

Issue Two

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)



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On the cover: We hope our cover photo makes you laugh, as it clearly shows the sense of humor and camaraderie we enjoy with our Icelandics. Andrea and Steve Barber chose Álfadís frá Hellnafelli (IS2017237320) for her new owner, Meredith Vanderminden, in part because of her exceptionally friendly and personable nature. Her breeder, Kolbrún Grétarsdóttir, describes her as the kind of horse that feels like your BFF. Álfadís is back with the Barbers to deliver her foal by Strákur frá Vatnsleysu. This photo of Steve hanging out with Álfadís on a summer evening was taken by Andrea.

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.

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THE USIHC MISSION

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

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

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

A pro rider (Terral Hill on Kvikur from Beat n' Branch) and an amateur (Marisa Shaw on Svartálfur frá Syðri-Gegnishólum) race in tölt at the Fall Gamankeppni Show in Kentucky. Photo by Kevin Zibart.



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."



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USIHC NEWS

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Virginia Lauridsen writes: I was honored to serve as the USIHC chair at the 2025 international FEIF conference, which was held in Vienna, Austria from January 31 to February 2. Vienna is a beautiful city, and the meeting was held near the city center, allowing us to enjoy the sights after our meetings ended. As always, it was fun and educational to meet with other Icelandic horse associations from around the world. Out of 23 member countries, 19 were represented. This year, the delegates assembly was held virtually on January 28. The US was permitted to have two delegates, and USIHC Board members Caeli Cavanagh and Jeff Rose participated.



March Leisure Rider of the Month Frank Sihler at a mounted archery competition in Scottsdale, AZ. Photo by Chris Yung.

Jean-Paul Balz completed his term as FEIF president, and Gundula Sharman (former Director of Youth) from Great Britain was voted in as the new FEIF president. Our own Will Covert was re-elected as the Director of Sport. You can view all of the new FEIF Board members and sport and breeding rule changes at: <https://www.feif.org/feif/documents/conference/>.

Some of the highlights of the conference this year included a trip to the Spanish Riding School to watch a training

session and the association dinner on Friday night. Sigurbjörn ("Diddi") Bárðarson was honored for his induction into Iceland's Sports Hall of Fame. This is a great honor, as he is the first rider to be included in this esteemed group.

Erik Anderson from Norway was named "Trainer of the Year." Germany received the 2024 "Youth Country of the Year," having started a new riding academy which utilizes virtual lessons. For the first time FEIF also chose a "Leisure Country of the Year," which was Great Britain. You can read more about the conference in the FEIF News section of this issue.

Great food, conversation, and ideas were also shared. I find it so interesting to learn about the strategies employed by other countries' associations to boost the presence of the Icelandic horse. Some of these could be very successful in the US.

One idea that came up in the chairpersons' meeting was to form a "buddy system" within FEIF. Individual countries were matched with other association countries of different sizes and demographics. The US has been matched with Luxembourg. I have contacted their chairperson and am hoping to find some areas for collaboration. If anyone is interested in this idea, please contact me.

I look forward to hearing from our membership about their thoughts and ideas for our future role in FEIF.

2025 SHOW SEASON

In March the Sport Committee published an official list of the 2025 nationally ranked shows. "Come join our community at any of these events. Whether you're competing, mingling, or learning, we'd love to have you!"

The season opened with the USIHC Spring Virtual Show, which closed on May 9. The Vormót was held in Boxford, MA on March 29-30. The CIA Open Triple World Ranking Show took place April 4-6 in Santa Ynez, CA. The first in Solheimar's Pentathlon series was held May 3-4 in Tunbridge, VT. The Spring Gamankepni took place May 10-11 in Crestwood, KY. Five Gait Farm held its Open Show on May 17-18 in Eugene, OR. The Triple Ice Championships World Ranking Show

took place May 23-25 in Shelbyville, KY.

Shows in June include: The Montaire National Ranking Show, June 7-8, in Middleburg, VA (contact frefgang777@gmail.com). The Toppur National Ranking Show, June 14-15 in Truro, IA (contact virginia@harmonyicelandics.com). Solheimar's Pentathlon Show II, June 21-22 in Tunbridge, VT (contact sigrunbry@gmail.com). The 2025 North American Youth Cup, June 22-29, in Truro, IA (contact virginia@harmonyicelandics.com).

Shows later in the summer and fall include: Solheimar's Pentathlon Shows III (July 26-27), IV (August 30-31), and V (September 27-28), all in Tunbridge, VT (contact sigrunbry@gmail.com). The Harmony Triple World Ranking Show on October 3-5 in Truro, IA (contact virginia@harmonyicelandics.com). The Fall Gamankeppni on October 25-26 in Crestwood, KY (carrieandterral@gmail.com). The CIA Fall Show on November 8-9 in Santa Ynez, CA (asta@tolt.net).

NATIONAL TEAM

June 1 was the deadline to qualify for the 2025 US National Team. The purpose of the team is to develop Icelandic Horse Sport in the US by developing a sense of



Sandy Solberg, the January Leisure Rider of the Month, greets Tru from Westwynd. Photo by Lauren Murphy.

community and teamwork among our top riders, investing in educational resources, offering financial support, positioning our top equestrians to serve as inspirational role models and to share their skills, and serve as a prerequisite for our World Championship team (tryouts for which were part of the Spring Virtual Show).

Riders over age 22 can qualify every six months; the next deadline is January

1, 2026. You must be a current USIHC member, a US citizen or Green Card holder for at least one year, compete in at least one in-person national or world ranking show in the US, score an average of 6.0 in select classes (T1, T2, V1, F1, T3, T4, V2, F2) or be in the top 3 in P2, as well as follow the Team Code of Conduct.

VIRTUAL EDUCATION

The Education Committee sponsored four webinars this quarter. Olil Amble spoke on how to read a breeding assessment (January 18), Brett Sponseller on how transport affects horses (February 15), Guðrún Stefánsdóttir on feeding the Icelandic horse, and Jen Verharen on riding psychology (May 10). See our reports on these webinars in this and future issues of the *Quarterly*.

USIHC ANNUAL MEETING

The Annual Meeting was held virtually on February 22. The USIHC has grown 18% in the last two years, said president Virginia Lauridsen. "With more members, we can offer more support and programs." In 2024 the Congress hired an administrative assistant, Sabrina Batemen, to help with bookkeeping and requests for information.

Treasurer Shelby Walker reported on how membership dues is being spent, noting that \$42,000 is needed for the North American Youth Cup and Youth Camp this year. Another \$20,000 will be used to update the website. The current Board plans to focus on fundraising.

Registrar Ásta Covert reported that 117 horses were registered in 2024, and 106 registrations were transferred to a new owner. The total number of US-owned horses in the international WorldFengur database is now 7,105, of which 3,694 were domestic-bred.

In Sport, Ásta said 2024 saw 16 nationally ranked shows and 1 pace event, with a total of 668 entries. Sixteen US riders made FEIF's World Ranking lists: In February, Lucy Nold led the world in V2. Three USIHC members were cited for Good and Harmonious Riding: Ásta, Alex Dannenmann, and youth member Liesl Kolbe.

In Breeding, Virginia reported one



Skreppa frá Hólshúsum, ridden by Carrie Lyons Brandt, is officially the fastest Icelandic horse in the US, according to the 2024 National Ranking, with a time of 8.21 seconds in the 100m pace sprint.

assessment was held. Kvikur from Beat N' Branch, owned by Ron and Sherry Hoover, won the Elwell Award for highest judged stallion. Katla from Meant to Be, owned by Stephanie Surbey and Gunnar Eggertsson, won the Cantella Award for highest judged mare. Virginia also noted that the Icelandic horse will be included in the equine pan-genome project at the University of Louisiana, which could lead to a better understanding of problems like summer eczema. Finally, she noted that FEIF was now offering certification as a young horse judge, which is easier than becoming a full breeding judge.

Jeff Rose noted that a new Regional Club is forming in the Southeast, bringing the number of clubs to 13. Funding for club clinics is available at up to \$300 per event.

In addition to outlining the 2024 Virtual Education series, Caeli Cavanagh noted that funding was available for people who want to become trainers. Contact her "to see how we can help."

Ebba Meehan, as new head of Promotion, encouraged members to join her committee and bring their ideas for promoting the Icelandic horse in the US. Funding for expos has been increased to a maximum of \$500 per event. In 2024, the USIHC was represented by the Top-pur Club at the Iowa Horse Fair (10,000

attendees), the NEIHC at Equine Affaire (33,000 attendees), Flugnir at the Minnesota Horse Expo (20,000 attendees), and the NWIHC at the Northwest Horse Fair and Expo (14,000 attendees).

Nicki Esdorn, co-chair of the Quarterly Committee, announced two Spaeri Awards for youth who demonstrate their commitment to and love for Icelandic horses by submitting articles to the *Quarterly*. Miette Jennings won for "At the Youth Cup," published in Issue Four 2024, and Laura Shalhoub won for "Sunna at the Show," in this issue.

Youth Leader Lucy Nold noted that tryouts for the 2026 FEIF Youth Cup, to be held in Germany, will be part of the USIHC Fall Virtual Show.

After the Board and Committee reports, guest speaker, Freija Thye, an IPZV Trainer and National Sport Judge A, spoke on "The Healthy Management of the Icelandic Horse." Introducing her, Virginia said Freija had mentioned once that, in order to show in Germany, riders have to pass a basic horse management class. Her presentation focused on three points: 1. What does my horse need? 2. How do I understand what my horse needs? and 3. How can I give my horse a good life? "Horses are individuals," she stressed. "You have to find out what is best for your own horse."

SEA 2 SHINING SEA

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 Sandra Solberg, Laura Shalhoub, and Frank Sihler.

Sandra Solberg lives in Graham, WA with four Icelandics. "Having had Arabians until my 20s, I found Icelandics by way of a television show. They looked incredibly fun." She now enjoys trail riding at Joint Base Lewis-McCord and is a member of the Woodbrook Hunt Club. "My goals include: 1. Increase my knowledge of horsemanship and always keep what's best for my horse in the forefront. 2. To participate in the training of my two youngsters. 3. I'd love to learn to jump

some day!" She adds, "It's important to be open to change and to new ways of doing things."

Laura Shalhoub is a youth member from Eugene, OR. "I don't have any Icelandic horses of my own, but I'm lucky enough to be able to ride some amazing horses at my barn. These horses are owned by my instructor, Lucy Nold, and other people. They each have taught me important skills that I'll keep throughout my riding career. One of my long-term goals is to start my own farm with Icelandic horses and create a training program. I find it fascinating how horses and humans have been able to trust and work together to perform such incredible things."

Frank Sihler of Ash Fork, AZ owns two Icelandics. He and his wife like to trail ride "to see interesting places, to be out in nature, and to master difficult terrain together with my horse." He was drawn to Icelandics because of "their toughness in harsh climates (we lived in Alaska back then), their smaller size, their balanced temperament out on the trails, and their history with the Vikings." In addition to trail riding, he practices mounted archery. He will be defending his Masters Silver Medal at the 2025 World Championships for mounted archery in Tennessee in September.

BOARD MEETINGS

The USIHC Board of Directors met by Zoom call on November 12 and December 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 announced that Melinda Studstill has been appointed to fill the open director's seat. She will chair the Leisure Committee. The Board also approved a new annual award, the Betsy Jenkins Award, for the highest achieving domestic sport horse.



The February Leisure Rider of the Month is youth member Laura Shalhoub. Photo by Heidi Benson.

FEIF YOUTH CAMP

Invitations for the 2025 FEIF Youth Camp have been sent to the national Youth Leaders. The camp will take place July 9-14 at the Agricultural University of Iceland in Hvanneyri, near Borgarnes. Participants will enjoy a rich program of horse-related learning, workshops, a ride out, trips into the surrounding countryside, and, of course, making new friends from all over the international Icelandic horse world. All that while speaking English all day. For information see <https://www.feif.org/2025/01/07/feif-youth-camp-2025/>.

WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS

On August 3-10, the Icelandic Horse World Championships will be held in Switzerland for the third time. After the championships in Fehraltorf in 1995 and Brunnadern in 2009, the association "Icelandic Horse World Championships in Switzerland" (VIS) found the optimal venue at Hardwinkelhof in Birmenstorf, Aargau. Up to 35,000 visitors are expected. For information see <https://www.wc2025.ch/en>.

As of April, the facilities have been completed: two oval and pace tracks (one for training and one for the competition), as well as details like washing areas in front of the stable tents, a podium for the award ceremonies, a collecting ring, etc. The preliminary program has been set, but the days on which tests are held may change based on actual team registrations in July 2025.

An informative and varied supporting program around the event is in preparation. There will be live talks where experts discuss current topics related to horses, as well as exciting lectures that provide new insights into the world of horses. From training tips to feeding and horse well-being, there is something for everyone. Thanks to Event Town, which coordinates the supporting program, not only horse lovers but also entertainment fans and families will get their money's worth. With concerts, food stalls, children's programs, and diverse shopping opportunities, it will be an experience for young and old alike. Throughout the entire venue, cashless payments can be made with a wristband that also serves as a ticket. The wristband can be easily and quickly loaded with money via mobile phone or at



a physical charging station. After the event, any remaining balance can be refunded. Day tickets for August 5, 6, and 7 are now available. Those who cannot attend the entire week of the World Championships now have the opportunity to experience the world's best in sport and breeding live on individual days.

Childcare will be available! The Familientreff Birmenstorf Gebenstorf will offer a daycare service at the event, open from Tuesday to Sunday, from 9am to 6pm (longer on weekends). The cost is CHF 30 per child for 4 hours, CHF 8 per hour, and CHF 8 for lunch and dinner. You can register your children directly with Familientreff Birmenstorf at: brigitte@familientreff-birmenstorf.ch

2025 RULES

All Competition and Breeding Rules and Regulations valid for 2025 shows, as well as the updated Sport Judges Guidelines, are now published on the FEIF website. A summary of all changes is available for download at <https://www.feif.org/2025/03/25/rules-regulations-and-more-published/>.

FEIF CONFERENCE 2025

The annual Chairpersons' Meeting, held in Vienna on February 3, can be summarized as having been both "cheerful" and "careful." One of the common themes emerging from several regions was a renewed focus on leisure riding and the implications for horse welfare. As communication and mutual understanding are key to FEIF work, the

meeting came up with the idea of a FEIF buddy system. Participants felt that pairing countries quite different in size, culture, and outlook might be a fun way of increasing knowledge.

The group also took a close look at FEIF finances and improvements in the transparency of FEIF structures. The meeting spent considerable time on a proposal for next year's delegates assembly concerning how the Board would deal with emergencies that required delegating responsibilities, and especially the role of the deputy president. In a joint session with the Sport and Breeding departments, a preliminary structure for a new system of bans and warnings was introduced and received wide support. The request that spontaneous working groups be set up, which would then channel new ideas and feedback to the relevant FEIF committees, was also broadly agreed on.

EDUCATION MEETING

Representatives of 10 FEIF member associations discussed a number of topics. Updates were given on the structure of education for instructors and trainers, as well as on systems for education of individual riders and the prerequisites, if any, necessary in some countries to enter competitions. A first draft of the revised trainer matrix was presented, and all countries are now asked to provide input on this over the next few months. In this way, a new edition of the matrix can hopefully be presented at the next conference in 2026.





The Danish representative gave the results of their efforts to gather material on horse welfare and to raise awareness of riders on that topic. In Sweden, major efforts are being made to produce material and organize educational events within the Icelandic horse sector. In Germany, a new system of preliminary schooling for novice competition riders will be introduced. In Norway, steps are being taken to refresh and revive the whole system of education for new instructors.

Part of the meeting was devoted to an interesting discussion with Michael Weishaupt on his presentations in the plenary session. One of the steps forward was sketching an outline of a central online platform where all educational materials used by the different countries—in different languages, but hopefully soon to be translated into English—will be accessible to all members of the FEIF community. Sabina Anderberg from Sweden offered to take a lead role in this process, and Michael Weishaupt offered access to platforms at Zürich University to serve as an example.

SPORT MEETING

The main topic in the annual Sport Leader meeting was the proposal on the description of the colored warning cards used by judges at sport competitions. Right now there is no proper description of the warning cards, and the disciplinary measures they invoke are spread over the General and Sport sections of the FEIF Rules and Regulations. Cards may also be added to pace disciplines.

Another idea is to register the cards given to a rider during a calendar year. If a threshold is reached, the rider will be suspended for a certain period of time. The proposal needs to be fine-tuned and will be discussed again in a virtual meeting with the national Sport Leaders before it is sent to the FEIF Delegates Assembly next year.

The sport leaders also discussed the use of hoof boots in sport competitions. Mike Weishaupt gave a talk with interesting scientific information on this topic. Other topics of discussion included reducing the time to enter the starting boxes for races, setting the width of the end of the funnel used in the pace test, following the way Iceland appoints judges for competitions, and adding a microchip check to the equipment check in world ranking events.

FEIF YOUNG LEADERS

All young people ages 18-26 in FEIF countries are invited to come to Denmark for an inspiring weekend. We aim to encourage young people to engage in organizational work and inspire curiosity in a natural and reflected way. There are no prerequisites other than love for the Icelandic horses. You will go home with new friends and lots of knowledge. If you are interested in the work of FEIF, this could be a stepping stone to becoming a young member of a FEIF committee. The event will take place November 21-23 in Grindsted Landbrugsskole (School of Agriculture), close to Billund Airport, Denmark.

SPORT JUDGES EXAM

In March, the theory part of the Sport Judge's test to become a FEIF Licensed Sport Judge or National Sport Judge took place in Denmark. For the theory exam, the FEIF Rules & Regulations 2024 and the Sport Judges Guidelines 2024 applied. Candidates that passed all sections of the theory exam are now eligible to enter the practical exam, which will take place in September or October 2025. The venue and set up (either as a separate event or within a tournament) will depend on the number of participants. We congratulate the 16 judges from Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, and Switzerland who passed the theory exam.

2024 LEISURE COUNTRY

For the first time FEIF chose a "Leisure Country of the Year" at its annual conference: The award went to Great Britain. All FEIF member countries were invited to showcase their leisure work achievements and innovations by submitting a short report. The reports included their greatest accomplishments and a lot of creative ideas, but also challenges and how to address them.

2024 YOUTH COUNTRY

The 2024 Youth Country of the Year, and winner of an extra seat at the FEIF Youth Camp, is Germany. After struggling to connect with the next generation of young riders, Germany came up with the excellent idea of a new form of academy. "If the young riders don't attend the programs we invite them to, we will bring the programs to them—virtually, on platforms they use every day." Starting off with a number of theory lectures, the German Youth Committee also used a virtual "Jump into the Year 2025" contest, which was a huge success. They are now offering dressage tests which can be ridden and filmed and then sent in for evaluation. The FEIF youth department considered this idea very innovative and in the spirit of our times.

TRAINER OF THE YEAR

There were nominations from nine countries, and a total of 475 persons answered the survey (which is much more than in the last few years): Erik Andersen (Norway) received the most votes. Erik is a highly respected FEIF Level 4 instructor who has played a pivotal role in the Icelandic horse community, both nationally and internationally, for several decades. His remarkable career includes being a dedicated competitor in Icelandic horse competitions, a skilled judge at numerous events, and a cornerstone in the education and mentoring of trainers and instructors in Norway. Erik's utter dedication makes him a truly deserving candidate for this year's award. We strongly believe Erik's expertise, and influence in the Icelandic horse community, make the ideal recipient of the 2024 FEIF Instructor/Trainer of the Year.

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

A new experience for some of us recently was having horses arrive on a FedEx plane. While I am aware that it is not unusual for horses to fly, when it's your horse and it is coming from Iceland, it is pretty cool! Thanks to the coordinative efforts of Global Horse Transport, two horses coming from Iceland and two horses coming from Vermont were able to fit in a box and fly from Newark to Alaska. Waiting for their horses to arrive were Alana Wright and Jay Murray, Ranja Dean and her husband, and myself. It was especially fun as Janet Mulder was working "the tower" and saw the plane land and came to wait with us.

Here's Alana Wright's telling of the event: "On a chilly evening in the middle of March, several of us eagerly gathered at the FedEx receiving area awaiting a very important delivery. A truck towing a large silver box finally made its way to the parking lot; tucked inside were four long-awaited Icelandic horses. An electricity akin to Christmas morning filled the air, as the rush



A very special FedEx delivery came to Alaska in March.

to unload and swiftly reload all the horses into their respective trailers began. Two of the horses in the shipment were destined for my small farm in Wasilla, to join my other two Icelandics. Their journey started when they were purchased from Iceland nearly four years ago and made their way to a now-very-dear friend's sprawling farm in Vermont, where I visited in October with the intention of purchasing one horse. The visit to Vermont was nothing short of magical, and my intention to purchase one horse quickly turned into two after riding my friend's electric red mare for the week. Fast forward six months later, and my two horses completed their journey into their

new life as Alaskan horses. I could not be more thrilled to introduce Finnur frá Stóradal, our larger than life three-year-old pinto gelding, and Stjörnurós frá Álfhólum, the 13-year-old fiery red mare that I fell in love with. I cannot wait for our future adventures."

Misty Bohnert shares the news that her stallion Álfasteinn from Fitjamyri, who is in training with Caeli Cavanagh, is a busy horse: He is performing with the drill team at the Northwest Horse Fair & Expo in Albany, OR. Álfasteinn will be returning to Alaska for the summer and is going to be at the Stallions of the North event in June.

CALIFORNIA

by Ásta Covert

The Spring CIA Show was held in the beginning of April at Flying C Ranch in Santa Ynez, CA. It was a Triple WorldRanking show, with National Team training during the week leading up to the show. Riders came from different areas of California as well as from Iowa, Oregon, and Washington. Many fun memories were made on and off the track! All results can be seen on the IceTest app. The California Icelandic Association will be hosting a fall show on November 8-9, so we hope to see you at Flying C Ranch for another fun show weekend.



At left, Geisli frá Höskuldsstöðum, who is now an Alaskan horse, mud and all. At right, "Skuggi and the Studs" won the Team Fourgait competition at the CIA show. Riders were Anna Bella, Laura, Evelyn, and Dora. Photo by Laura Benson.

CASCADE

by Lisa Roland

As the weather is slowly improving, our club members are starting to hit the trails again! Member Diana Harris and her gelding Skuggi took advantage of a few dry moments and went for a nice ride at Chehalem Ridge Nature Park in Oregon. Open all year around, the park offers many miles in several loops, so is a great place to keep in shape over the winter.

A group of us just got back from Albany, OR. As in previous years, the Cascade Icelandic Horse Club participated in the breed demonstration at the Northwest Horse Fair & Expo. It's always a fun time to introduce the Icelandic horse to the public. This was the second year they organized a meet-and-greet in a round pen inside the exhibitor's hall. It's a wonderful opportunity to let the kids meet the horses up close and personal. People stop by, ask questions about the breed, and get to know them for a brief period.

HESTAFOLK

by Lisa McKeen

One of my favorite parts of the club are our monthly Zoom meetings. Trainer Freya Sturm came up with the idea that members



Lisa Roland on Krakatindur during the Cascade Club's demo in Oregon. Photo by Julie Marie.

should choose one exercise to do with their horses and share it at the meetings. Videos or still shots, all have been inspiring and eye-opening! We found out that some of us hold our horses too tightly, some of us are beyond patient, and some of us are sweet

teachers. It is so exciting to be learning together.

One exercise we chose was the pole walk. We started with Lauren and Andi doing a demo and setting high standards. Straddling a pole helps horses with proprioception, as they have to feel where the pole is and move their feet just slightly farther apart which helps with the development of those important sling muscles, as well as with the rider's signals. The horses also release tension from their underbelly muscle chain.

We also worked on backing up as a way to identify things our horses or we, as riders, need to work on, both in the saddle and on the ground. Backing up will tell you if your horse uses their front end or their back end in balance. Do they veer off to the side? Do they organize their feet appropriately? Are they balanced, or do you feel resistance? Do they lift their feet, or do they drag them?

These short simple exercises have been a gold mine of information for each horse and owner. They make good warm-ups before you ride too. A great resource book is Jec Ballou's *55 Corrective Exercises for Horses*.

The Hestafolk Club also managed to gather for a trail ride during the first nice spring weather at the Redmond Watershed Preserve area. It has a great parking lot for



Hestafolk Club members learned how straddling a pole helps horses develop their proprioception, as demonstrated (left) by Ljúfur frá Sölvolti and (right) by Andi from Evans Farm, led by Lauren Murphy. Photo by Pivo.

trailers and nice up-and-down hills. We did have to go around or jump a downed log—good for all.

We are gearing up for the Spring Fair display at the Washington State Breed Showcase and for more trips around the Pacific Northwest. We are off to a good long riding season, and with our new club-logo gear, we will be styling!

KLETTAFJALLA

by Ellen Lichtenstein

The Klettafjalla Icelandic Horse Club has been busy planning several regional events and trips. As we continue to grow and serve our members across the Rocky Mountain region, we've added a new board member and two new regional liaisons for northern and southern Colorado. This quarter, we're excited to introduce our new northern Colorado regional liaison, Cindy Loader of Fort Collins, CO.

Cindy brings enthusiasm and dedication to her new role, attending our monthly board meetings and coordinating activities for members in northern Colorado and Wyoming. She and her husband own Spirit Dancer Ranch, home to a diverse herd that includes two (hopefully soon to be three) Icelandic horses.

Cindy's journey with Icelandic horses includes a heartwarming story about her newest equine partner, Raketta. What began as a one-month training arrangement blossomed into a special bond that couldn't be broken. Although Raketta was skittish at first, Cindy recalls it only took a couple of sessions for the mare to warm up and want to be with her. "She was so smart and responded to everything I asked of her," Cindy said.

During that training month, Raketta learned to come to Cindy's deck and wait for an apple. "Needless to say, I fell in love with her, and I believe she fell for me, too," said Cindy. When the training period ended, and Raketta returned to her owner, Cindy felt she had taken "part of my heart with her."

But fate had more plans for this partnership. About a year later, Raketta's owner reached out to Cindy after seeing her skill with riding her other Icelandic horse, Loki (affectionately nicknamed "Yogi Bear"),



Klettafjalla's new regional liaison Cindy Loader, with her palomino Loki (aka "Yogi Bear") and pinto Raketta.

and asked if Cindy would like to purchase Raketta.

Now permanently home at Spirit Dancer Ranch, Raketta has settled in beautifully with the herd. Cindy has begun light rides with her and taught her the "Taxi game": Raketta will come across the pen to the mounting block at liberty so Cindy can mount. Meanwhile, Yogi Bear watches patiently, waiting for his turn to ride. He's also accomplished at the Taxi game, trail riding, and navigating obstacles. Now, with any luck, Raketta will help Cindy get her third Icelandic horse in the spring of 2026.

NEIHC

by Miette Jennings

The start of 2025 brought exciting NEIHC youth achievements from the 2024 season. Brynja Meehan (age 16) qualified for the US National Team. Liesl Kolbe (age 15) was recognized on FEIF's 2024 Good and Harmonious Riding list. I myself (age 16) was the recipient of the 2024 USIHC Spaeri Youth Award for my article in the *Quarterly* about the FEIF Youth Cup. The Spaeri Award is given annually to a youth member who demonstrates a deep commitment and love for Icelandic horses.



NEIHC member Suzy Graf on Lila from Deerfield Farm and leading Hlein from Kaldakur celebrate the publication of Suzy's latest book.

The NEIHC community embraced the unique challenges and joys of winter in the Northeast, with many reporting that it was hard to ride as much as they had hoped. Rachel Broadhurst and her horses enjoyed their much-needed downtime, spending their days "eating, cuddling, and braving the ice storms and brutal cold temps." After a February snowstorm, Rose Terami and



NEIHC members Susan Gibbons on skis, pulled by Amy Keeler on Odinn, in a moment of successful skjoring this winter. Picture by Susan Matheke.

her friends in Vermont rode up the road to deliver cinnamon rolls to a neighbor. While cars couldn't make it through, the horses easily made the journey! Jennifer Bergantino and her horse Æsa rode through most of the winter, embracing the season's challenges. During one ride through Willowdale State Forest, they stumbled upon a fairy house and decided to add some beautifully carved Icelandic horses, made by club member Anna Walstrom's father, hoping "that the fairies would appreciate the magic of Icelandic horses, too!"

Jennifer, along with Nancy Rohlfs and Elizabeth Bergantino, joined the equine community of Massachusetts' North Shore in Hamilton, MA, for a cozy series of "fireside chats." These gatherings brought active members together to share the rich history of the region's open, rideable land, entertaining stories, and insights into the renowned Myopia Hunt. During one of the chats, the trio presented "The Icelandic Horse," captivating the audience with videos of the tölt and flying pace. The presentation sparked a lively discussion on Iceland's horses, their unique gaits, competitive roles, and the joys of owning them. The event was a resounding success and may have even converted a few "big horse" enthusiasts!

Charity Simard hosted a "Horse Speak" clinic and monthly study group, with eight NEIHC participants. Sharon and Laura Wilsie's practice of learning the language of the horse to build stronger bonds and improve communication both on the ground

and in the saddle has had profound results. The group plans to continue their studies with a visit to the Wilsie farm in the fall.

New member Yvonne Davis from Watertown, NY, participated in a Luke Reinbold "Confidence Through Horsemanship" clinic with her horse, Týr.

Meanwhile, Block Island Icelandic riders Sue Gibbons, Amy Keeler, Susan Matheke, Vashti Brotherhood, and Polly Barnes braved an icy winter, riding along the beaches. One particularly snowy day led to a hilarious attempt at makeshift skjoring using a waterski tow rope. Sue Gibbons laughed, saying, "It was with some success and a great bloop reel!"

Merrimack Valley Icelandics (MVI) in Boxford, MA stayed active throughout the winter. Thanks to the indoor arena at Springtide Farm, lessons and training continued despite the wintry conditions. Trails remained accessible through mid-February, and riding in the snow proved beneficial for both horses and riders. MVI hosted schooling shows for the second year in a row in January and February, with national judge Jana Meyer. These shows served as a great way for riders to stay in training and prepare for the upcoming show season. In addition, MVI hosted a clinic with Taktur Icelandics in early March, with 12 riders participating. To wrap up the winter season, MVI held a nationally ranked show the last weekend of March, judged by Hulda Geirsdóttir, with 15 participants.

Connecticut author Suzy Graf's latest book, *Lessons From Meerah: How a Rescued*

Arabian Mare Helped Me Evolve as a Horsewoman, chronicles her five-year journey with a horse who changed her perspective on horse ownership and riding, ultimately leading her unexpectedly into the world of Icelandic horses. Now, with two Icelandics, she has discovered a new joy in riding.

At Sólheimar Farm in Tunbridge VT, Sigrún Brynjarsdóttir imported nine horses in March. Carefully selected for their exceptional qualities, this group of horses headed to their new homes across the country in April, after completing their training period at Sólheimar. In April, Sigrún also hosted a clinic for members of the US National Team, with team trainer Ölil Amble.

The NEIHC 2025 Annual Meeting was held on March 1, with 36 members attending virtually and two in-person Þorablót locations. The new Board of Directors, who took office on April 1, was introduced: Shelby Walker (President), Charity Simard (Vice President), Nancy Rohlfs (Treasurer), Leah Greenberger and Emily Potts (Promotion), Andrea Smith (Clerk and Education), Phebe Kyrk (Youth), Brigit Huwyler (USIHC Liaison), Amy Goddard (Secretary, Membership, and Website), and Miette Jennings (Youth Representative and Quarterly Reporter). Also announced was the winning design for our new club logo, created by Ona Kwiatkowski. Alicia Flanagan, currently attending Hólar University in Iceland, joined us for a special presentation titled "Insights with Alicia: What I Wish I Knew Sooner!" She discussed training



Rose Terami (left) set out on a snow-day adventure to deliver fresh cinnamon rolls to a Vermont neighbor, with the help of her cousin and aunt who were paying a visit from Wisconsin. Óskadís from Mill Farm (left) led the charge, with Fær from Roxbury Ridge close behind.



Left to right, Sirius Club member Ron Hoover is all suited up for an early spring ride on Katla in the Ohio snow. Frances Rospotynski and Landi, followed by Jill Schermacher (whose Icelandic is too young to ride), enjoy a bit nicer spring weather at Silver Creek Park in Norton, OH. Lindsay Gunzburger and her daughter practice mounted archery at Tennessee Valley Archery in February. Photo by Meredith Bordonon.

concepts such as positive and negative reinforcement, the conflict of aids (driving vs. restraining aids), and shared valuable insights from her journey as a professional rider and trainer.

SIRIUS

by Janet Kuykendall

Sirius member Shari Wells, a founding member of the Archers of Arvak, has scheduled a clinic to teach us about mounted archery on August 16 at the Kentucky Cowtown Arena in Williamstown. The clinic will start with a meet-and-greet, then cover the history of mounted archery. That will be followed by an overview of equipment (including a quiver designed by our very own Chris Marks). Each rider will be paired with a lightweight bow of the appropriate draw weight. Initial shooting will begin from the ground, then archers will begin to desensitize their horses. After the horse is convinced it's okay, the riders will mount and shoot from the horse at a walk. Side-walkers are optional until each participant feels comfortable coming through the lane on their own. Everyone will learn to load, draw, and shoot. Shari's contagious enthusiasm will guarantee a great time for all!

Shari says of the Archers of Arvak, "Chris Marks put us together, and we oper-

ate like a fine-tuned machine." The Archers will be going on tour with internationally recognized mounted archer Elizabeth Timman this year. Next year, they are presenting mounted archery clinics in Hawaii and France.

The Sirius Club Retreat will take place October 24-25 at Léttleiki Icelandics in Shelbyville, KY. The agenda is still in the planning stages, but will definitely include Countryside Riding, which is an international judged and timed trail riding competition.

Club member Lindsay Gunzburger went with her mom, Sue Bertch, and a few other friends on a private trek organized by Julie Veloo from Horse Trek Mongolia. Julie donates a significant portion of the trek fees toward education for Mongolian kids. Lindsay says, "I couldn't help compare my time there with my time in Iceland and how horses are such a central part of both cultures." On her six day adventure, she writes, "We rode in sunshine, thunderstorms, and hail storms. We climbed rocky passes and cantered in fields of wildflowers. We crossed rivers, rode around lakes, and almost got stuck in a mucky marsh. We ate so much delicious food and laughed until our voices were hoarse. It was magical." They also visited a national park to see the endangered

Przewalski's wild horses. "Although we call American mustangs wild horses, they are actually feral horses which are descended from domestic horses. Przewalski's horses are considered the last wild horses, and it was an honor to be able to see them." All in all, it was the trip of a lifetime!

As a final note, Sirius Secretary Nancy Radebaugh offers some positive thoughts for those who are experiencing equine health problems. As Nancy says, "Owning horses isn't for the faint of heart. Many of us start out with dreams of töltng effortlessly down the trail on our perfect, fuzzy partner—mane flying, worries gone. What we don't always prepare for are the injuries, illnesses, expenses . . . and the heartache. I've owned horses for 50 years—Quarter Horses, a Rocky Mountain, a Tennessee Walker, and now my heart horse, Gunnar. He may not be the flashiest or fastest Icelandic out there, but he's brave, steadfast and kind. When I bought Gunnar, I didn't know he had Cushings disease. We got that under control fairly quickly, but then he foundered, despite me being told he'd been on pasture his entire life. Since then, I've dealt with recurring laminitis, countless vet visits, insanely expensive prescriptions, and the daily grind of soaking hay. It's been a challenge, to say the least. Recently, I found a

game-changer: a glue-on shoe that actually stays put. No more painful hammering. Having my Gunnar back and sound is everything. He's currently doing great and we're back to doing what we do best—hitting the trails, mane flying, worries gone.”

ST. SKUTLA

by Katherine Forrest

This winter, some St. Skutla and NEIHC members attended a two-part farrier education webinar series with Steve Kraus, Certified Journeyman Farrier and head of the Cornell Farrier Program. Between shoeing my mare for long-distance miles since 2021, and currently having Mouse Hedrick in his farrier school class, Steve has been hearing about the Icelandic horse on a daily basis for a while now. We were super lucky to have his expertise and to learn about two of the most practical farrier topics out there: how to know if your horse needs shoes, and conformation considerations in farrier care.

Important takeaways include: 1) the importance of assessing the individual horse, i.e., what is your horse's job? What kind of terrain does he travel over? For how long? What individual health-related needs does he have? and 2) how to recognize some basic conformational issues which will have high costs, not only in terms of finances, but in time and commitment, which are probably best avoided before we get attached to a particular horse (as difficult as that is!). Steve emphasized that the more severe any conformational defects are, the less likely it is that the horse will be able to be maintained barefoot, at least for ridden work.

In general updates, Windswept Farm has been bustling with activity since the



St. Skutla member Katherine Forrest and Gaukur frá Sveinsstöðum after a snow-squall conditioning ride.



Daniela West and Ridari in blue represent ice, while Ulrike Passe and Gnyr are playing fire in the Toppur team's demo at the Iowa Horse Fair.

New Year, with Mouse Hedrick in residence with her gelding, Gráfeldur frá Syðri-Geignishólum, while she attends the Cornell Farrier Program (and takes on some training clients), as well as the arrival of new boarder Ómur from Cornell, owned by Quentin Bartholomew. We are excited to continue developing our own little nucleus of distance riding activity for Icelandic horses with Ómur's arrival!

TOPPUR

by Brandie Gean

Toppur members met at the end of January at the house of Virginia Lauridsen to plan for the year and to elect new officers. We will have club activities every month. Daniela West remains President, and Virginia Lauridsen is Vice President; we elected a new Treasurer, Quelly Turney, and Secretary, Suzy Woollums; I will be the USIHC Liaison.

While the snowstorms were howling around the barns at unimaginable speeds, we used January and February to plan our appearance at the 2025 Iowa Horse Fair. Our theme was “The Land of Fire and Iceys,” which meant that not only did we decorate the stalls in red, white, and blue, but also the horses and ourselves. Our team, Gentry Johnson, Dustin Gean, Ulrike

Passe, Brandie Gean, Teresa Harp, and Daniela West, practiced the moves on the ground for multiple hours, which of course changed when our horses (Gosi, Djasn, Koldimm, Gnyr, Ridari, and Hler) also had a voice in the directions and speed of the drill. Together we finally figured it out and presented the Icelandic horse demonstration at the Iowa Horse Fair from March 21-23 to much applause and appreciation from the audience. Of course, the beer tölt gets the most applause, and who would otherwise be allowed to run around the arena in the early Saturday morning with a stein of beer in the hand? Only riders of Icelandic horses.

Looking back at 2024, our most notable event was our fall clinic on the Masterson Method with Linda Allen Sawyer. We met at Harmony Icelandics with a group of horses and riders and learned how to use the touch of hair along the bladder meridian to calm and relax our horses, which was a truly revelatory experience. For those who are not familiar with it, the bladder meridian runs along each side of the horse's body parallel to and just below the topline. This is a slow and very effective way to connect with your horse. We hope to connect more with Linda to introduce more Toppur members to this method for

MEET THE TEAM TRAINER

by Virginia Lauridsen and Nancy Marie Brown

We are very fortunate to have Olil Amble serve as trainer for the USIHC National Team.

Olil is a world renowned Icelandic horse trainer, breeder, and rider. She has been Icelandic Champion, Nordic Champion, and World Champion many times and is a frequent finalist at Landsmót. Olil is a highly educated trainer and riding instructor and is a member of Félag Tamningamanna. She has over 30 years of experience teaching internationally and has been a trainer for many national teams, including Iceland, Norway, Sweden, and Germany.

Teaching has played a big role in her life, and she enjoys teaching riders of all levels. She also loves to be taught, and is a student of the dressage master Julio Borba, who travels to Iceland seven to eight times a year to work with her.

Olil currently holds the titles of Breeder of the Year and Competition Breeder of the Year, and her breeding lines are highly regarded throughout the world (see the article in this issue on her recent webinar on breeding assessments in the USIHC Virtual Education series). This year, her stallion Alfaklettur was named an honor prize stallion at the young age of 11 years. He is a son of her famous honor prize mare Alfadís. Olil is a previous Chairman of the Gæðinga judges group and spent many years educating judges and introducing Gæðingakeppni to riders on the continent.

Today Olil resides at Syðri-Gegnishólar in the south of Iceland, where together with her husband Bergur Jónsson and her family they breed and train horses from their collaborative breeding under the names Ketilsstaðir and Syðri-Gegnishólar and run their company Gangmyllan.

ACCEPT CHALLENGES

With such an impressive resume, it is a gift to us all that Olil agreed to be our team trainer. When asked why, she said, “Well, there are many reasons. In general, I like challenges and my life as a teacher was starting (with all due respect) to be a little boring after going to the same place



Olil Amble coached National Team member Sigrún Brynjarsdóttir on a misty day at Sólheimar Farm in Vermont last April. Earlier in the week, Olil had worked with additional team members at Flying C Ranch in sunny California. Photo by Jana Meyer.

for 30 years. So after Covid, I decided to challenge myself and to work with the German National Team—a job way out of my comfort zone. It was exciting and very uncomfortable, but I learned a lot and really enjoyed my two years with the team.

“When it comes to the US team, well, I got to know Will and Ásta Covert in 1999, when Will and I were World Champions together, Will in the T2 (Loose Rein Tölt) and I in Four Gait. I think when you win together you bond, and we did. I would say that we have worked closely together since 2001. I was proud to be Ásta’s trainer when she had her super World Championship in 2009 and became a star overnight. I trust them and they have become my friends over the years. When they ask me to do something, I at least consider it twice.

“During the years I have been traveling to the US, I have gotten to know some people that I really like and that are willing to do a lot for the Icelandic horse and the Icelandic horse association. They are actually willing to do so much that I cannot see how it’s possible not to support them. I know it’s close to impossible, but I think if we all stick together and do our totally best, there are exciting possibilities for Icelandic horses in the US.

“I think the fall 2024 show at Harmony Icelandics showed that people were

willing to travel for many days with their horses just to be there, to have lessons, to compete, and to bond together. I think it went really well and, yes, traveling long distances is something you Americans have to get used to if you want to build a strong community and compete at the World Championships. It’s tough, extremely tough, but it is the only possibility if you have that dream and you want to live it. You have to accept it, simple as that. Saying, ‘Let’s see, maybe later, I’m not ready, it’s not possible’—that is not an option.

“To travel to America these days is very difficult, I must say, and when I’m on the way to the airport I think, what an idea, when I could stay in my cozy place in the north. But when I have arrived, then everything is great, and it’s so worth it. To come to the beautiful places like Will and Ásta Covert’s Flying C Ranch in California, Antje Freygang’s Montaire in Virginia, and Virginia Lauridsen’s Harmony Icelandics in Iowa is just amazing. To think all of that was built just for the Icelandic horse!”

RIDE AS A TEAM

The first National Team clinic was held in September 2024 at Harmony Icelandics and was followed by a World Ranking Show, at which the team members got to



At Sólheimar in Vermont, after the sun came out and began to dry out the muddy track, Olil gave some pointers to National Team member Richard Davis. Photo by Jana Meyer.

try out their new skills. In April 2025, Olil returned to America to give another National Team clinic at Flying C Ranch, then made her way across the country to teach more National Team riders and hopefuls at Sigrún Brynjarsdóttir's Sólheimar Icelandics in Vermont.

Among the riders in Vermont were Sigrún herself and new team members Richard Davis and youth rider Brynja Meehan. We asked them how the National Team clinic with Olil differed from a regular clinic with a top international trainer. Brynja replied, "I would say that it was very helpful to get input from others as I was riding." Answered Sigrún, "The team training offered more specialized attention to the horse. It was tailored toward your specialized needs with each horse." Added Richard, "This clinic focused on the mental, as well as the physical, needs of the horse. The clinic also emphasized being persistent in physically relaxing the horse in order to work on higher-order goals like collection and gait quality."

National Team member Laura Benson trailered her horses from Washington State to take part in the first team clinic in Iowa last September, then to California to attend the April clinic. She wrote, "This has been such a valuable format for me and my colleagues. Even though we have

traveled great distances and sacrificed a lot to make these trainings happen, I know it has been worth it!

"You asked why the National Team Training is different than just going to a clinic with a good clinician? Well, I have to say, the 'team' element is the key here. I have had the opportunity over the years to learn from many incredible trainers and clinicians, but the experience of learning as a team is something that I have always longed for and I find exceptionally rewarding.

"First of all, you see that even though we are all in different places with different horses and different goals, we all struggle. We all get stuck in our heads. We all have challenges and hitches that make us vulnerable in our training. It's easy to think that everyone else 'has it all together' when you look in from the outside, but when you are learning together, you offer up your insecurities in front of your teammates and you all become vulnerable together—which is a beautiful thing. It's not a place of shame, it's a platform in which we realize we are all on a different and unique journey with our individual equine partners, and watching each other problem-solve through those challenges is one of the most wonderful things I've ever experienced. Its educational benefits are ample.

"I've learned so much from Olil while riding in these clinics, both on Lykill (my sensitive and forward five-gaiter) and Geysir (the energy-conserving T2 stallion). Olil is really able to pinpoint the root of a problem, and I have been able to utilize these minor adjustments in training with all my horses. I have also learned so much from watching my teammates' lessons: the different exercises they do, how they approach their particular horse's issue, etc. Watching is just as important, if not more important, than riding yourself!"

We also asked Laura the question, "Since you've been a nationally ranked rider for a number of years, why is it meaningful to become part of a team? What changes?"

Laura replied, "I have to say for me, it's all about community. I'm not a super competitive person. I'm not saying being competitive is a bad thing at all, it's just never been my strong point and I really had to work in finding my 'Why' in competition. I am also a musician and I've never liked the idea of being a soloist. For me, the joy in making music is collaboration. I feel the same way about training and competing. That is my 'why.' I absolutely love learning from and with my colleagues. To me, that is the ultimate joy in riding and in this beautiful journey of horsemanship. I feel I get stuck when I'm alone and I lose inspiration, but when I'm working with my peers, I feel like we have unlimited options and I always feel safe in trying new things together, even if they are intimidating ones.

"For me, that's what the National Team creates," Laura continued, "a safe community of collaboration and exploration. Knowing when you can help out a teammate and work behind the scenes to elevate them, or asking them for help when you need a little boost. This is my goal in being on the team—to develop the community aspect of it. This country makes it quite difficult, with our great distances and costs, but we are trying our hardest."

In conclusion, Laura said for us all, "Thank you, Olil, for taking on this team of riders from all over this giant country and for giving us a chance to build something new. I hope we can find more creative ways to learn and grow together."

SUNNA AT THE SHOW

by Laura Sophia Shalhoub

When I was first introduced to Sunna from Flying C Ranch, I never envisioned the lessons and adventures that would follow. Before meeting her I didn't have the full understanding of what it meant to try, while working with a horse. I'm 13 years old and I started riding about three years ago at Five-Gait Farm in Oregon. I am still at that barn, and my instructor is Lucy Nold, who is on the Board of the USIHC. I started riding with Icelandics and will forever stay with them, because they are absolutely amazing!

I had been fortunate enough to have access to some of the most easy-going horses, which was great during the beginning of my riding career. These horses helped me gain confidence in the saddle, allowing me to focus on building a solid foundation of basic riding skills without the added pressure of complicated behaviors. But as I wanted to progress, this wasn't enough to continue improving. That's when Sunna came in—she ended up being the tool I needed to push me out of my comfort zone.

Sunna really showed me that when riding any horse you need to have patience, trust, and adaptability. She's a chestnut mare, full of spirit and fiery, as most of us know. With her bold personality, I realized that patience and trust could channel the energy she had into focus, making each ride enjoyable for both of us. But like trying to tame a river, there are limits to how much you can control a horse's energy. There have been some days when Sunna decided that she's going to be a firecracker bouncing off every wall. Those are the days when no matter how much patience I showed, she wouldn't cooperate. Instead of being annoyed and frustrated, I knew I had to adapt. It was a tough lesson for me to learn that not every ride was going to go as imagined. Some days, I'd plan to focus on tölt transitions, but by the end, we'd be working on an entirely different gait.

There are also rides when I instantly felt that Sunna was tense and anxious, but instead of fighting her I would decide to stay calm and gradually get to the point in the ride where we both felt happy.

It was through these experiences that



Laura and Sunna celebrating their successful partnership. Photo by Heidi Benson.

I began to see how riding Sunna opened doors to new opportunities, like showing horses, where patience and adaptability were key. One such opportunity came at the Harmony Icelandic show in Iowa. This was my most memorable experience, knowing that it was my first Triple World Ranking show, and that I got to do it with Sunna. All of the love and commitment we had put into our partnership over the many long weeks of training would have finally paid off.

On first arriving in Iowa, nerves hit me immediately, but I told myself that this was the show where I got to apply everything I had learned onto the track. I remember seeing Sunna in her little grassy paddock the night I arrived. It was around midnight, so all I could really make out were the twinkle of her star and the tiny snip on

her nose. Watching Sunna calmly grazing and being relaxed in her movements made me realize something crucial: I had to mirror that same sense of relaxation before entering my class. If I let myself feel nervous, she would surely pick up on it and that would throw both of us off. With a horse like her, naturally tense and anxious, adding more of that tension to my body would only make things harder for both of us. I'm glad she helped me figure out that lesson; it's a reminder that no matter the horse you work or show with, maintaining your composure is already heading you both for success, especially since horses are extremely in tune with our emotions.

The week leading up to the show, there was one particular ride with Sunna that truly stood out to me. During lots of our training sessions, I worked heavily on Sunna's trot. While her trot wasn't particularly bouncy, it was heavy and forward, making it difficult for me to maintain softness and relaxation in the gait. Both Sunna's trot and my ability to cue her effectively showed significant progress as time went on. As we both were feeling more confident, I started to experiment to unlock more in her movement. Sunna naturally doesn't have high suspension in her trot, but I figured out that sitting it helped significantly. Then, a couple of days before the show, I was able to arrange a lesson with Ásta Covert, a trainer who also helped numerous other riders improve their sitting trot as well. This was absolutely a game changer for Sunna and me.

Ásta taught me how to drive the energy forward without giving slack in the reins, which added so much power to Sunna's movement and suspension. Having Sunna find relaxation and being able to connect with her through my seat while going so fast was an incredible feeling. Everything clicked in that lesson, and having that different approach was what I needed.

The results were immediate. The scores I got in trot during that Triple World Ranking show were the highest they have ever been. Sunna seemed to understand, at last, that she didn't need to be tense and rush to go faster. It was

about the balance—maintaining that forward task, while keeping her movements relaxed. The lesson with Ásta gave me a deeper understanding of how to bring out the best in Sunna, and the results really spoke for themselves.

Finally, after all the preparation and learning Sunna and I both did, it was time to put it all into motion. Leaving the track after each class, I told myself we couldn't have done any better than what we showed. Each time we stepped onto the track, we succeeded, and ended up ranking high in the novice scores—something I never thought was within reach.

I will forever be grateful for how much I learned while working with Sunna. She is the fiery, bold mare I never thought I needed, still pushing me to grow, while still having me understand the meaning of patience and hard work. Ribbons and medals are just a reflection of our partnership, but loving her was the only thing I needed to succeed in this sport.



As Sunna taught Laura, “No matter the horse you work with, maintaining your composure is already heading you both for success.” Photo by Heidi Benson.



Laura Shalhoub and Sunna from Flying C Ranch show off their trot during the World Ranking Show at Harmony Icelandics in Iowa.

ABOUT BREEDING

by Carol Andrew

The Icelandic horse is one of the few breeds in the world with international evaluation standards, so that breeding horses from all over the world are judged on the same points of conformation and ridden abilities. To encourage breeders in the US to have their horses assessed, the USIHC Virtual Education Series sponsored a webinar by Olil Amble on “How to Read a Breeding Assessment” on January 18. Virginia Lauridsen, chair of the USIHC Breeding Committee, and Caeli Cavanaugh, chair of the Education Committee, were the facilitators, and 29 people attended.

Olil began by introducing herself and explaining that she “does not know everything,” although she has won the Icelandic awards of Breeder of the Year and Competition Breeder of the Year. (She is also currently the team trainer for the US National Team; see the story in this issue.) Her goal, she said, “has always been to breed horses that are suitable in competition and preferably with talents that are extraordinary.”

In the webinar, she used her own stallion as an example when looking at specific scores for conformation and for abilities under saddle. She shared her stallion’s scores at four years old and again after more training and competition, noting how certain scores showed an increase in strength and an improvement in his body proportions.

In general, she said, anyone interested in breeding should see as many good horses as possible at Landsmót or other big shows. It is essential that breeders themselves be well trained. At Landsmót, the national horse show held every other year in Iceland, only the best horses who have done well in qualifying breeding shows are allowed to attend.

CONFORMATION

When showing a horse for conformation at a breeding assessment, Olil said, it is important that the handler makes him stand properly for measurements. Measurements can “tell a lot,” she said, “but they are affected by the horse’s behavior.”

Olil made sure to point out that the early care of the horse can be very important,



Kvikur from Beat N’ Branch won the 2024 Anne Elwell Breeding Award as the domestic-bred stallion receiving the highest scores at a USIHC breeding assessment. Kvikur is bred and owned by Ron and Sherry Hoover of Ohio. Here, he is handled by Terrall Hill of Taktur Icelandics.

ant, and that horses started too young can show difficulties, such as broadened joints or a low back. The horse must be trained well prior to the evaluation, however, so that his handler can show him to the best advantage. Body condition is essential.

The most desired conformation is a strong, cylindrical body with long legs. There are many individual qualities that are valued, such as well-separated and dry tendons, which suggest stronger legs. With the current trend toward breeding for higher and higher movements, leg strength is vital.

She also discussed the rules concerning the length of the horse’s hoof. The breeding rules were changed when a scientific study indicated more lameness in horses with hooves over 9 cm (3.5 in) long (see the article on “Shoeing and Hoof Health” in Issue Two 2024 of the *Quarterly*). In America, however, too short hooves is very common, which is also a problem.

When judging the shape and size of the head, the judges are looking for fine ears, big eyes, and a finely chiseled head. Olil said, “We all think our horses

are great, but we can make them more beautiful—as long as their conformation is good, which allows for them to have better ridden abilities as well.” Horses that are “just beautiful, but have poor ridden abilities, should not be bred.”

RIDDEN ABILITIES

Olil began this section of her talk by explaining the development of the young horse. Most problems occur when the horse’s legs are not strong and/or the training has been improper for the horse’s age and development. If there is an attempt to ride with huge movements before the horse is ready, Olil said, the horse can be ruined.

Some pace riders want a horse to score a 9 for pace at age four, but that can be damaging to a young horse. Forcing gaits during training also creates problems in the mind of the horse, which can present challenges later.

If the training is proper, though, a rating of 7.5 at age four can become a 9 at age seven. This is important when anticipating using the horse for breeding.

Slow gaits are more important to



Katla from Meant to Be won the 2024 Caryn Cantella Breeding Award for the highest judged domestic-bred mare. Katla is owned and trained by Stephanie Surbey and Gunnar Eggertsson of Klakkahross in Oklahoma, and was bred by Juli Cole.

look at in a young horse, she noted. If the horse's natural tölt scores a 9, his slow tölt will be about an 8 until he gets stronger. Getting the natural movements during slow work is especially difficult. Assessments for walk, canter, and slow tölt at a young age can predict better what the horse's skills will be when he is older and stronger.

Gaits should be clear and well-balanced, and pace is often not balanced if the horse is too young. It is essential to have a well-prepared horse and rider.

Having a good walk is essential. If the horse is stressed or uneven in the walk, it is often because the rider is doing too much. The horse (and rider) should always be able to relax in walk.

Trainers often hire a "presenter," she added, who can show the horse to the best advantage. Temperament is important to understand, and using an accomplished trainer or presenter can be helpful. On the other hand, the horse should be presented by a person who knows the horse, as an unfamiliar rider can interfere significantly.

READY TO SHOW?

During the Q&A period, Olil discussed her own practices in getting horses ready for assessments and deciding which horses to use for breeding.

Olil begins training three-year-old horses in October, continuing until December 25; then she lets them rest until May or June, when she begins to develop their balance, tölt, and other basics "in hand." They undergo nine to ten months of training, five times a week for half an hour at a time.

Out of a group of 20 four-year-old horses, she can expect perhaps four or five who will be ready for a breeding show. If they get another six months of training, they can participate in a breeding show as five-year-olds. Most folks wait until the horse is five to six years of age, when 10 out of 20 can do well. The developmental level of each horse matters.

Olil indicates that the breeding show is just the beginning. She uses the assessment scores to guide her training or breeding. After the horse is seven or eight years old, she stops presenting it at breeding shows and works on competitions in-

stead. Some horses are later maturing and trying another assessment prior to age seven may give more informative scores.

Needless to say, breeding horses can cost a lot of money and getting help to sort out which horse may do well at an assessment is important. While there are many breeding shows each year in Iceland and in some other countries, in America we are lucky to find just one breeding show in the entire nation.

Breeding assessments must be judged by FEIF breeding judges, of whom there are only a few in the world. Because there are so few breeding shows in the US, sometimes it is best for American horses to be older (8-10 years) to avoid getting bad scores. It is also a challenge because it is so far to travel in America to get to a breeding assessment.

All horses are welcome to attend breeding evaluations but some horses will not get a high score. They can be wonderful riding horses, but perhaps not the best for breeding.

Asked what she considers to be most important in breeding, Olil said the key was to have an excellent mare, who has good ridden abilities and "a good mind." The mare is "80% of the equation," she said. Americans would do well to breed fewer horses and to use the best mares and trainers.

Asked to define "a good mind," Olil said it means a horse that is not afraid to be ridden and will not become unsafe. Horses that anyone can ride and who will take care of their riders are worth their weight in gold.

FEEDING STRATEGIES

by Gabriele Meyer

In March of this year, Guðrún Jóhanna Stefánsdóttir, PhD, held a webinar on riding horse nutrition. Her Zoom webinar was the third installment of the 2025 USIHC Virtual Educational seminar series. Guðrún is an associate professor at Hólar University in Iceland, and in that function she has taught several of our young US trainers who attended Hólar.

Guðrún received her PhD in 2015 at the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences in Uppsala, Sweden. The title of her thesis was “Physiological Response to Exercise in the Icelandic Horse.”

One of her special interests is the intersection of a horse’s nutrition and performance. At the webinar she talked about the feeding strategies and nutritional needs of Icelandic riding and competition horses. The presentation lasted more than 1.5 hours, and she covered a lot of details. The following text is a condensed write-up of her presentation.

NATURE OF THE HORSE

Horses are social animals meant to be roaming on spacious land. They move at least 3-5 km (2-3 miles) daily, searching for and eating grassy roughage (forage) for 14-16 hours per day. In recent years,

the term “the 3 F’s” has been coined—the F’s standing for “Freedom, Forage, and Friends”—and it is our responsibility to keep this in mind and accommodate the nature of the horse as much as possible.

In Iceland, there are government rules about horse welfare. Rule # 910/2014 states: “Horses should have access to feed at least two times per day. If fed hay (85% dry matter), the absolute minimum amount per day is 4 kilograms (9 lb). They should not be without water for more than six continuous hours. Should have access to grazing for at least two months between June 1 and October 1. Horses should not be thinner than a 3.0 on the Icelandic body condition score scale (see below). If thinner, they must be placed under special management or resting.”

BODY CONDITION

The Icelandic body condition score goes from 1 to 5, with 1 being “poor condition” and 5 being “extremely fleshy.” Using this scoring system, a body condition of 3 is the optimal level of body fat for Icelandic riding horses. This level of body fat is preferable for competition horses because it affects physiological responses (for example, it lessens “difficultness” in riding or

handling) and because it benefits a horse’s performance.

Excess fat is an extra weight to carry and has been shown to have a negative effect on performance. Studies from Hólar University (in collaboration with the Swedish Agricultural University) found that horses with extra body fat received lower scores in breed assessment tests, where riding abilities and gaits are scored by judges on a half-point scale from 5 to 10. They also had an increased recovery time after training and increased locomotion asymmetry.

Too little fat (low body condition score) can cause a lack of energy and lead to earlier fatigue, and if there is also a loss of muscles involved it can negatively affect performance.

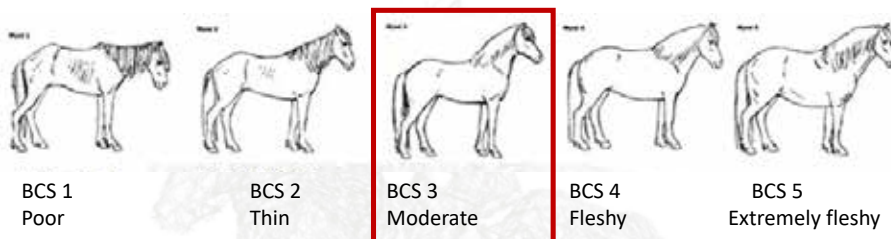
In light of these results, Guðrún suggests that riders should aim for “the golden mean” in terms of the body condition of their riding and competition horses.

DIGESTION

A horse’s digestive tract consists of the following parts:

- Mouth and teeth—the teeth need to be taken good care of.
- Stomach—has a small volume; digestion starts here, and it should not be empty, especially during training.
- Small intestine—is a narrow and long tube; the absorption of easily digestible nutrients, e.g. from concentrates takes place here, as well as that of the more easily digestible nutrients from grass/forage and most vitamins and minerals. All soluble carbohydrates and fat should be digested here.
- Large intestine—is the main site for digestion of grass and forage (fiber-digestion), consisting of several parts with different functions. In the cecum, microbes ferment plant fiber and the fermentation products proceed to the large colon, where they are absorbed. The large intestine is prone to health issues and it is important to keep it well balanced (with regard to its pH). To function correctly, it needs enough roughage and not too much concentrates.

Body condition - Scoring system



Henneke-scale		Icelandic scale	
Body condition score	Short description	Body condition score	Short description
1	Poor	1	Poor
2	Very thin	1.5	Very thin
3	Thin	2	Thin
4	Moderately thin	2.5	Moderately thin
5	Moderate	3	Moderate
6	Moderately fleshy	3.5	Moderately fleshy
7	Fleshy	4	Fleshy
8	Fat	4.5	Fat
9	Extremely fat	5	Extremely fat

References: Henneke o.f. 1983; Guðrún Stefánsdóttir and Sigríður Björnsdóttir 2001, 2008.

The Icelandic body condition scale and how it compares to the Henneke scale, which is commonly used by US vets. According to Icelandic law, a horse that scores lower than 3.0 should not be ridden.

FORAGE FIRST!

Horses are herbivores, and roughage is their foundation feed. The main ingredient of roughage most commonly is grass, which can be fed in the form of pasture, or as different dried forages, such as hay, haylage, or silage. Horses have the behavioral necessity to eat and to chew and the need to produce saliva. Roughage is beneficial for a healthy digestive tract. The stomach should not be empty and feeding roughage aids in keeping the normal pH within the digestive tract.

Roughage is also beneficial for the water and mineral balance in the gut, as well as for the sugar and hormonal balance in the body. It also affects the metabolism during training in a positive way, as horses can work for a longer time using aerobic metabolism.

Guðrún mentioned a number of factors that need to be taken into account when feeding forage (hay). Because we tend to limit the horse's feed intake due to obesity concerns, the quality of the forage is very important! For example, to increase time spent eating it is possible to feed larger amounts if the quality is lower. However, high-performing horses might need forage of higher quality to fulfill their energy requirements on forage alone.

Generally, horses require six different classes of nutrients to survive: carbohydrates (soluble carbs and fiber), proteins (all 20 amino acids), fats, minerals (with 7 macro-minerals and 7 micro-minerals), vitamins (importantly the fat-soluble vitamins A, D, E, and the water-soluble vitamins B and C), and, last but not least, water.

Even high-quality forage does not necessarily fulfill the optimal requirements of all nutrients. Most likely lacking in hay are calcium and/or phosphorus, salt (sodium and chloride), electrolytes, the micro minerals (copper, zinc, and selenium), as well as the fat soluble vitamins. To cover all the bases, Guðrún suggests adding a quality mineral-vitamin supplement to a horse's ration.

Feeding forage leads to more heat production than concentrate/cereals or fat/oils and can increase the weight and bulky appearance of the digestive tract, especially if the forage has a very high fiber content and is fed in large amounts.

CONCENTRATES AND CEREALS

Cereals and concentrates are energy-rich



A horse's body condition improves with training and the right nutrition. Here, the same horse is shown at a proper weight (above) and underweight (below). Photos by Selina Bauer.

feeds based on grains such as oats, barley, and corn. Cereals or concentrates are fed if a horse needs high-energy feed and soluble carbohydrates (e.g. starch), which cannot be fulfilled by feeding hay only. Cereals and concentrates commonly contain 50-60% more energy per kilogram than forage or hay. However, it is possible that high-energy forage (early-cut grass) can contain energy similar to concen-

trates. Such feed can be recommended for high-performing horses instead of choosing to use concentrates.

Because concentrates are less voluminous in the digestive tract—they hold less water in the gut, due to their lower fiber content—they “lighten” the horse body. The horse has a less bulky appearance, and it also might get higher spirited. People have observed that horses on too much

concentrate can get easily excited.

However, due to the nature of the horse's digestive system, concentrates have to be given in very limited amounts. Per meal, the amount of cereal or concentrate should not exceed 1 kilogram (2.2 lb), with a maximum of 1-2 grams starch per kilogram of body weight per meal.

Another disadvantage of feeding cereals and concentrates is boredom, from a shortened feed intake time compared to roughage. Less chewing goes hand-in-hand with less saliva production, a more acidic environment in the digestive system, and an increased risk of gastric ulcers and other digestive disturbances.

If too much concentrate is fed per meal, some of the components that are meant to be digested in the small intestine will travel instead to the large intestine, where they can negatively affect the microflora and increase the risk of sickness (such as colic or laminitis).

PROTEIN

Protein is the building material for muscles and enzymes. Icelandic forage tends to be rich in protein. If the protein content of the feed is low (or when a limited amount is fed) or lacking any essential amino acids, it can be supplemented with fishmeal or soybean meal (100-200 grams/day, or 3.5-7 ounces).

MINERALS AND VITAMINS

As mentioned above, most hays will be deficient in at least some of the needed minerals and vitamins, and Guðrún advised feeding a mineral and vitamin supplement. However, which minerals and vitamins need to be added depends on the type of hay and the cereals or concentrates you feed (for example, if you feed pure grains or a pelleted feed).

Also consider that some vitamins and minerals can be dangerous if fed in excessive amounts: This applies to the micro-minerals selenium, zinc, copper, and iodine, and to the fat-soluble vitamins A and D. Guðrún suggested keeping it simple, because over-supplementation can easily happen if one feeds many different types of feeds and supplements at the same time.

Horses' salt (sodium chloride) requirements can differ considerably, depending on the air temperature and workload. They should almost always have free access to a salt block. There are

exceptions, however, where horses are overeating on salt or playing with the salt block. In this case, she advised feeding loose salt instead, so that the amount of it can be rationed.

FATS AND OILS

Fat and oils, such as flax oil and soybean oil, can be an excellent source of energy. The advantage of adding oils as an energy source for riding and competition horses is that they are more energy-dense, but at the same time a safer energy source than grains or concentrates, which can create digestive problems, as mentioned above.

While oils provide calories, they lead to less heat production during digestion compared to forage or concentrates. Feeding oils can improve the skin, hair, and hooves and has been reported to have a calming effect in easily excitable horses.

If you decide to feed oils, it is important to introduce the oil gradually. The maximum amount of fat in the feed is 0.9 ml per kg body weight per day, which is about 306 ml (10 ounces) per day for an average Icelandic horse with a body weight of 350 kg (770 lb).

WATER

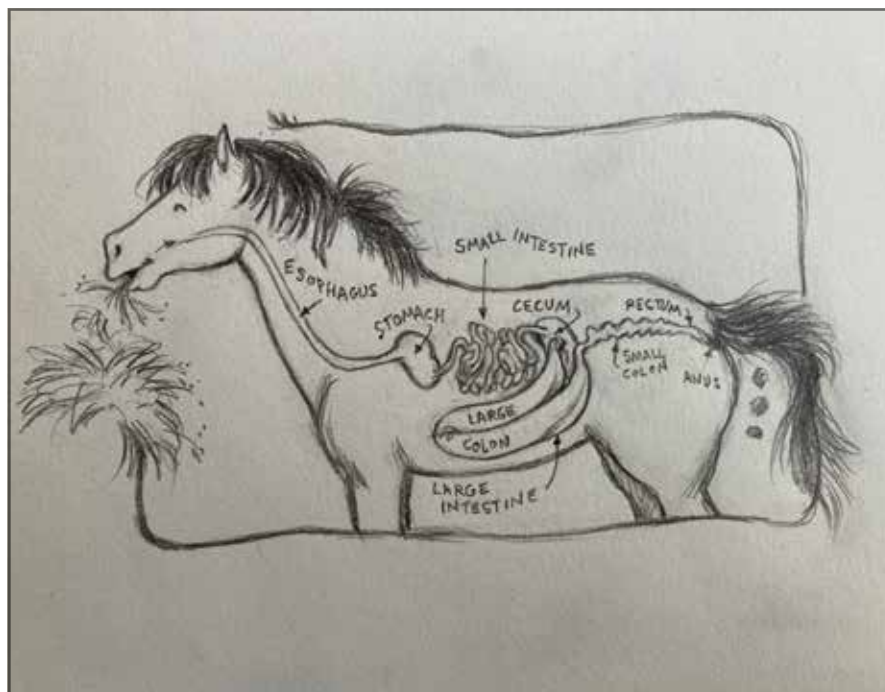
A horse's water needs and consumption vary quite a bit. Guðrún presented the results of two studies with Icelandics. In one study, 18 Icelandic riding horses

(averaging 392 kg, during wintertime, in light training), drank on average 15.4 liters of water (4 gallons) per day, with a range of 3.8-34.3 liters. In a second study, five Icelandic riding horses drank on average 52 liters (13.7 gallons) per day (with a range of 21-136 L). It was noticed that some of the horses had an unhealthy drinking habit and were urinating a lot in their stalls.

Not only did the amount of water intake vary, the timing varied as well. The horses in the first study drank the bulk of their water late in the afternoon and early in the night, whereas the second group of horses preferred to drink late at night into the early morning hours. If horses have unhealthy drinking habits, the access to water needs to be controlled.

In an unrelated study, Swedish researchers found that horses showed a strong preference for drinking from buckets and drank more water from buckets than from automatic waterers. This should be kept in mind to get high-performing horses in a warm environment to fulfill their water requirements.

The most important factor determining water and salt requirements in riding horses is loss of sweat due to weather conditions and exercise. Both water and salt need to be replenished after exercise. The loss of sweat during exercise has been estimated to be between 4.5 kg (10 lb) and



The digestive tract of the horse. Guðrún points out that the horse's stomach should not be empty during exercise, while for the large intestine to function correctly, we need to feed enough roughage and not too much concentrates. Illustration by Margot Apple.

Table 1: Mineral concentrations in horse blood plasma, horse sweat and human sweat.

	Sodium g/L	Chloride g/L	Potassium g/L	Calcium g/L	Magnesium g/L
Plasma, horse	3.2	3.5	0.16	0.12	0.024
Sweat, horse	3.0 – 3.7	5.9 – 6.2	1.2 – 2.0	0.08 – 0.24	0.024 - 0.2
Sweat, human	0.75	1.2	0.18	0.04	0.024 - 0.5

50 kg (110 lb). But these numbers come from studies in warmblood horses; this has not been studied specifically in Icelandics yet.

To estimate the electrolyte loss after exercise it is also important to consider that the composition of horses' sweat differs from that of humans and that horse sweat is hypertonic to blood (see the above table).

TIMING OF FEEDING

At competitions, try to keep the horse's routine the same as much as possible. Large amounts of forage shortly before your ride should be avoided, because they create extra weight in the digestive tract and influence the distribution of blood in the body.

Instead, Guðrún recommends feeding approximately 1 kg (2 lb) of forage or hay during the two to three hours before the ride. As mentioned before, the horse's stomach should not be completely empty when exercising.

Feeding concentrates can negatively affect the horse's energy metabolism via fluctuations in blood sugar and hormones, so concentrates should not be fed during the last three hours before your ride at the competition. But if you still choose to feed them, limit the amount to less than 0.5 kg (1 lb) per 350 kg (770 lb) horse.

PC-HORSE

Guðrún concluded her webinar by introducing a computer application called PC-Horse, which is a database of horse feeds. It lets a horse owner calculate the correct amounts of their feeds so that all nutrition requirements are covered. Rations can

be adjusted to accommodate for weight, metabolic state (easy keeper or not), and training load. The participants of the webinar got the opportunity to test this application for four weeks for free. You can still go to <https://pchorse.se/en/> if you are interested in learning more about the software.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Guðrún's seminar provided a very comprehensive overview of the fundamentals of feeding Icelandic horses, with special consideration given to feeding strategies for performance at competitions and/or before any ride. At the end of the seminar she answered questions. Some were about how the nutritional recommendations can be adapted to us here in the US. It was obvious that some of the products she mentioned are not readily available in the US, but there might be similar products available here. More importantly, we keep Icelandics as far north as Alaska, throughout various climate zones and all the way down to the humid and hot Southeast or the desert Southwest. It seems quite intuitive that every climate zone produces different forages and requires different feeding strategies to balance nutritional needs and boredom, in an effort to keep our horses happy, healthy, and ready for top performance. So the current plan is to invite Guðrún for a follow-up seminar where those questions can be explored.

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SPOTLIGHT ON LÉTTLEIKI

by Carol Andrew

Welcome to Léttleiki Icelandics at Swallowland Farm, in the beautiful Bluegrass region of Kentucky. Léttleiki is the largest full service Icelandic horse business in North America, with an active, enthusiastic, and supportive community of professional trainers, instructors, farm managers, students, volunteers, and horse owners. Owner Maggie Brandt began with a career as a geomorphologist and Mesopotamian archaeologist with an interest in ancient agriculture. I caught up to her last spring to ask her a few questions.

Tell us about the history of your farm. What makes it unique?

Over 25 years ago, my family bought our first three Icelandic horses, two of whom, Vima and Kraka, are still on the farm. These original three won our hearts with their gentle dispositions, individuality, and comfortable gaits and became the foundation for a growing business dedicated to the promotion of the breed in the United States.

In 2011 the first construction began at Swallowland Farm in Shelbyville, KY, and we have been growing ever since. There are now over 90 horses on 105 acres of beautiful farmland that includes an historic 1820s home, a 100-year-old hay barn, lush pastures, run-in sheds, a dry lot system, a world class oval track and pace track, a large year-round indoor arena and an ultramodern barn. This past year we added a solar power collection system that provides enough power to operate the main barn and indoor arena.

This is a large operation, and we depend upon our dedicated barn and farm managers Jahlen Shehan and Esteban Grenald and their team of feeders and farmhands who work from 6:00 AM to late-night checks every day of the week. They keep horses, staff, students, and boarders safe, healthy, and comfortable.

The University of Kentucky has used our farm as an example of the best equine management and land use practices in their educational programs. For example, one third of the farm is devoted to a rotational series of large pastures where



Pausing in the driveway on their way back from a nice spring ride in the Kentucky sunshine are Léttleiki trainers Paetra Hennigar on Rindill from Swallowland Farm and Molly Lindeman on Freyðir frá Mið-Fossum.

mares can peacefully raise their foals and young horses can grow up naturally in small herds learning from older horses. We pride ourselves on taking excellent care of our horses and the land and in supporting our local agricultural community for hay and professional services.

What programs and services do you offer to riders?

Over the past 15 years our programs have grown rapidly. We were the first farm to host three world ranking competitions in one long weekend and have been hosting them ever since, with the support of a dedicated team of volunteers from around the United States. These world ranking shows have been an excellent opportunity to get together with fellow Ice-

landic horse enthusiasts from around the country and share ideas and an exciting fun weekend of riding at all skill levels.

We also host annual national ranking shows and a series of schooling shows for our students including a crazy Christmas parade and show with decorated horses and riders in silly sweaters.

Our over 50 students in the riding school are motivated to work hard and develop solid horsemanship skills, but also have fun and care about the horses. The riding school supports all levels of riders from the littlest riders having fun and laughing with supportive experienced instructor Lindsay Hillyer as they go "Around the World" to enthusiastic and knowledgeable instructor Carly Zaayer and her Icelandic sheep dog Ofelia



challenging our most advanced students to try pace and train their own horses.

We believe in meeting the needs and supporting the goals of all our students with everything from a Tiny Tölter program for our youngest riders to challenging competition preparation summer camps and supporting older new horse owners refreshing their skills for a new chapter in their lives.

One of our most successful programs has been the annual Newbies Clinic, where we offer an intensive weekend including lessons, lectures, and demonstrations about “everything” having to do with Icelandics.

We don’t keep a sales list of horses. Instead we ask our clients interested in horse ownership to become part of our community as students, so we can take the

time to make potentially lifetime matches between horses and riders that benefit them both.

What practices do you find crucial for the welfare of your horses?

The comprehensive Léttleiki training program aims to support a horse being supple, relaxed, and able to move comfortably through the gaits in a healthy and beautiful form with “lightness.” Our name, Léttleiki, means “lightness” in Icelandic, and this idea is at the heart of all our interactions with the horses.

At the heart of all our programs is a belief that each horse is an individual and deserves a chance to reach their highest potential, given their natural abilities, inclinations, conformation, and temperament. In frequent discussions and marathon staff meetings, the entire staff evaluates and reevaluates the training,

Top, a young Léttleiki Icelandic student with Andvari from Rocking R. Photo by Lindsay Hillyer. Below, the Léttleiki Icelandics training staff and their horses in Germany. Left to right: Paetra Hennigar with Boði frá Breiðholti GBR, Molly Lindeman with Spaði frá Stuðlum, and Alexandra Dannenmann with Ára frá Langholti. Photo by Finja Niehuus.





A scene from the 2024 Svöluhagi Klassik, a USIHC Nationally Ranked competition held at Léttleiki Icelandics' Swallowland Farm. Photo by Peter Heiniger.

nutritional, psychological, and social needs of each horse. We work together as a team and don't hesitate to help each other when a sick horse needs shifts of 24-hour care or we are hosting a large competition.

Our training program is led by talented, thoughtful, dedicated, creative, and horse-centered trainers with the support of internationally recognized consulting trainer, instructor, and competitive rider Alexandra Dannenmann. On any day you might see trainer Paetra Hennigar practicing an intricate and beautiful dressage program set to music, or Molly Lindeman flying down the track in high-speed pace.

What does the future hold for Léttleiki?

One of the greatest strengths of our business has been breeding and properly starting high quality horses with patience and kindness. We are very fortunate to have excellent stallions and mares that have been the foundation of our breeding program.

Carly Zaayer became fascinated with genetics and breeding in college and brings this knowledge to orchestrating our breeding program. Every winter Carly is busy figuring out what magical matches we should try with our mares and first prize Breyer model stallions Sporður frá Bergi (IS2005137340) and Svali frá Tjörn (IS2006188415). Both stallions come from amazing breeding lines in Iceland, and their excellent temperaments and gaits are being passed on to their offspring. It has been exciting to watch

each new generation come into training and be given the chance to carefully develop their individual talents.

Our breeding program is also supported by our subsidiary in Germany. Several years ago two of the highest evaluated young stallions in Iceland and a very talented young mare joined the Léttleiki family. These amazing horses are being trained by Alexandra Dannenmann at the prestigious breeding and training farm Kronshof in Germany. We chose both of our stallions because of their excellent temperaments, gaits, and breeding potential.

Spaði frá Stuðlum (IS2013187105) is a stunning, good-natured five-gaited palomino. The second highest evaluated six-year-old in Iceland in 2019, last year he and Alex earned their way to the German National Championships and the Mid European Championships. We are looking forward to another year of competitions.

Icelandic tack fashion super-model, sweetheart, and thrilling tölter Boði frá Breiðholti GBR (IS2012125421) has been busy spending his summers breeding, too. Plans to bring frozen semen from these two talented stallions to the United States are in the works.

But we have had the most fun watching and cheering on "the little mare that could," Ára frá Langholti (IS2012287405). Ára landed in Germany in the Spring of 2023 with no competition experience and ended up at the German National Championships and the World

Championships over the next few months. She continues to surprise and delight us.

Developing a relationship between a horse and rider based on cooperation, patience, lightness, and kindness can bring success at the world level. Thanks, Alex, for helping make this long term goal and dream come true for everyone in your Léttleiki family.

What is the secret to your success?

I keep on using the words "community" and "family." They are at the heart of what makes Léttleiki Icelandics successful.

On any given day the barn is busy with students laughing and tacking up horses, interns saddling horses for the trainers, foals surprising us and arriving in the late afternoon, and trainers and barn managers brainstorming about ways to make a horse more comfortable. We care about each other and work together to grow, learn, humanely care for our horses as individuals, promote the breed, and take on new challenges. We look forward to continuing to build bridges with the larger Icelandic horse community. We'd like to get to know you and share ideas!

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KALDI COMES TO MAINE

by Jean Ridington Goldfine

“I see a black horse.” My friend Laura likes to think of herself as someone with psychic powers, so when I told her I was going to Iceland to buy a horse, she closed her eyes, sighed, and told me what color horse I would bring home. I’d already been to Iceland four or five times, and I knew what I wanted: good disposition, soundness, easy tölt. Color was not on my list. After all, a good horse has no color!

My husband had gone to Iceland on a whim for a riding tour in 2000. He came back with stars in his eyes. He said to me, “Next year you will go, ride the tölt, and never look back.” He was right. I’ve ridden all my life, starting with hunt seat and moving to dressage. But I never wanted to compete. I wanted to ride well and connect with my horse. Riding in Iceland is my dream. Steady horses, gorgeous scenery, riding from place to place with a herd, and sitting that tölt! Except for two years during Covid, I have ridden in Iceland every summer since 2001. I have indeed never looked back.

Hulda was my buying guide on my quest in 2006. She met me in Selfoss, and we spent the day visiting four farms and trying out five horses. The first was Punktur, named for a white “dot” on his forehead. He was stabled at a riding club on the outskirts of Reykjavik, a place with a big oval track, barns, and trails. Hulda took him out on the oval and showed me his gaits. Then I mounted up and walked and tölted him around the paths. Nice tölt, and he seemed cooperative and alert. A good possibility, though I hadn’t felt much connection.

Next, we went to a farm out in the countryside, a school for kids in some kind of trouble. They did chores and learned how to ride—good therapy for them. The owner brought out a small brown gelding, Moldi. His tölt was okay, and I could tell that he was calm and steady. I galloped him up a slope and he felt good. So, another possibility.

Next, a farm where they bred and trained horses. The owner rode with me as I tried out a tall brown and white pinto mare. At first, I felt good. The mare was



Kaldi, with his Morgan friend, Jewel, on a Maine trail ride in October 2009, looking thoughtful, “the way he always does.”

smooth and forward. But when we started to gallop, she took off. I know what to do, or not do, when a horse runs away with you. Don’t clamp your legs on her, don’t yank the reins in a death grip. I remembered to sit back as well as I could, breathe, and give and take on the reins. Finally she stopped, and I was about to leap off. But off she went again like a thoroughbred on the track. When she stopped again I did manage to get off and tell the owner shakily that this was not the horse for me.

In Iceland, saying that you are an experienced rider may not mean what we intend. I was in my 50s, and not interested in excitement. As we drove off, Hulda made a phone call to someone in Selfoss, I think a cousin. When we got to Benni’s farm, he brought out a small brown mare, and I tried her out. She had the bumpiest tölt I had ever felt! I felt like my backbone was going to implode.

Benni had another horse for me to try, a solid looking black gelding. Benni rode with me as we walked and tölted down the long driveway. Soft natural tölt, big broad back. So far so good. I was still a little shaken from the pinto. We stopped

about a half mile from the farm, and Benni turned us around. “Now we will gallop back,” he said. “Toward the barn?” I thought. “Oh boy here we go.” The gelding had a smooth transition to gallop, and it was a real gallop, not a pony gait. Benni said, “Now we will stop.” The horse pulled up calmly when I asked him to. Then, off we went at a calm gallop, and again, we stopped near the barn. The gelding didn’t seem to know that a horse is supposed to charge back toward home. He stood calmly, as if any direction was okay with him. Sold! Back at Benni’s house, we made arrangements for payment and transport. I went back to the stable to say goodbye before Hulda and I left. Kaldi stood in a stall looking thoughtful, the way he always does.

In Maine, Kaldi and his Morgan friend, Jewel, had years of trail riding together. Now, he is 30, and I am almost 80. We still take quiet rides in the fields and woods, enjoying the time together. If he stops to listen to or smell something I am not aware of, that’s fine. We listen together, then he cocks an ear back, we breathe together and meander along.

TRANSPORT TIPS

by Ellen Lichtenstein

You've picked your destination, mapped your route, packed your truck and trailer, and you're ready to drive off for a weekend camping trip with your best Icelandic horse companion.

Or maybe you've just imported a horse and made travel plans for her to get from the ARK Terminal at JFK to your home in Montana.

What about competitions? Are you planning to haul from all corners of the country to this year's Harmony Triple World Ranking show in Iowa?

No matter your reason for hauling, every horse owner knows it can be tricky and dangerous to get horses from one place to another. Luckily, there are plenty of steps we can all take to minimize the risks and maximize our horses' safety and comfort during transport.

BREATHE EASY

Last winter, the USIHC Virtual Education Series brought members the chance to hear from Brett Sponseller, DVM, PhD, who is the chair of the Veterinary Science Department at the University of Kentucky. On February 15, he presented the webinar "How Transport Affects Horses: Both Short and Long Hauls." This informative session covered a variety of common transport-related topics, and some you might not have thought of before. For those who couldn't make it, and for anyone wanting a reminder, we'll cover the key takeaways here.

"A lot of people, when they think about hauling a horse, are concerned about wrapping the legs and protecting the tail. It's more of a cosmetic approach. What people don't think about as much are the respiratory and infectious disease aspects of trailering, which are a more significant concern," he began.

Respiratory disease is horse transport's hidden danger. When you place a horse in what Brett described as essentially "a tin can," you're creating an environment that can significantly impact their respiratory health. He referred to a Japanese study from the 1990s that found hauling horses for 18 hours reliably produced pleura pneumonia in all study



Tilraun frá Pulu uses her untied trailering position to find hay dropped by Keilir from Klakahross.

subjects. For longer journeys of 40 hours, the results were even more concerning. Pleura pneumonia, an inflammation of both the lungs and the lining between the lungs and body wall, is a serious condition that can develop when bacteria normally present in the horse's upper airway make their way into the lungs.

The risk of developing pleura pneumonia increases during transport due to a variety of factors, and the combination of these factors, often present during trailer rides, including poor air quality, limited ventilation, reduced ability to clear airways, stress and immune system suppression, and dehydration.

While these issues are always present to some degree, the design of the trailer, the length of the trip, and other environmental factors can make respiratory illness more or less likely.

RESPIRATORY RISKS

To appreciate why transportation poses such a threat to respiratory health, it

helps to understand how horses breathe. Unlike humans, horses have a two-phase exhale, with passive exhaling followed by active, forced exhalation. This unique respiratory mechanism makes them efficient runners, but also more vulnerable during transportation.

Inside the horse's respiratory system, the airways are lined with cilia: tiny, finger-like projections that beat rhythmically to move mucus and trapped particles up and out of the lungs, where they can be swallowed or allowed to drain out of the body. This "mucociliary escalator" is a critical defense mechanism that keeps the lungs clear of potential pathogens.

However, during transportation, several things can disrupt the horse's natural ability to clear its airways. These include:

A fixed head position: When horses are tied in a trailer with their heads in a fixed, elevated position, they can't lower their heads to clear their airways naturally.

Air quality: The enclosed environment of a trailer quickly fills with dust, ammonia from urine, volatile organic compounds from manure, and potentially exhaust fumes. These irritants can damage the respiratory lining and overwhelm the clearing mechanisms.

Dehydration: Long journeys without adequate water intake affect not just the gut but also the respiratory system.

Heat and humidity: Hot, humid conditions in a trailer stress the respiratory system further, especially for horses that already struggle with respiratory issues.

WHO NEEDS EXTRA CARE?

While all horses face some level of respiratory risk during transport, certain horses are particularly vulnerable. These include:

Horses with asthma, heaves, or other allergies: This can be a concern for Icelandic horses in particular, since they commonly struggle with allergies in the US, as well as with heat. These horses already have compromised airway clearance mechanisms, making them more susceptible to bacterial pneumonia.

Horses that recently exercised: Horses that just completed a race, a long trail ride, or any other exercise, especially in



There are reasons you may want to tie your horse while trailering. But make sure your trailer tie is loose enough to allow your horse to put their head in a natural position, and even to lower it slightly, but not so loose that they can get a leg over the tie.

dusty conditions, may already have irritated airways and they may have inhaled particles deep into their lungs already.

“Bleeders”: Horses with a history of exercise-induced pulmonary hemorrhage (EIPH) are at increased risk of developing pneumonia because blood collects in their lungs after exercise and creates a fertile breeding ground for bacteria.

Horses recovering from viral infections: Viral respiratory infections damage the protective ciliated cells in the airways. It can take six weeks for full recovery, and during that time, horses lack their normal defense mechanisms against bacterial invasion.

Older horses: Aging horses often develop some degree of asthma and may have less robust immune systems, making transportation particularly risky.

MITIGATING RISKS

If you’re like most horse owners, what you’ve read so far is enough to make you swear off traveling with your horse ever again. But not so fast! There are plenty of best practices you can observe to make the trip safer for your equine partners.

The type of trailer you use can significantly impact your horse’s respiratory health during transport. Surprisingly, the humble stock trailer often outperforms more expensive options when it comes to respiratory health. Why? Stock trailers typically offer better ventilation with their more open sides. There is more space for horses to move and adjust their body and head positions. There is less confinement, reducing their stress. There is a tradition of letting horses travel un-tied, giving them the benefit of more natural

airway-clearing head positions.

For slant-load or straight-load enclosed trailers, ventilation becomes critical. Windows, roof vents, and adequate air flow help reduce the buildup of ammonia, dust, and heat. Brett recommended keeping windows open when possible (but not if the window allows the horse to reach its head out), with the use of eye protection like a window screen or fly mask.

The debate over whether to tie horses during transport involves careful consideration of risks and benefits. While tying prevents certain injuries, it restricts the horse’s ability to lower its head and clear its airways. Brett suggested a compromise: If you’re going to tie your horse, ensure the rope is long enough that they can lower their head to clear their airway, but not long enough that they can get a leg caught.

Trailer bedding is another thing to think about. Traditional wood shavings create a lot of dust that can exacerbate a horse’s breathing difficulty during transport. Brett recommended a combined approach instead, consisting of a deep layer of shavings on the bottom followed by a thick layer of straw. This helps absorb urine while minimizing dust.

SAFE AND HEALTHY

Whether you’re worried about respiratory disease, colic, physical injury, stress, or any other travel-related issue, Brett has some advice that will help reduce the risks and keep your horse safe and healthy during travel.

Limit trip duration: Don’t travel more than 12 hours at a time without an overnight stop. Less is always better, so if you can split your trip into shorter legs, Brett suggests doing so.

Regular stops: When transporting his personal horses, Brett said he prefers to stop every two hours to give the horses a rest from the effort of standing in a moving vehicle and to offer them more water.

Time your trips strategically: Plan to leave at the time of day that will keep the temperatures cooler, provide better air quality, and minimize traffic and delays. Sometimes traveling at night is cooler and faster.

Hydrate, hydrate, hydrate: Water is key for respiratory health, gut health, and general wellbeing. There are lots of strategies to get horses to drink before

and during trips, including adding salt and other electrolytes to their food. It's a good idea to load them up with water for several days before transporting.

Vaccinations: Keep your horses current on all vaccines, but particularly ones that protect against respiratory illness like influenza and equine herpes virus. This is particularly important when trailering to events where they'll come into contact with other horses.

Pre-travel health assessment: Be particularly cautious about transporting horses with recent respiratory infections, asthma, or a history of bleeding. Consider delaying travel if possible or consult with your veterinarian for appropriate precautions.

Protective gear: When considering whether to wrap your horse's legs or other body parts, weigh the pros and cons of that protection versus other factors such as heat. Leg wraps can keep a horse from injuring itself, but can also add to overheating. Brett recommended considering options like bell boots, fly boots, and fly masks to offer protection without limiting the horse's ability to release heat from its body.

HAPPY TRAILS

Transportation is a necessary part of horse ownership, especially when dealing with a breed like the Icelandic horse that often comes from far away to reach a



new home with us. By understanding the unique risks that trailering (especially over long distances) brings, we can all do better for our horses and reduce the risks of detrimental health impacts.

Brett Sponseller's insights remind us to look beyond the obvious when preparing for travel. While scraped legs and trailer accidents might be more obvious concerns, the invisible threats to your horse's respiratory system often pose the greater danger.

Leaving a horse untied, as above, can help them clear their airway of mucus and particles, which can prevent respiratory disease while traveling. But you must consider if the risk of your horse passing under a stall divider is significant enough to trade off for the risks that come with tying. When it comes to airflow and respiratory health, a stock trailer or even a slant or straight load with significant openings can beat out fancier trailers for horse health.



USIHC
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As the Chair of the fundraising committee, I want to express my deep gratitude to the committee members who devoted their personal time, energy, and skills to make this auction happen. Mackenzie Durbin is our tech person extraordinaire. She immediately stepped up to set up all social media posts, marketing, and team meetings. I marveled at her talent and accuracy. And, hey, if anyone out there is looking for someone to manage their marketing on social media, Lady Mac is your gal! Next, I want to send a big shout out to Carole Niclasse. She acted as my right hand, organizing items, reaching out for donations, and creating the editorials for all the offerings. She researched how to navigate this whole new territory of fundraising and set us on the right track. Every time I asked either Mackenzie or Carole, "Can you do this?", they responded positively and took on a heavier load. And I'm not forgetting about Jeny Feldner. She helped with the National Team survey and securing our best auction items. Lastly, I want to send a thank you to Dora Becker, for swooping in with her content creation and social media management skills. This is what community is all about. Riders helping riders where we are all united in our love and passion for the Icelandic horse.

- Marisa Shaw

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m.meier@hestar-ranch.us
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Lough Arrow Icelandics
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13311 Spring Valley Road
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Tolt Mountain Ranch
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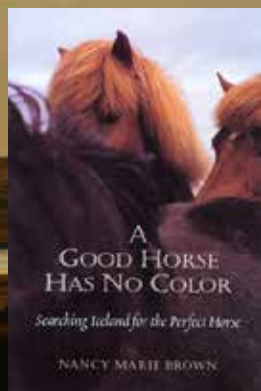
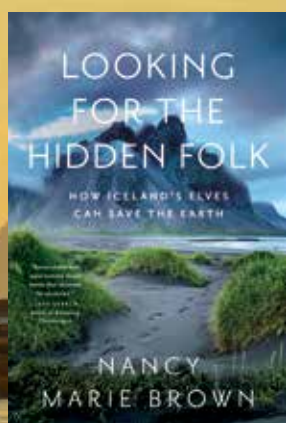
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