jewell Boone Rd.
Pelion, South Carolina 29123
(803) 307-8270
blackcreekfarm@me.com
blackcreekfarm.us

VERMONT

Lunar Hill Icelandic
Jana Meyer
33 Hall Rd
Chelsea, Vermont 05038
(603) 856-6697
lunarhill70@gmail.com
www.lunarhillicelandics.com

VIRGINIA

Montaire Icelandic Horses
Antje Freygang
36727 Leith Lane
Middleburg, Virginia 20117
(202) 372-5324
freygang777@gmail.com
<https://www.montaire.org/>

WASHINGTON

Avondale Icelandic LLC
Doreen (Dor) Shoda
Redmond, Washington 98053
Avondaleicelandics@outlook.com
www.Avondaleicelandics.com and <https://www.facebook.com/Avondaleicelandics>

Valkyrie Icelandic
Laura Benson
16330 270th Pl NE
Duvall, Washington 98019
(650) 281-4108
invaderlala@gmail.com
www.valkyrieicelandic.com

Vinur Farm
Freya Sturm, Ben Sizemore
2216 Highway 141
Trout Lake, Washington 98650
(360) 601-9656
vinurfarm@gmail.com
www.vinurfarm.com

WEST VIRGINIA

Icelandic Thunder
Denise & James Taylor
550 Hackers Creek Rd
Philippi, West Virginia 26416
(304) 457-4238
icywoman@msn.com
icelandicthunder.com

WYOMING

Gyetorp II
The Behringer Family
810 Valley View Drive
Cheyenne, Wyoming 82009
(307) 757-7915
gyetorp2@gmail.com
www.gyetorp2.com



This year, the 4,000-mile Sea 2 Shining Sea route visits 13 Icelandic horse farms in the US. Each farm checkpoint counts for 330 miles, or about 82 hours of riding. For complete rules, and to register, see: <https://icelandics.org/sea-2-shining-sea-ride>



Experience Iceland on a working horse and sheep farm!

Enjoy picturesque views from the privacy of your own cabin, take a riding tour, go hiking, or spend your days fishing and exploring.

Located near Borgarnes on the Snæfellsness Peninsula, just 15 minutes from the ocean, our farm has been in the family for more than 100 years and features miles of mountains, rivers, lakes and spectacular views.

3500 ACRES OF BREATHTAKING SCENERY • RIDING TOURS & LESSONS • FISHING • PRIVATE CABINS WITH JACUZZIS



icelandonhorseback.com | mummi@hallkelsstadahlid.is

"... makes a strong case for everyday wonder."

—*New York Times Book Review*



Learn more at
www.nancymariebrown.com



Will you come play with us?

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

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

breeding clinics education lessons boarding

events education lessons boarding

Gyetorp II

A family owned and operated Icelandic horse farm hailing from the centuries old, and original family farm in Southern Sweden. A magical memory, echoing generations of horsemen, honor breeding and horse racing.

We promote fun & belonging, classical education and safety, and know that not much is better than the happiness of developing together with your horse.

We believe in keeping our horses together in a herd with daily access to open pastures and rolling hills and putting the welfare of the horse first in everything we do.

Located within minutes of Medicine Bow National Forest, and a short easy drive from Cheyenne, or only 90 minutes from the Denver metro area. We welcome riders of any age and ability.

Tel: 307-757-7915 Email: gyetorp2@gmail.com



breeding clinics education boarding lessons



Young Stallions of Beat N' Branch Icelandics



Kvikur US2019105421
 F.: IS2007187661 - Strokur frá Syðri-Gegnishólum I
 M.: US2010204585 - Kvika from Four Winds
First Prize Assessed Parents



Svartigaldur US2020105620
 F.: IS2007188906 - Hrókur frá Efsta-Dal II
 M.: US2010204585 - Kvika from Four Winds
First Prize Assessed Parents

Beat N' Branch Icelandics Ron & Sherry Hoover 330-635-5623 Follow Us on Facebook

JULY 19-25, 2025

PHOTOGRAPHY & RIDING WORKSHOP WITH LINAIMAGES

Experience the perfect blend of riding and scenic photography sessions curated and coached by Lina of LinaImages.

Ideal for photography enthusiasts and advanced photographers who aim to capture the spirit of the Icelandic horse in its stunning homeland while developing their portfolio and skills.

www.hestaland.net

info@hestaland.net



TREK ADDED!

SEPTEMBER 3-9, 2025

ULTIMATE TREKKING ADVENTURE

Get away from it all and enjoy pure Icelandic nature as you ride with a large, loose herd through breathtaking scenery only accessible via horseback.

Adventurous days, relaxing evenings, one unforgettable experience.

www.hestaland.net

info@hestaland.net



Lettleiki

ICELANDICS



Training • Education • Boarding • Breeding • Shows • Clinics
Shelbyville, KY



www.lettleikiicelandics.com • (502)541-4590



- KARLSLUND - ROECKL - FLECK - TOP REITER - WERKMAN - FAGER BITS - ARIUS- G-BOOTS - EQUES - HRÍMNIR - REITER - WERKMAN - FAGER BITS - G-BOOTS - EQUES - HRÍMNIR - ÁSTUND - FEATHER WEIGHT - KARLSLUND - ROECKL - FLECK - TOP REITER - WERKMAN - FAGER BITS - ARIUS- G-BOOTS - EQUES - HRÍMNIR - ÁSTUND - FEATHER WEIGHT - WERKMAN - FAGER BITS - ARIUS- BACK ON TRACK - G-BOOTS - EQUES - HRÍMNIR - ÁSTUND - FEATHER WEIGHT - WERKMAN - FAGER BITS - ARIUS- G-BOOTS - EQUES- HRÍMNIR - ÁSTUND - FEATHER WEIGHT - KARLSLUND - ROECKL -



PHOTO BY HEIDI BENSON

WWW.FLYINGCTACK.COM

FREE SHIPPING TO US AND CANADA ON ORDERS OVER \$250 *

ONE STOP SHOP FOR EVERYTHING YOU MIGHT NEED
FOR YOU OR YOUR ICELANDIC HORSE

TACK SALES - TRAINING - HORSE IMPORT - LESSONS - CLINICS - SHOWS - STALLION SERVICE

*EXCLUDING USED SADDLES