

Issue Four

THE

2025

ICELANDIC HORSE

QUARTERLY



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



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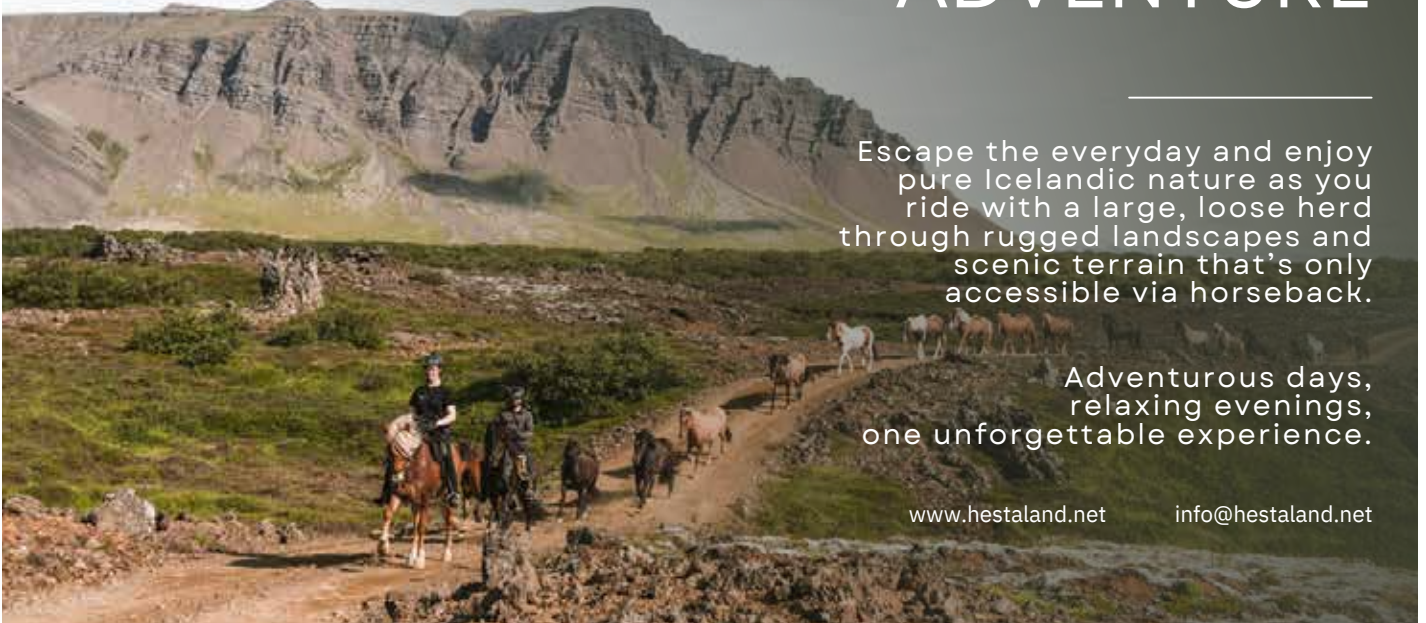
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On the cover: Ásta Covert and her nine-year-old stallion Gígur frá Ketilsstöðum show off in gorgeous, goosebump-inducing tölt at the World Championships! The Coverts bought Gígur as a four-year-old after seeing him at Landsmót in 2018. He stayed in Iceland for a while, but Ásta decided to bring him home to California in 2022 to develop their partnership. “Gígur is an amazingly confident horse who would go through fire for me,” she says. The pair had a great time and really enjoyed competing, being expertly coached by team trainer and friend Olil Amble. Ásta and Gígur were the highest placed US entry, narrowly missing the V1 Four Gait final. Now it is upward and onward for Germany 2027! Photo by Krijn.

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.

Join the fun at an Icelandic horse show! Here, riders at the 2024 Fall Gamankeppni, organized by Taktur Icelandics in Kentucky, enjoy a joyous bourbon (or apple juice) tölt.



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

ANNUAL MEETING

Mark your calendars! The USIHC Annual Meeting will be held on February 2, 2026 via Zoom. A link will be sent to all members and posted on social media closer to the date. The special guest will be National Team trainer Olil Amble, who will speak on "The History of Icelandic Riding," after the reports from Board members and committee chairs.

VIRTUAL EDUCATION

The USIHC will sponsor a Virtual Education series of lectures again this winter. Dates will be January 31, February 28, March 28, and April 25. According to USIHC President Virginia Lauridsen, "I am still nailing down the presenters, but we hope to have Kristín Halldorsdóttir speak on Advanced Worldfengur: How to Get the Most from Your Membership, Antonia Gabriel on Current Research on Summer Eczema and Other Allergies, Caeli Cavanagh on The FEIF Educational Matrix and the US Trainer Certification System, and possibly someone on The Rider's Position and the Biomechanics of Horse Movement."

RIDERS OF THE MONTH

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 Teresa Harp, Laura Risk, and Julia Koritko.

Teresa Harp lives in Polk City, IA and owns one Icelandic, Sörli of Ozark Saga, whom she bought in June 2024; she also has two Tennessee Walking horses. She is a member of the Toppur Tolters Team and has participated in the S2SS rides for three years, logging her mileage the first year on a borrowed Icelandic. "I have been an avid trail rider for 25 years. I like horse camping and spending time with my horses and friends, exploring new as well as familiar trails." Asked "What made you interested in Icelandic horses?" Teresa responds, "The tölt, of course! Admittedly, I could be experiencing my second childhood, as the big hair and outline of the Icelandic horse remind me of my



Laura Risk of Colorado was the Leisure Rider of the Month for August. Photo by Craig Risk.

beloved childhood pony. It is not easy to wipe the smile off my face when I ride Sörli. He is forward and bold, yet calm."

Laura Risk lives in Pagosa Springs, CO. She and her husband, Craig—who signed her up for S2SS—own two Icelandics, Gutti frá Austerey II and Ragnar frá Einiholti II. "I came late to the Icelandic horse world," Laura writes. "I've had many different breeds, but never owned a gaited horse. While finding and keeping tölt has been the ideal sought after, gaining and holding my horse's trust has been the most powerful. When Gutti arrived, he was stoic, to say the least. He didn't like being touched and bolted many scary times. Now he nickers when he sees me. Continued trust is my number one goal. I love his hyper focus, now that I know how to work with it. Learning just how smart and sensitive these horses are has been a humbling and wondrous journey. I'd like to extend my utmost gratitude to trainer Ulla Hudson of Windsong Icelandics. Without her, I'm sure Gutti and I would not have the extraordinary relationship that we possess today."

Julia Koritko lives in Leesburg, VA and owns one Icelandic horse, Ísak fra

Mollemarken. She joined S2SS because of her “passion for trail rides and my desire to build trust with my horse in new places,” she says. “My goals are to be able to build a strong partnership with my horse. Another one of my goals would be to gain confidence when trying new things, since I get nervous. What I enjoy about trail riding is the sense of freedom that you feel. It gives me time to connect with my horse without any distractions or anyone to bother us. I also enjoy finding small logs to jump over in the woods.”

2025 SHOW SEASON

24 National Ranking or World Ranking shows were held this year in Massachusetts, California, Vermont, Kentucky, Oregon, Virginia, and Iowa, as well as the Spring (May) and Fall (November) USIHC Virtual Shows.

The season opened in Massachusetts with the Merrimack National Ranking Show in March. California followed in April, with the CIA Open Triple World Ranking (three shows). Sólheimar's Pentathlon (five shows) began in Vermont in May, with monthly shows through September. In Kentucky, the Spring Gamankeppni was held in May, as well as the Ice Championships Triple World Ranking (three shows). The Montaire National Ranking Show was held in Virginia in June; June also saw the Toppur National Ranking Show and the North American Youth Cup in Iowa. The Svoluhagi Klassik was held in Kentucky in September. October saw the Harmony Triple World Ranking (three shows) in Iowa and the Fall Gamankeppni in Kentucky.

We're looking forward to the 2026 show season, which will begin on April 17-19 with the CIA Triple World Ranking Show at Flying C Ranch in California. Contact Ásta Covert at asta@tolt.net.

Sólheimar Icelandics in Tunbridge, VT will again host its Pentathlon, with monthly shows on May 23-24, June 20-21, July 25-26, August 29-30, and September 19-20. Contact Sigrún Brynjarsdóttir at sigrunbry@gmail.com.

Létteiki Icelandics in Shelbyville, KY will host its Triple Ice Championships (three World Ranking shows) on May

29-31. Contact Maggie Brandt at maggie@letteikiicelandics.com.

Other shows are sure to be announced soon. As the Sport Committee says, “Come join our community at any of these events. Whether you're competing, mingling, or learning, we'd love to have you!”

DEVELOPMENT TEAM

The USIHC Development Team was launched in August to “close the gap”

between leisure and sport. According to the announcement, “The purpose of the team is to further promote Icelandic Horse Sport in the US by encouraging participation in all types and levels of competition, from novice to individual and open classes. One of the core goals of the Development Team is to provide outreach and support to all the membership, recognizing that ‘the best competition horses also make the best trail horses.’”

The team plans to offer “specialized



Teresa Harp of Iowa was the July Leisure Rider of the Month. “It is not easy to wipe the smile off my face when I ride Sörli,” she says. Photo by Flo Walker.



Julia Koritko of Virginia was the September Leisure Rider of the Month. Photo by Ingrid Guðnadóttir.

educational and training opportunities,” and began in September with a virtual lecture by FEIF International Judge Hulda Geirsdóttir (see the report in this issue) and a two-day clinic in Iowa with National Team trainer Olil Amble.

Membership on the Development Team is open to all USIHC members in good standing who are committed to competing in Sport and agree to the team’s code of conduct. For information, contact Shelby Walker at treasurer@icelandics.org.

THE FRELSI CLUB

A new Activity Club affiliated with the

USIHC was approved at the September Board meeting. The Frelsi Riding Club, based at Merrimack Valley Icelandics in Massachusetts, is open to “anyone who agrees to the goals and purposes of the club.” According to its proposal, in addition to the goals shared by all USIHC and FEIF affiliated clubs, the Frelsi Club will organize and promote “clinics, fairs, demonstrations, competitions, breed evaluations, trail rides, international travel to meet other clubs/communities around the Icelandic horse, [and] activities of a similar nature.” For information, contact Ebba Meehan at ebbameehan@me.com.

USIHC ELECTION

The 2025 election selected three directors, who will serve on the USIHC Board for terms of three years starting on January 1, 2026. Incumbent directors Lucy Nold, Ásta Covert, and Virginia Lauridsen were up for re-election; all three opted to run. In accordance with the USIHC Constitution, an election committee was formed, chaired by Brandie Gean. Nominations were accepted until October 1. According to Brandie, no nominations were received, so no election was held, and the three incumbents were reappointed. Congratulations to Lucy, Ásta, and Virginia.

BOARD MEETINGS

The USIHC Board of Directors met by Zoom call on July 15, September 9, and October 14; there was no August meeting due to the World Championships. Meeting minutes can be found online at <https://icelandics.org/minutes>.

In addition to the topics reported on above, the Board discussed ideas to increase USIHC membership and to improve communication between the board/committees and the membership at large. A Spring 2026 membership drive is planned. Jeff Rose noted that the Affiliated Clubs Committee received a request for information on starting a Regional Club in the southeastern US. The new Frelsi Club (see above) was approved.

Breeding Chair Virginia Lauridsen noted that there would be one FEIF Breeding Assessment Show held in the US

in 2026. Contact her for information.

The Board discussed the North American Youth Cup, in particular changing the age range, lessening the burden on the event’s host, and better setting expectations for the 2027 Cup.

In Sport, the Board discussed a possible National Championship Show. They agreed to allocate the \$9,000 raised by the National Team’s silent auction to help defray this year’s World Championship expenses, including those of the team trainer and team leader, housing, stalls, and team jackets, but not horse transport. The Board reviewed a proposal for sponsorship of the Lifetime Achievement Awards. They also discussed revising the Code of Conduct for the National Team and the Development Team to address harassment and cyberbullying, as well as adding a conflict resolution/disciplinary action process.

The Education Committee reported that the education modules were being edited and would soon be released. Contact Caeli Cavanagh for information.

The Promotion Committee has prepared a flyer template to allow Regional Clubs to print their own promotional materials when going to an expo or other event. Chair Ebba Meehan and webmaster Mackenzie Durbin also reported on the updates being made to the USIHC website. Ebba outlined several demos planned in the Northeast for the fall, and the Board discussed the need for a clearer policy when two clubs request funding for the same event.

CORRECTION

In the photo caption on page 27 of Issue Three 2025, we made a mistake in the foal’s lineage. The dam is Valkyrja frá Lambeyrun (not Herborg).

FROM TRAIL TO TRACK, AND BACK!

by Ellen Lichtenstein

The USIHC Development Team held a webinar on September 21 featuring FEIF International judge Hulda Geirsdóttir. The engaging presentation focused on the benefits all horses and riders can achieve by participating in two seemingly contradictory endeavors: trail riding (or trekking) and Icelandic sport competitions. If you're largely a pleasure or trail rider and ever wondered if you should try competing, Hulda's answer is a resounding "yes!" At the same time, Hulda emphasized that it goes both ways. Just as pleasure horses and riders can benefit from the experience of competing, sport horses and riders benefit from the mental stimulation, physical conditioning, and unique challenges that you only get out in nature.

Ultimately, Hulda's message was that you can have it all. Here are the top five takeaways from her inspiring presentation:

1. SPORT COMPETITIONS ARE NEW.

The US isn't lagging behind when it comes to Icelandic horse competitions. Even in Iceland, where the horse has been a vital part of life for over a thousand years, sport competitions are a very modern development. It has only been over the last 30 years that factors like Hólar University's full degree program and the Icelandic government's investment in nationwide riding halls have propelled riding into a viable sport. This means American riders aren't decades behind; rather, they're part of a global community of Icelandic horse enthusiasts still developing the sport together.

2. SHOWS ARE FOR EVERYONE.

While trail riders may feel intimidated at the thought of competing, Hulda empha-

sized that shows are for everyone, regardless of your level. Unlike some other breeds and disciplines, Icelandic horse shows have very simple requirements. Namely, you must be on a purebred Icelandic horse using appropriately fitting tack and dressed in a polished fashion. Unless you're competing at the highest levels, Icelandic horse shows don't require specific (and expensive) clothing that can scare casual riders away from giving competing a try. Hulda also mentioned the variety of classes available at shows, particularly in America. From the various Four and Five Gait classes to Two Gait classes and obstacle courses, there's something for everyone.

3. SHOWS ARE FOR LEARNING, NOT JUDGING.

If you've never competed in an Icelandic horse show, you might feel anxious about being judged on your performance. Hulda eased these fears by reassuring everyone that judges are there to educate. While Hulda says she can't remember any rider's specific score from her 28 years of judging, what she does remember are the times she's seen people take her feedback and improve—often dramatically—between the first and third day of a competition, or between one competition and a later one. The chance to get feedback and come back stronger the next time is a large benefit of competing, Hulda says.

4. THE BEST TRAIL HORSES ARE THE BEST COMPETITION HORSES, AND VICE VERSA.

Rather than seeing trail riding and competition as contradictory activities, Hulda explained how they complement each

other for the benefit of the horse and rider. She also gave examples of how top-scoring competition horses can pull double-duty as wonderful family horses, even for children. In an informal poll of Icelandic National Team riders, Hulda reported that 100% of them said they take their competition horses outside for training, and even on multi-day treks. Hulda explained how the skills you need in one situation often translate to the other, so cross-training benefits both types of riding.

5. COMPETING IS A GREAT WAY TO FIND AND BUILD COMMUNITY.

Throughout her presentation, Hulda emphasized how competitions build community in a way that's particularly valuable for American Icelandic horse owners, who may be geographically spread out. Attending shows, whether you compete or not, is a wonderful way to meet others with a passion for the Icelandic breed, as well as to support the people and businesses who make it possible for us to enjoy our horses. Hulda emphasized the tight-knit community of horse owners, trainers, riders, instructors, and more who all come together at shows to share knowledge and develop deep friendships.

Above all, Hulda's message to the Icelandic horse community is that competition is a fun, exciting, and educational way to be with our horses and our friends. Whether you're interested in World Ranking shows or just want to try a beginner class at a local schooling show, there's a place for every rider and horse combination.



Riders of all ages, from teens to seniors, competed together at the September show in Vermont, the fifth in Sólheimar's 2025 Ice Cup Series. Going to a show, whether to compete or as a spectator, says Hulda Geirsdóttir, "is a wonderful way to meet others with a passion for the Icelandic breed, as well as to support the people and businesses who make it possible for us to enjoy our horses." Photo by Ona Kwiatkowski.

WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS RECAP

The 2025 Icelandic Horse World Championships were held August 3-10 in Birmenstorf, Switzerland. First, the rules: A national sport team can include up to seven rider/horse combinations and a reserve horse, a reserve rider, or a reserve rider/horse combination. In addition, up to five extra eligible rider/horse combinations and a reserve horse, a reserve rider, or a reserve rider/horse combination can be added to the team, provided that these extra riders are at least 16 years old and not more than 21 in the calendar year. Young riders may choose to compete in a separate age division or with the adults. Only one horse per rider is allowed in the sport competitions, and the rider/horse combination cannot be changed after the final entry unless the reserve horse has been entered in accordance with the rules. The reigning World Champions are allowed to participate at the succeeding World Championships with the same or another eligible horse.

A breeding show is also organized. Each full FEIF member association may enter a maximum of two horses per age group; no reserve horses are possible. The horses may take part in both the breeding and sports classes, but their shoeing may not be changed at all during the World Championships. A horse may only represent the member association in which it was born. All stallions presented for judgment must have proof of parentage, either by blood type or DNA analysis (born from 2006 on). Stallions and mares are shown in separate classes in one of the following three age groups: five years old, six years old, and seven years old or over.

Next, here's a brief recap of the 2025 World Championships: On Monday, the participants had the chance to train their horses on the competition tracks. On Tuesday, the breeding show began, featuring outstanding stallions and mares; judges and spectators all admired the quality, movement, and spirit of the horses presented. Thrills and speed dominated Tuesday afternoon, as both adults and young riders delivered spectacular runs in the PP1 Pace Test. Riders showed



impressive precision and control as they raced down the track in flying pace. In the evening, the official opening ceremony brought a festive atmosphere to Birmenstorf. All nations participated, along with the judges and the relay riders on horseback. The heartfelt speeches, and a backdrop of good music, set the perfect tone for the days ahead.

On Wednesday, the atmosphere became electric as the day was fully dedicated to the tölt, the signature gait of the Icelandic horse. The morning kicked off with the elegant T2 Loose Rein Tölt competition, showcasing the harmony between horse and rider. In the afternoon, the crowd was treated to thrilling T1 Tölt performances that continued until 8 p.m., with top riders delivering unforgettable moments. The spectator stands were packed, and the energy was contagious. Even a brief technical glitch couldn't dampen spirits—when the music stopped unexpectedly, the audience stepped in without hesitation, clapping rhythmically to support the rider through their performance. It was a moment of unity that perfectly captured the spirit of the Icelandic horse community. With great performances, an enthusiastic crowd, and a strong sense of togetherness, the tölt day in Birmenstorf was a true highlight of the championship.

Thursday began with the thrilling P1 Pace Race over 250 meters, kicking off the day with speed and excitement.



Spectators gathered early to witness the top riders push for the fastest times. The breeding show was held both before and after lunch, drawing great interest from breeders and fans alike. The good atmosphere continued throughout the venue, with the bustling shopping area attracting many visitors and adding to the vibrant experience. In the afternoon, attention turned to the F1 Five-Gait competition, delivering impressive performances and crowd favorites. The day concluded with the FEIF Reception, held for national chairpersons and FEIF award holders—a special opportunity to connect, reflect, and celebrate contributions to the Icelandic horse community.

Friday began with powerful impressions in the V1 Four-Gait competitions: Riders and horses delivered expressive performances that energized the early crowds. In the afternoon, the second round of the breeding show highlighted the exceptional quality and diversity of breeding horses, drawing praise from both judges and spectators alike. As the sun began to dip, the pace picked up with the third and fourth heats of the P1 Pace Race, thrilling fans with speed, precision, and close finishes. Meanwhile, leisure riders gathered at the FEIF stand for a warm community meeting, where FEIF proudly announced the new virtual ride to Landsmót. The evening closed with music, smiles, and a shared sense of excitement—bringing people together



to celebrate not just the competitions, but the passion that unites the Icelandic horse community around the world.

Saturday was full of energy, emotion, and celebration—from decisive B-finals to fast-paced action and a festive evening of Icelandic spirit. The morning kicked off with a string of B-finals, where riders ranked 6-10 in their classes battled for final placements and the chance to enter the A-finals. Before lunch, the spotlight turned to breeding excellence during the prize ceremony for the breeding mares. A standout moment was the awarding of the trophy for the highest evaluated breeding horse, once again going to an exceptional mare, underscoring the strength and consistency of the top breeding programs. After lunch, all eyes were on the track for the thrilling SpeedPass, where some of the fastest horses of the week delivered powerful and precise performances, drawing huge cheers from the crowd.

In the evening, attention shifted to celebration and recognition during the prize-giving ceremony for the best combinations—Lisa Schürger (DE) for Four Gait and Caspar Logan Hegardt (SE) for Five Gait—and the coveted team trophy, which was won again by Iceland. The day concluded in a joyful atmosphere with a lively dance to Icelandic music, where riders, teams, and fans came together to celebrate not just the results, but the unique community that defines these championships.

Sunday, the last day of the World Championships, wrapped up in spectacular fashion, packed with A-finals and an electric atmosphere. The world's best stallions dazzled in the arena, showcasing power, grace, and precision in front of a roaring crowd. The awarding of the coveted Feather Prize to pace rider Laura Enderes (DE), honoring exceptional harmony between horse and rider, moved fans and judges alike. Complete results and scores can be found on the FEIF website: <https://www.feiffengur.com/documents/WC2025%20Results%20Updated.pdf>

The next Icelandic Horse World Championships will be held July 27 to August 1, 2027 in Rieden, Germany.

LANDSMÓT

The next major Icelandic horse competition is Landsmót 2026, to be held at Hólar in Hjaltadal, Skagafjörður on July 5–12. This will be the 26th Landsmót since the event was first established. Landsmót is one of the largest and most significant events in the world of the Icelandic horse, attracting around 7,000-8,000 visitors and featuring over 1,000 horses. For decades, Landsmót has been the meeting place in Iceland where riders and enthusiasts of the Icelandic horse come together to celebrate the power, beauty, and versatility of the breed, while also enjoying a rich cultural and entertainment program. All information about the event can be found at www.landsmot.is, and early bird ticket sales have already started. Secure your place here: www.landsmot.is/en/tickets

VIRTUAL RIDE

Registration is now open for the FEIF Virtual Ride “Hoofbeats to Hólar,” inviting riders worldwide to join the journey in spirit and distance. The Virtual Ride is just that: Real riding on your horse along a virtual route from your home to the flagship events of the Icelandic horse calendar, the World Championships and Landsmót. These are held in alternating years in Europe and in Iceland, respectively. Over the course of a year, the Virtual Ride invites Icelandic horse riders to

make their way gradually (and virtually) to these venues!

This is not a competition. The aim is to bring people together both in real life and virtually (mostly on Facebook). Participants may ride solo or in teams. Every rider progresses in accordance with their own routine and fitness, keeping track of the approximate distance covered each time they ride out. Each month, the distances are tallied up and logged via the FEIF website. Riders and teams can track their own progress—and that of everyone else—on the scoreboard. Every year, a new ride offers a way of getting to know each other, the different landscapes and seasons we ride through, and all the adventures encountered on the way. Why not join in? Shared is double the fun!

For more information and to join, go to <https://www.feif.org/leisure-riding-dept/virtual-ride/>

FEIF YOUTH CUP

The 2026 FEIF Youth Cup will be held July 13-19 in Rieden, Germany. The Youth Cup combines sport, education, and international friendship. Participants ages 14-17 not only compete, but also learn and build strong connections with riders from other countries. The event promotes team spirit, respect, and cultural exchange, fostering long-term friendships and a shared passion for the Icelandic horse. After the cancellation of two Youth Cups due to the Covid-19 pandemic, we are excited to bring back this important tradition and strengthen our sport with a renewed international youth gathering. Our goals for the Youth Cup 2026 include reconnecting and inspiring the next generation of Icelandic horse lovers and filling all 86 available spots again. For more information, go to www.feif.org/youth-work-dept/youth-cup/ or contact USIHC Youth Leader Lucy Nold at youth@icelandics.org.

CLUB UPDATES

There are 12 Regional Clubs and one Activity Club 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 Karen Gardner

What a fantastic summer for members and friends of the Alaska Icelandic Horse Association! We saw several new Icelandic babies, youngsters, stallions, and seasoned horses coming out to learn and play in the land of the midnight sun.

Arctic Arrow hosted three clinics and one schooling show, thanks to Jeannette and Bernie Willis. We learned so much from trainers Freya Sturm of Vinur Farm in June and September, Janet Mulder of AK Icelandic Horse Farm in July, and Alex Montan Gray of Egenforetagare in August. Alex also judged our year-end schooling show. We were all amazed at the progress



Karen Garder on Kolfreya practices riding without stirrups at an AIHA clinic.



Above, the new AIHA Youth Representative Mia Mulder (left), with her mother Janet Mulder at the AIHA Schooling Show. At right, Terri Mielke and Dynur from Creekside Farm competing at the AIHA show. Photos by Bryan Mulder.



everyone made from spring to the end of the summer. Thank you to all our amazing clinicians and to everyone behind the scenes who made these great learning opportunities happen.

As an added bonus, several members had the good fortune to ride with trainer Vibeke Thoreson, who has studied at Hólar and worked at Hestaland in Iceland. Vibeke was hosted by Misty Bohnert of Arctic Circle Icelandics and was able to tour Alaska from the valley to Fairbanks to Homer and back to the valley while giving great lessons, help, and encouragement to AIHA members along the way. We all learned so much, and a couple of young Icelandics got their first starts under saddle.

Shelby Blades of Brookshire Acre hosted a dressage clinic and schooling show at the end of September at the France Equestrian Center in Palmer. Five AIHA members participated and successfully competed in dressage classes, including classical dressage, working equitation dressage, western dressage, and even prix caprelli. Shelby even added a gaited division to the show.

The Icelandic breed has gained quite a bit of attention within the Alaska Equestrian Community in recent years. No longer looked at as “those cute ponies,” they are gaining attention as formidable athletes and willing partners in multiple disciplines, as well as being surefooted on the trail. AIHA member Terri Mielke has shown this extensively with her

Icelandic gelding Dinni (aka Dynur from Creekside). Along with miles and miles of trails, this team regularly places in First Level Dressage, AQHA All breed Ranch Trail class, competitive trail trials, and Alaska reined cow horse classes, as well as in the AIHA shows. After a successful Working Equitation Clinic this July, we feel sure this discipline will be added to Dinni’s resume. Their great partnership is inspiring and truly shows the versatility of the Icelandic breed.

Plans are swirling for next year! Along with more clinics and our yearly show, there has been talk of forming an Icelandic drill team to perform at the Alaska Breed Show. As a club, we now have a youth representative. In September we unanimously added Mia Mulder to serve in this position. We are so excited for her input as we look forward to planning another great year.

HESTAFOLK

by Lisa McKeen

What a great summer! Horses every day is our happy place. While we were all busy with our families and non-horse lives, we made time for the club as well.

We managed several clinics at Freya Sturm’s Vinur Farms and several club rides. Clinic topics this year included “Feldenkrais and Riding” and “The Art of Groundwork” in May. Feldenkrais, in the Awareness through Movement series that Freya Sturm leads online, has helped many of us overcome damaging patterns of movement that



At left, Hestafolk member Lisa McKeen and Elsa From Extreme Farm negotiate a 10-meter-circle obstacle at the Viking Games held at Vinur Farm in Trout Lake, WA. Photo by Lauren Murphy. Two horses represented the Icelandics in the Breed Showcase at the Washington State Fair: Andi from Evans Farm, shown by Lauren, and SkyDreki from Celticheart, shown by Lisa. Photo by Amy Rogala.

we have learned through injury. In June, "The Art of Dressage" was hosted at Vinur Farm in Trout Lake, WA.

Adult Summer Camp wrapped up June—what a wonderful thing it was to gather, learn, and laugh with horse friends. We had a group ride at the Danville-Georgetown area in July.

From August 28 to September 1, SkyDreki from CelticHeart and Andi from

Evans Farm entertained and engaged the Washington State Fair attendees in Puyallup. While Andi was inspiring the crowd with his friendly demeanor and tricks, SkyDreki learned quickly that people will pet you if you sidle up to the front of your stall and that touching the green ball also gets you a treat! Lisa McKeen and Lauren Murphy talked to lots of folks as well.

Hestafolk is putting together a list of

folks who are up for letting someone ride an Icelandic horse, will give lessons, or will just allow folks to come visit and meet a real Icelandic horse. Look on our Facebook page under documents for this information. We will wrap up September with a Viking Games clinic. We are looking forward to more adventures through the fall.



A rowdy bunch at the Hestafolk Club's Viking Games in September. From left, Lisa McKeen, Lauren Murphy, Kristen Peterson, Ben Calen, Claire Wolfe, trainer Freya Sturm, the evil knight Dummy, and Mary Chamberlin. Photo by Klaus.



KLETTAFJALLA

by Ellen Lichtenstein

Here are some photos from our summer events (clockwise from top left): Several KIHG members enjoyed a club trip to Winding River Resort in Colorado. Youth rider Camilla Buckley competed on Fjaladis from Winterhorse Park at the TIFE Show at Tamangur Icelandics, as did Sami Browneller (on left, below) and Abby Hickox; both photos by Nick Buckley. KIHG business member Leg Up Learning Solutions took horses to a day of healing for students at Evergreen High School after the tragic shooting on September 10. This picture shows Keilir from Klakahross with the students' artistic expression.



NEIHC

by Miette Jennings

The Northeast Icelandic Horse Club enjoyed a vibrant summer packed with group rides, competitions, and community events that brought riders together across the region. Reflecting on the season, Yvonne Davis of Depauville, NY shared, "All in all, this summer has been spectacular, but busy, and we are looking forward to fall riding and the inevitable slowdown as the season turns cooler."

In July, Icelandic horse enthusiasts congregated at West Wind Icelandics in Delhi, NY, for an enjoyable day of mounted games, laughter, and camaraderie. Fourteen riders participated in the games, which included drill team practice, an obstacle course, ribbon tölt, beer tölt, and "We Got the Beat!" (riding to the beat of selected songs). Kitty Hall-Thurnheer and her husband, John, newcomers to West Wind Farm, both rode in the games, with Kitty sharing, "Games Day was unbelievable. It was really special to be with so many Icelandics and their owners and just play with our horses! I've always wanted to ride in a drill team and Jana was such a great coach." Many thanks to Heleen Heyning for hosting, Jana Meyer for coaching and judging, and Alexis DeBoschnek for the yummy lunch.

Yvonne Davis and her Icelandic gelding Týr embraced a summer of exploration at Otter Creek Horse Trails. Tackling everything from steep slopes to ATVs and even low-flying jets, Týr proved himself a cool, brave, and reliable trail partner in his first full season. They also participated



NEIHC member Jean Ervasti attended an equine photography workshop in Iceland. Here she is photographed by Carolin Giese.



NEIHC member Barbara Sroka and Náttfari are front and center at the start of the North Salem Bridle Trails Association's 2025 group ride. Xenia von Lilien-Waldau and Valdis also took part in this six-mile ride through fields and forests.

in multiple clinics, including the Games Day at West Winds, an obstacle clinic hosted by The Horse Camps at Otter Creek, and a Mounted Police De-spooking Clinic and Equine Confidence Course. She felt that these unique, controlled events boosted both horse and rider confidence, strengthened their trust, improved

horsemanship skills, and enhanced their ability to handle challenging or stressful environments.

Also in July, Jean Ervasti and her daughter Lark participated in the Equine Photography & Riding Workshop at Hestaland Farm in Iceland. Led by professional photographer Carolin Giese of Lina Imag-

es, the workshop offered a unique blend of horseback riding, hands-on photography sessions on the farm, trips to scenic offsite locations, and instruction in both shooting and editing techniques.

At Merrimack Valley Icelandics (MVI) in Boxford, MA, summer was packed with activity. Horses stayed busy through June and July—thanks in part to a lot of hose time to beat the heat! MVI riders attended the Sólheimar Pentathlon series of National Ranking Shows in Tunbridge, VT (see below), bringing up to eight horses and connecting with new judges and friends. The lesson program continued throughout the season, with 12 riders participating in the farm's 10th annual custom trek to Hestaland in August—a much-loved tradition offering a refreshing change of scenery. As fall begins, preparations are in full swing for the Topsfield Fair Breed Demo, where 10 horses will showcase the Icelandic breed. MVI is also planning for Equine Affaire (November 6–9), where they'll host a booth and stall. Additionally trail riding has taken center stage in MVI's training schedule, with riders enjoying the freedom of the North Shore trail systems



At the NEIHC Games Day (left to right), John and Kitty-Hall Thurnheer, Emily Helck, and Lorie Smith practice their new drill team skills.



In a new twist on the team Four Gait competition, four mothers competed against their own daughters at the July Sólheimar Show in Vermont, with each of the four team members showing one gait. From left to right, the mothers are Aja Jennings, Ebba Meehan, Sigrún Brynjarsdóttir, and Jana Meyer; the daughters are Kamilla Brickner, Brynja Meehan, Miette Jennings, and Finja Meyer-Hoyt.

and riding on beautiful Crane Beach.

For Alicia and Nikkisue of Fire and Ice Icelandics in Limington, ME, summer was packed with horse-centered adventures at home and abroad—including their second horse shopping trip to Iceland. They shared behind-the-scenes moments on Instagram and Facebook, capturing the detailed prep work: weeks of reviewing videos and collaborating with trainers to narrow 26 prospects down to six. When the client arrived, she quickly found her dream horse. Between farm visits and horse trials, the two also took time to enjoy Iceland's iconic landscapes—waterfalls, glaciers, black sand beaches, puffins, and more.

Alicia also competed with her gelding Hnokki in two events in Iceland. At the Flúðir competition, they earned up to 8.49 in the preliminaries in B-Flokkur—the highest score in their class—but were unfortunately disqualified due to a rider

error. Despite the setback, it was only their second time in B-Flokkur, and it became a valuable learning experience ahead of the national competition next year at Landsmót. Later in the season, the pair reached the finals in both T3 and V2 classes at a sport competition, earning strong marks across several gaits. Now in her second year at Hólar University, Alicia is training green horses and working with an assigned school horse, continuing to grow as a rider and trainer. She's grateful for the journey and excited to share what she learns along the way.

In North Salem, MA, Barbara Sroka and Xenia von Lilien-Waldau, along with their horses Náttfari and Valdis, joined the North Salem Bridle Trails Association group ride, covering over six miles of fields, forests, and water crossings.

Ashley Bishop, Wendy Balinski, and Karleen Oosterwal attended the Tibetan Festival and Animal Blessing at Do Ngak

Kunphen Ling (DNKL) in Redding, CT with their Icelandic horses: Stoltur, Gjafar, and Klerkur. The group has been attending this annual event for 10 years and were especially moved this year by the peaceful gathering of over 50 dogs (many of them rescues), along with cats, goats, chickens, bunnies, and a rooster named Maverick. All listened in harmony as the monks offered prayers and blessings in a truly serene and touching moment.

Sólheimar Farm in Tunbridge, VT wrapped up its 2025 Pentathlon Series with shows in July, August, and September, offering a supportive environment for riders to learn, grow, and build stronger partnerships with their horses. This summer, riders added a fun twist to the ever-popular team four-gait class: At one show, it was mothers versus daughters, while another show featured randomly selected “grab-bag” teams, making for lively and memorable competition. Other show highlights included Sigrún Brynjarsdóttir achieving a personal best with a 7.3 in the T1 Finals on Markús from Sun Crest Farm, and youth rider Kamilla Brickner reaching a personal best of 6.3 in V6 Finals on Erpur frá Neðri-Hrepp. FEIF International Judge Hulda Geirsdóttir opened the September show with heartfelt words, reminding everyone that even when the world feels heavy, we are incredibly fortunate to have the joy of these special little horses—and the supportive community they bring into our lives. We're deeply thankful for everyone who comes together to celebrate this breed and for the horses that bring such meaning and richness to our journey.



Three Icelandic horses joined 50-plus dogs, cats, goats, chickens, and rabbits at the annual Tibetan Festival and Animal Blessing in Connecticut. From left, Ashley Bishop with Stoltur, Wendy Balinski with Gjafar, and Karleen Oosterwal with Klerkur.



Three Sirius Club members attended the cattle-sorting clinic at CRC Ranch in Marengo, OH. From left are Nancy Radebaugh, instructor Cam, and Sherry and Ron Hoover.

SIRIUS

by Janet Kuykendall

Summer flew by with climate craziness that made us feel like we were either riding through the Sahara Desert or the middle of the rainforest during monsoon season. It was one way or the other—nothing in-between. As a result, many of our club activities had to be canceled. Let's hope for better riding weather next summer.

In July, three of our club members took a trip to Iceland for the five-day Northern Exposure Islandshester trek. It was Nancy Radebaugh's second trek, but the first time for Lisa DesJardins and Cindy Gray. They rode with a loose herd of about 70 Icelandics and had two different horses each day. Nancy says, "I feel riding two different horses per day made me a better rider, as I had to figure out each horse's personality to make it a good ride for me and the horse both!"

On one of the rides, Nancy's guide

handed her a horse and said, "You really need to ride this horse." To Nancy, that could have meant several different things. She figured out that this horse did not like any contact with the bit, so she kept her hands very light, and they got along great. It was a great ride. The guide was surprised that Nancy liked him! He was fast and smooth. She also learned that if you put your trust in your horse, you'll likely have a good ride. They know the trails and the terrain. You just need to relax and enjoy the ride! She had a blast and can't wait to do it again.

Three Sirius Club members also attended the cattle-sorting clinic at CRC Ranch Horses in Marengo, OH. Sherry and Ron Hoover joined Nancy Radebaugh at the clinic. Instructor Cam was amazing, Nancy says. "He didn't just throw you and your horse to the wolves, he took it one step at a time, one horse at a time, building up their confidence at every go." Sherry's and Ron's horses had never been



In July, Sirius members Nancy Radebaugh (on left) and Cindy Gray took a five-day trek in Iceland. Joining them was Lisa DesJardins, who took the photo.

around cows before, so they were understandably very apprehensive. But in a matter of minutes, they were confident and pushing those cows like they'd been doing it their whole lives. Nancy commented, "Gunnar isn't very fast, but he is very confident and likes chasing them around. Although, in true Gunnar fashion, he just wants to make friends with them at first."

After the clinic, Ron, Sherry and Nancy went on a trail ride at the farm where Nancy boards Gunnar. It was fast and fun! The next day, Nancy took the Hoovers to Camp Falling Rock in Newark, OH, where they got to experience huge rock formations, a waterfall (well, it was dry at the time since we're in a drought), a covered bridge, and lovely trails.

And we have the opportunity to welcome new members Pam and Herb Livingston to our club. Pam doesn't show or compete, but fell 100% in love with Icelandic horses on their June 2023 trip to Iceland. Pam's Dutch warmblood had recently had a career-ending injury, and her husband's beloved AQHA mare had passed away. Pam says, "So we were primed for horse shopping prior to this trip! We imported two mares in the fall of 2023 and imported a mare and a gelding in the fall of 2024." (This was unintended, but that is a story for another time.) Along the way, their local rescue took in a herd of three Icelandics. Pam and her husband adopted two of them, about which she says, "Yes, are we crazy!" So now they have six Icelandics, along with a couple of "bigs," as they call them. Their herd includes her retired warmblood, as well as another rescue who is a permanent pasture fixture.

Pam admits, "We are lifelong horse



Nancy Radebaugh's horse, Gunnar, enjoys herding cows. When he's not trying to make friends with them, "he is very confident and likes chasing them around," she says.

people who found a new frontier with Icelandics and are 100% committed to this beautiful breed. We train with Alex Pregitzer, who is amazing, and we are loving the Icelandic horse journey we are on!”

Although the Livingstons have not been active in club activities yet, they plan to be. They play with their Icelandics every day on their own farm and trailer them to northern Michigan several times each year for trail riding in the apple and cherry orchards and vineyards. Pam says, “We definitely need to retire so we can embark further on our Icelandic journey!”



In the costume class at the Toppur Fun Show, Harry Potter is Mia Hilpipe on Hlér frá Gullberastöðum and the ghost is Ezra Wiegand on Gnýr frá Morastöðum.

TOPPUR

by Brandie Gean

On October 2, in the middle of “A Week in Icelandic Horse Paradise,” came the Toppur Fun Show: a day of lighthearted competition, a costume contest, and community spirit. This “Fun Day” stood as the prelude to the deeper competition to follow—the World Ranking Show that began on October 3—yet it carried its own excitement, warmth, and meaning for members, spectators, and volunteers alike.

The “Week in Icelandic Horse Paradise” at Harmony Icelandics in Truro, IA was held this year from September 29 through October 5. The week included: trail riding, offering scenic treks over more than 1,000 acres of trails and natural terrain; lessons with FEIF-level trainers, including Guðmundur (“Mummi”) Skúlason, Carrie Lyons Brandt, and Terral Hill; a clinic with National Team trainer Oilil Amble; a Development Team module; and the World

Ranking Show, including a new “Harmony Tölt” class.

By design, the Fun Show was a gateway: A chance for riders less experienced in showing to get comfortable with a ring, judges, and fellow competitors in a relaxed setting. Toppur Icelandic Horse Club members played a pivotal role in making the Fun Show (and the broader week) successful. Many took lessons earlier in the week under the expert FEIF instructors, reinforcing their skills and building confidence heading into the show day. Several entered the Fun Show classes, bringing their horses and support, helping generate energy, competition, and community. Some members also went on to compete in the World Ranking Show that followed, stepping up to the higher level of competition.

Crucially, many Toppur members contributed as volunteers: staffing, organizing, assisting the judges, managing stabling logistics and paddocks, coordinating times in the warm-up ring, and more. That volunteer corps helps turn an ambitious multi-day event into reality.

In short, Toppur members didn’t just show up as competitors—they showed up as builders, supporters, and ambassadors. It was a microcosm of what makes the Icelandic horse community strong: friendship, support, learning, and a shared love of our horses. It set a tone of inclusion and enthusiasm for the more competitive days ahead.



During the “Week in Icelandic Horse Paradise” at Harmony Icelandics in Iowa, Kelly-Zenyatta Glosser and Spaði frá Hallkelsstaðahlið competed in an obstacle course. At right, Lila Petersen rode Dorrit frá Lambastöðum on the Harmony trails.



Club member Hayl Bergeland rode Hlér frá Gullberastöðum at the Toppur Show in October.



SPOTLIGHT ON MONTAIRE

by Carol Andrew

For this third installment of our series shining a spotlight on farms that host major USIHC events, we travel to Virginia to visit Montaire Icelandic Horses in the town of Middleburg. Montaire hosts clinics and shows for all levels of riding and all Icelandic horse disciplines, from fun shows to breeding shows to National Ranking shows. In 2023 they hosted the North American Youth Cup and they plan to host World Ranking shows in the future. In addition to horse activities, Montaire supports cultural activities that introduce Icelandic customs, culture, and cuisine to the Washington D.C. area, such as the Icelandic Independence Day picnic, which they will host again in 2026. To learn more, I interviewed Montaire's owner, Antje Freygang.

Q. Tell us about the history of your farm. How did it get started and what facilities do you have now?

A. After many years of fascination with the Icelandic horse, I had a growing awareness of what kinds of facilities are required to truly support the best of breeding and training them. I wanted to see the United States Icelandic community grow, and I wanted US riders and horses to be able to compete successfully in international venues.

In 2015, I found the property that



Antje Freygang, owner of Montaire Icelandics in Virginia, has spent the last 10 years developing her property into a premier Icelandic horse training center. Her key focus is on education.



Nicole Kempf, the head trainer at Montaire Icelandics, is a world expert in all aspects of Icelandic horse sport, breeding, training. At Montaire, she has developed programs to encourage riders of all levels and ages. Here she gives a high score at a show.

would become Montaire Icelandic Horse Farm, nestled among the historic horse venues of the Virginia piedmont. I fell in love with its beauty, and with its clear potential to be that regional training and learning center I knew was so badly needed. The following four years were devoted to turning these 125 acres with its small barn and riding arena into that dream.

We aspire to be a key education, training, and competition hub and have invested in facilities that match the quality and requirements of international sport. Our facilities now include a regulation-sized covered arena with footing appropriate to supporting tölt, a 20-meter round pen, a 250-meter FEIF regulation oval track and a 300-meter FEIF regulation pace track, and an exercise treadmill. There are multiple barns, pastures, dry lots, and wooded

trails, including a completely new natural horsemanship trail. We are working to add a teaching facility with state-of-the-art video and streaming capabilities that will enable our extensive learning program to be shared nationally.

Our services span the range of activities and interests unique to the Icelandic horse. We offer riding lessons, both with school horses and with riders who own their own horses. We train our own cadre of performance horses and keep the school horses fit and responsive. We have wonderful trail riding opportunities on the property and nearby. Currently we have about 25 horses on the farm: There are 10 school horses, eight boarders, one breeding stallion, one foal, two breeding mares, and a group of three retirees.

Owning Montaire Icelandic Horse



During a Montaire show, Nicole runs through the obstacle course with the participants, explaining each of the different obstacles and how to achieve a good score.

Farm has enabled me to structure the venues, the environment, and the programs in a way that I believe is ideal. Being able to offer this to Icelandic horse enthusiasts is what I find most rewarding.

Q. What makes Montaire unique?

A. While the quality and the overall beauty of the farm make it special, what makes it truly unique is the presence of Montaire's Head Trainer, Nicole Kempf. Nicole is one of the world's leading experts across all aspects of Icelandic horse sport, breeding, training, and rider education.

Her credentials are so unique that she

has been able to come to the United States since 2019 under the O1-A Visa for people of "extraordinary ability"—the so-called "genius visa." Nicole is one of only 13 trainers in the IPZV, Germany's Icelandic Horse Association, with the "Ausbilder" (Master Trainer) certification. With more than 25,000 members, the IPZV is the largest national association within FEIF. Nicole is one of only 48 FEIF Level 4 trainers worldwide, and the only Level 4 trainer now in the US. She works with both the IPZV and FEIF to establish credentials and qualifications for horse trainers, teachers, riders, and horse breeding activities. Further, she is an inter-

national FEIF Sport Judge.

The importance of having the consistent and regular counsel of such a key member of FEIF to help structure programs and processes in the US, and to keep them aligned with international standards, cannot be overstated. Since 2019, Nicole has established a range of programs and activities at Montaire that encourage the interest and participation of riders of all ages and skill levels, from lead-line youngsters to advanced riders looking to complete official certification programs. For example, to meet the needs of US riders, Nicole Kempf has structured a local rider certification program that mirrors the German model of rider education.

Given our key focus on education here at Montaire, we could not have found a more qualified Head Trainer. Nicole has so many years of experience teaching riders to work with horses of all levels and has had good success in finding good matches and building good rider-horse partnerships. We work to ensure the foundations for these partnerships by encouraging riders who purchase a horse from us to let it stay at the farm for at least six months while they take lessons with us. For us at Montaire, safety of both rider and horse comes first.

Q. What inspired your passion for the Icelandic horse?

A. I can't remember a time when I wasn't fascinated by horses—all horses. As my family originally came from Germany, I was able to spend vacation time there taking riding lessons. I prepared for and acquired the German Riding Badge and grew to love the sport of dressage. In the 1990s, I was living in New Mexico and furthering my dressage training with Ulla Hudson. I was surprised to find that in addition to her



During the 2023 North American Youth Cup, participants and volunteers (and their dogs) posed for a group portrait between the paddocks at Montaire.

warmblood horses, Ulla was also training Icelandic horses to move in that beautifully balanced way that is the object of dressage. I just couldn't take my eyes off one black Icelandic beauty with a flowing mane, a kind eye, and a fascinating way of going. This would be my first encounter with the Icelandic horse.

I was amazed at the partnership that this Icelandic horse offered me from the start. He was so responsive to my lightest aid; he was tuned in to me in a way that I hadn't yet experienced with other horses I'd ridden. He was so grounded and self-assured—nothing seemed to faze him or distract him. I felt safe. And of course, he had tölt! I was mesmerized by this effortless, exciting way of moving, and my time tölting

the byways of New Mexico with him are among my fondest horse memories. Later, I experienced the ultimate exhilaration of flying pace. As I got to know the Icelandic horse better as a breed, I found that these endearing characteristics were pretty typical.

Q. What is your vision for the future? What advice can you give others thinking about starting an Icelandic horse farm?

A. If you want to start an Icelandic horse farm like Montaire, learn as much as you can before you start! Be confident in your own knowledge and skills in riding and raising horses. A location close to a big city is a good idea, and climate also plays a big role. You need to have a good space



When teaching young children, Nicole likes to make things fun. Here, Ainsley enjoys dismounting by sliding down the rump of one of Montaire's well-trained school horses.



The water obstacle is one of many obstacles on the new natural horsemanship trail Nicole designed at Montaire. Here, Ava successfully rides her horse through the pool.

with good access to trails and a facility that can continue growing. Starting your own horse farm also requires a certain level of financial independence.

My vision for the future of Montaire is to continue to promote the Icelandic horse and to grow the Icelandic horse community at large. We will continue to focus on young riders and on helping current riders improve their skills. While horse shows are a fun and educational experience and do support our teaching mission, I want to be clear that Montaire's primary mission is to educate people about the Icelandic horse. I find it so important to keep up with and to implement the growing knowledge of the Icelandic horse and its requirements, from riding and training to nutrition and environment. We also have a vision that in every state in the United States we can educate more established trainers and coaches, who are already conversant with the basic knowledge about teaching horses and riders, about the unique Icelandic breed.

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WORLD CHAMPIONS

by Nicki Esdorn, photos by Katie Daly



Team USA marches in the opening ceremony of the 2025 Icelandic Horse World Championships in Switzerland. Riders Ásta Covert, Caeli Cavanagh, Alexandra Dannenmann, and Jennifer Melville were supported by team leader Jana Meyer, team trainer Olil Amble, and many others.

The Icelandic Horse World Championships take place every other year, somewhere in Europe. This year, they were held August 3-10 in Birrenstorf, Switzerland. Four riders, Ásta Covert, Caeli Cavanagh, and Alex Dannenmann, who are members of the US National Team, and Jennifer Melville, an American who lives in Germany, represented the United States. They were joined by team leader Jana Meyer and team trainer Olil Amble. The three US-based riders qualified in tryouts held as part of the USIHC Virtual Spring Show, judged by five FEIF International Sport Judges. Jennifer qualified for a “flex spot”; she has represented the US in several previous World Championships.

Ásta rode Gígur frá Ketilssstöðum

(IS2014176181), scoring 7.0 in T1 Tölt and 6.97 in V1 Four Gait. Jennifer rode Eldur frá Mið-Fossum (IS2015135536), scoring 6.67 in T2 Loose Rein Tölt and 6.47 in V1. Caeli rode Dimma frá Feti (IS2018286909), scoring 6.60 in T1 and 6.30 in V1. Alex rode Ára frá Langholti (IS2012287405), scoring 6.23 in T1 and 6.60 in V1.

Team USA ended up in 11th place, calculated from the two highest scores in each test—an excellent showing, given that we had representation in only three of the seven tests offered. Ásta and Gígur were the highest scoring pair, missing their chance to ride in the V1 Four Gait B-Finals by a hair—0.05 points! Complete results can be found on the FEIF website, www.FEIF.org. See also FEIF’s report on

the championships in the FEIF News section of this issue. After the competition, we asked each member of Team USA to answer a few questions.

1. In the months before the World Championships, how did you prepare yourself and your horse for this highest level of competition, both physically and mentally?

Ásta: When I made the decision to participate in the World Championships, after qualifying again this year, I sought additional help from the National Team trainer, Olil Amble. She has been my trainer for a long time and knows both Gígur and me very well, so we were able to do lessons through virtual meetings. This worked out great for me to push myself and to get feedback more frequently

leading up to the trip. She then worked with us in person at the World Championships' venue.

Jenny: Preparation began months in advance—though in many ways, it's the result of years of learning and experience. Since Eldur and I have not been together for very long, our focus was on building a strong foundation. Physically, we followed a structured training program that emphasized not only sport performance, but also overall fitness, balance, and responsiveness. I dedicated significant time to refining the basics and strengthening our communication, which I believe is the key to trust and a truly harmonious partnership. I regularly stepped back to look at the bigger picture and made adjustments as needed.

Mental preparation was equally important—for both of us. I kept our training varied and engaging to build confidence and to ensure that Eldur stayed motivated and relaxed. We also practiced competition scenarios to become comfortable performing under pressure. Maintaining a calm, consistent routine that keeps my horse happy is essential, and I also place great importance on finding the right feeding program for each individual horse to support both physical health and mental balance.

Alex: Whether I am preparing for the World Championships or for another

competition, my routine does not differ significantly. I always strive to keep my training varied and well-balanced. Trail riding is particularly important to me, as it allows my horse to stay mentally balanced and capable of performing at its best on the oval track. It also strengthens the bond between horse and rider, which is always at the forefront for me.

I usually train on the oval track no more than twice a week to work specifically on the classes that I signed up for. Otherwise, as mentioned, I do trail riding, longeing, indoor training, and I occasionally incorporate treadmill work. There is no fixed schedule; it remains flexible and is always adapted to my horses' needs on any given day. Regular breaks are also an important part of the training process, allowing the horses' muscles to recover and ensuring their longterm well-being.

My own physical fitness is, of course, also essential. Since I ride several horses, I remain in training myself. Due to a shoulder injury that persisted throughout the season, I also attended regular physiotherapy and osteopathy sessions in preparation for the World Championships. Regular mental training is a fundamental part of my daily routine. For that reason, I place the highest importance on my horses' mental strength and on the partnership between horse and rider.

Caeli: My journey with Dimma began

back in 2024. I got a fabulous opportunity to purchase and train with a talented horse, originally with a plan for resale. I wanted to figure out a way I could train with a horse and a coach in circumstances that would push my riding to a new level. My friend and coach, Sigvaldi Lárus Guðmundsson, and I picked Dimma out as a horse that really caught our attention. She stayed in Iceland, in training with him, where he built up her talent and nurtured her spark and sass, and I went to Iceland about every other month for about a week at a time to learn from them both. It worked better than I could have hoped: Not only did I get to know Dimma and prepare for the World Championships with her, I also found that it improved my riding with my horses at home, with me reaching personal bests both with my four-gaited competition horse, Dropi, as well as my five-gaited horse, Peyr.

Mental training for me is always tricky—I put a lot of pressure on myself, which has previously led to me choking under pressure. Our goal for mental training from the beginning was two-fold: First, to boost my confidence and increase my tolerance of risk, and second, to shift my ideas of success. The first one was really hard for me, because I really fear making mistakes in front of people, but Sigvaldi and his wife, Marta, really encouraged me to try, fail, fail better, and then



At left, Alex Dannenmann and Ára frá Langholti show a happy and expressive trot. At right, Caeli Cavanagh and Dimma frá Feti cruise along in a powerful tölt.



Though not a member of Team USA, 80-year-old pace racer Cora Wijmans of the Netherlands (at left) stole everyone's heart with her explosive speed. Jennifer Melville (right), who lives in Germany, has represented the US at several World Championships. Here she rides Eldur frá Mið-Fossum in elegant loose-rein tölt.

really pull something off that we were proud of. It helped me too that Dimma is so powerful and forward. Every time I hesitated, she answered with a feeling of calm power that was pretty infectious. The second goal was much easier, mostly because, at the core of it, my hopes for the World Championships were to use the experience as a way to improve my riding, represent my community with pride, practice competing at a higher level, and continue to find ways and methods to improve access and opportunities for US-based riders to compete at the world level. With that attitude shift, I could feel as if I succeeded even before we stepped onto the track in Switzerland, which really helped me to translate more confidence into my riding.

2. Did you do specific things to make the experience of traveling and being at the World Championships easier, calmer, or even more fun for your horse? Did you do something specific to make your own experience less stressful? What tips can you share?

Ásta: Surround yourself with the right people. My husband, Will, our veterinarian, Dr. Troy, and my trainer, Olil Amble, helped me feel at ease with the travel. The agent that planned all of Gígur's travel from California to Switzerland helped a lot too, by keeping me informed every step of the way. Gígur was the horse who traveled the farthest of all the horses that competed at the World

Championships this year, even though maybe he didn't have the hardest trip—like the horses traveling by truck all the way from Finland and Sweden.

Jana Meyer, our team leader, deserves a shout-out too. She made me feel at ease with everything on site at the World Championships. And, of course, I got a lot of great support from the USIHC president, Virginia Lauridsen, and my groom, Gentry. Finally, I cannot forget to mention my biggest cheerleader, my daughter Bella.

Jenny: For my horse, I divided the trip into two parts, because the full journey would have been far too long for him. I was very fortunate that my dear friend Kirsten, from Islandpferde von der Schmidtmühle, welcomed us to her beautiful facility for one night on each leg of the trip. This allowed me to maintain our feeding routine and give Eldur time to relax before continuing the journey.

At the World Championships, I kept his feeding and handling routines as close to our home environment as possible. I made sure the stabling area stayed calm so he could rest between events, and I brought our own hay and a fan to help him stay comfortable in the heat.

For myself, I focused on what I could control and kept my mindset grounded in gratitude and curiosity, rather than pressure. Being surrounded by a supportive team and fellow riders made a huge difference. I also gave myself moments to

simply take in the experience—it helped me stay centered and reminded me why I love this sport.

Alex: I believe that good preparation eliminates most of the stress. My horses—I had two with me, as options—live in Germany, so they did not have to travel as far as other horses did. This year, I experienced the entire process more consciously and made a point of turning it into an enjoyable time. Once again, I tried to spend as much free time as possible with my horses on site. We went cycling with them in the mornings and turned them out in the paddocks frequently during the day so that they didn't have to stand in their stalls for too long, but we also brought them back in whenever they seemed a little tired. To help them cope with the heat, we installed fans in their boxes and showered them regularly. Of course, all of this is standard practice and something we do at every competition. The sprinklers provided on site were a great way to cool down, and we made frequent use of them.

Caeli: For Dimma, the thing that really helps her feel her best is doing things. She likes having a job and staying busy. So one of the first things I did was to take her on long walks in the woods and around the grounds. She also really likes to be groomed and get scratched on her neck, so I tried to do that often.

I think the thing that helped me the most was to make sure I had good people

around me. Sigvaldi, Marta, and Jana all know me so well at this point and really helped me get into the right frame of mind. I also leaned a lot on my friends at home, Carrie Brandt and Lala Benson, who gave me lots of late night pep talks. One thing that really helped me a lot was also the support from the Icelandic team. Because my horse came from Iceland directly, I was under quarantine with the Icelandic team, which also meant I had to limit my interaction with my own team. I was really worried at first, because I can be rather shy with new people. My Icelandic is decent, but definitely slower when I'm stressed, and I would be cut off from the rest of Team USA. But the Icelandic team really supported me, often being the first people to congratulate me after a good ride and a good practice. It was so amazing to see how much they really worked together. It was really inspiring.

3. Did you have a specific goal for this competition, and did you reach it? Are you happy with your and your horse's performance? What went right?

Ásta: My goal was to have a clean performance with good gait transitions, and I feel like we accomplished that. It was definitely a big stepping stone for what is yet to come for us. I was very pleased with how confident Gígur felt on the big stage. It felt like we were riding at home. I had always believed he would handle it that way, but you never know till you are in that situation how the horse feels about it. I was very proud to be the highest placed US rider at the World Championships. To end up only one horse away from the B-finals in V1 Four Gait was bittersweet for sure.

Jenny: My main goal was to represent our country with pride and to showcase the partnership my horse and I have built. Like many competitors, I had performance goals in mind, but above all, I wanted us to show up as our best selves and demonstrate harmony and trust on the track. In that sense, I'm very proud of what we achieved.

There were some truly special moments that reflected all the work and heart we've put into this journey. While there is always room to grow, I'm genuinely happy with our performance. What went right was the deep connection we maintained—even under pressure, my



Ásta Covert and Gígur frá Ketilsstöðum, shown here in canter, were the highest-scoring pair on Team USA—watch out for them in the next World Championships!

horse stayed with me completely, and that meant everything. We were both relaxed and present, which is something I never take for granted in such an intense atmosphere. That experience made us even stronger as a team and marked a real milestone in our partnership. I can't wait to continue developing with him and to come back even stronger in 2027.

Alex: Due to my shoulder injury, I was grateful to be able to compete at all. The decision regarding which of the two horses I should ride was not an easy one. However, this winter I will actively focus on improving my own physical condition so that next time I can put into practice everything that wasn't possible for me this time. Of course, I know what we are capable of, and I will try my best to show it next time. Nevertheless, I am absolutely delighted with Ára, who gave me a wonderful feeling and was fully with me in every moment. That, to me, is always the most important thing, and what allows me to leave the competition feeling content. Also knowing it was a good experience for my horse, too.

Caeli: I was quite happy with both my rides. We ended up in the middle of the pack in both V1 Four Gait and T1 Tölt, and considering how young Dimma is and how we are only just beginning to work together, I felt like we really had moments

to be very proud of. I was very happy with how we did and how much promise our performance shows for the future. I was especially happy with our performance in T1, where we received scores between 6.3 all the way up to 7.2, with a total final of 6.6. I loved especially how so many parts of our programs really clicked into place, and how Dimma really shone on the track. She has such a beautiful and powerful presence.

One of my biggest goals is figuring out how we can further develop the US team, especially how we can continue to strengthen the US-based rider contingent. I feel like each time I go, I run up against a new road block or puzzle that I am determined to solve. This time really showed me that fundraising and the financial aspect of horse import and export will be our biggest long term barrier. In order to field a full US-based rider team, each rider has to raise upwards of \$40,000 to make the trip, largely drawing from the same group of people as their teammates, if they can't fund themselves. Imagine that with a group of 10 people drawing funding from the same base group—it really isn't feasible under the current paradigm. This has really lit a fire under me to find a different way we can fund Team USA. I have a couple of ideas in the works. We will see where they lead!

RO-FINISH WITH JOY

by Katherine Forrest



Katherine Forrest and Njónla from Cornell at Distance Days in Vermont.

There's something about our current cultural politics that really puts horse sports in perspective. No matter the discipline, at the end of the day we humans are sitting atop a moving equine for fun. Riding fast, riding far, around an oval, out in the wilderness—it's for our enjoyment, under rules created by humans.

This all felt particularly salient at the 89th annual Distance Days in August at the Green Mountain Horse Association, where I was planning on tackling 40 Vermont miles with my mare Njónla. As I'm sure is already evident by the title of this article, things did not go according to plan, but the ride was such a profound learning experience that I wanted to share a bit about it with the readers of the *Quarterly*.

We set out on the 40-mile ride, with the competitors riding other distances starting close behind us; the 25- and 15-mile courses were also being ridden that day. This event was Competitive Trail vs. Endurance, so the start was rolling, which meant that whoever started last in the 40-mile group was only a few minutes ahead of the first starter in the 25. We were in that "final 40" position, so while Njónla had horses ahead of her, she had even more behind her, including one she knew from home—a "big horse" friend of hers named Rango. As the starting draw would have it, Rango was the first 25 starter, so I knew that we would likely see him, but didn't know exactly when. We rode alone for the first 17.5 miles, in perfect cool weather, with views for days and the feeling so many of us strive for: "I'm alone, yet in partnership ... in nature with my horse." It's unique to ride for so many miles alone in these events, and I loved it.

RANGO ARRIVES

We arrived at the hold at 17.5 miles—a mandatory stop with veterinary evaluation—without being caught by Rango, but within a few minutes there he was. I should pause here by saying that Rango and Njónla have a bit of a love affair. So by the time his rider walked him over to us and asked if he could eat his mash with Njónla (horses usually eat better with buddies at the hold), I knew that our solo ride time had come to an end. There was a brief moment when I thought I might try to get Njónla out of the hold alone, since we could technically leave ahead of Rango, before realizing how utterly ridiculous that idea was. Both horses were head deep in each other's snack buckets, seemingly telling stories of the trail and wondering why they had been kept apart for so long.

We headed out together: Njónla, Rango, and the horse Rango had been traveling with, Alvin, who Njónla also knew from previous competitive rides. Needless to say, Njónla was delighted to be with her pals, and we left the hold as an energetic trio. At this point I was contemplating our next move, because while Rango and Alvin were stopping at 25 miles, Njónla and

I were supposed to be continuing on for another 15. This was going to be a particularly challenging feat, because the trail went directly back to camp. From there, the 40-milers kept going straight while the 25s made a right turn and were done.

The thought of implementing this and splitting up the trio was not pleasant. I noodled on it while we rode along between the hold and camp, contemplating the purpose and meaning of this event, for me and for my horse. What would it mean to ride 40 miles rather than 25? Is it fair to ask Njónla to leave her friends just to give me a better score sheet? I knew she could do it—her fitness was not in question. I knew I could ask her to do it—to leave her pals and ride off for another 15 miles (a solid three additional hours with gnarly hills), and that she would.

But there wasn't a world in which I thought those three hours would be joyful—not like the ride we were having as I was contemplating all of this, my sassy mare galloping up hills that we certainly would have walked if we were alone, simply not to be outdone by her boyfriends. It was at the top of one of these



What's the point of riding 40 miles? Is it to be a good partner for your horse, or to prove something?



The road ahead: Should we ride on alone (and get a better score), or stay with our horse friends (and have a happier horse)?

hill gallops that I decided we would stop at 25 miles.

As soon as I made the decision, I felt immediate relief. I let go of all the anticipatory planning of how I'd navigate our turnoff at 25 miles, whether I needed to slow our pace to prepare for the extra miles, and told my friends I'd be finishing with them. It felt great to say it out loud! From that point on (it was probably about mile 21), I just let Njónla carry me at whatever speed she wanted, stayed out of her way, and knew we would certainly finish with gas in the tank.

RIDER OPTION?

Here's where it got particularly entertaining. In the distance riding disciplines, my decision to stop is called "Rider Option." This is the situation where the rider decides to stop, but the horse has not been pulled by a veterinarian, i.e., it is still "fit to continue" (the designation necessary to be allowed to leave a hold, as well as to receive a completion of a ride). Interestingly, you can be pulled after you finish an entire ride—I've seen it happen—if your horse is not deemed

"fit to continue," even if you have ridden all of the miles! So when I came into the finish (of the 25) with Rango and Alvin, I announced to the "in timer" that I was "Rider Optioning." I untacked Njónla, got her finish pulse as if I were finishing normally, and presented her to the vet for her final exam. I trotted her out as usual and the vet said "nothing wrong there!" I said I knew. The conversation proceeded as follows:

Vet: "So you think she's tired?"

Me: "Nope."

Vet: "So you're tired?"

Me: "Nope."

He looked at me, confused. I told him, "We had a great ride, and I want to finish with joy!" He cocked his head like a dog who hears a high pitched noise, before saying, "Okay, so 'end on a high note'?" And I say, "Sure."

The emphasis on why I was stopping with a perfectly sound horse is because a "Rider Option" needs to be coded for the ride's record-keeping. The details of these codes are beyond the scope of this brief article, but there are a variety of designations, such as RO-lame, RO-metabolic,

RO-surface factors, and so on. Suffice it to say "RO-Finish With Joy" is not an official code.

I thought about this experience a lot (enough to write about it!) because of the reactions of folks at the ride, event officials and fellow riders alike. If you don't finish a competitive ride you have started, there's generally a good reason that's not "good" at all! I heard "What happened?" "Is Njónla okay?" often enough that I had a canned answer by the time night fell. It went something like, "She's fine, thanks so much for asking. Yes, we had a great day! We rode with friends in the 25 out of the hold and stopped with them. I wanted to finish with joy." I realized that of all the competitive miles I have logged with my horses, the ones I didn't finish this year at Distance Days are some of my proudest.

Njónla and I did her post-ride care (mash, electrolytes, full body sponge before applying cooler, poultice and wrap legs, unbraid mane, walk away from the bustle of camp to graze in tallest grass available), just as we always do. She didn't care that she had run 15 fewer miles than we had planned, and neither did I.



"RO" means "Rider Option," meaning the rider can decide not to finish a planned endurance ride even though her horse is judged "fit to continue." But there is no official code equal to "RO-Finish With Joy."

ASK JANET

by Amelia Carney

It was a chilly January evening during our first lesson together. Janet Mulder stood in the center of the indoor arena, bundled up in various items of winter clothing. Tryggur and I shuffled along the outside of the arena. We were both stiff. We resembled the little tin man from *The Wizard of Oz* missing his oil can. My hands were held awkwardly high and close to my body. Tryggur's steps were short, and he broke gait with what felt like every other step. It was a ghastly sight for anyone who knew how to ride an Icelandic horse.

"Let's speed things up and see what he's got," said Janet.

As I attempted to ask for tölt, Tryggur dropped his nose and immediately began trotting. After making our way around half the arena, he then spooked at the jumping blocks in the corner, sending us a couple of feet to the right of where we had been. I was both surprised and proud that I was still on his back. As we stood there, taking in what had just happened, Janet smiled and said, "That's alright, let's try again." We had a lot of work to do.

When I had purchased Tryggur one month prior, I was told he had behavioral problems and was missing his tölt. I hadn't owned a horse in four years, after selling my mare to focus on school in 2020. I'd felt inspired to ride again after taking a trip back to Guðmar Pétursson's farm, Hestaland, in Iceland in August 2024. I was riding the trails with Guðmar's son, Nökkvi, taking in the beauty of the landscape. Remembering the teenage version of myself in 2017 as an intern there, running in the fields to catch horses for training, I thought, "Why the heck did I ever stop doing this?" When I returned from my trip and was back in Alaska, I reached out to the Icelandic horse community to see what horses were out there.

VARIATION IS THE THEME

Janet was the first person I contacted. Janet and I had met when I was around five years old. Her parents, Bernie and Jeannette Willis, own Arctic Arrow Farm in Wasilla, Alaska, which had long posed as the gathering place for Icelandic horse lovers in the area. Janet helped my family



Janet Mulder on Prins, Amelia ("Millie") Carney on Tryggur, and Grace Dietz on Stella (left to right) enjoying a fall ride at Eklutna Lake, Alaska. Photo thanks to a stranger on the trail!

purchase our very first Icelandic horses. My childhood years were spent watching my mother take clinics at Arctic Arrow. Janet was always present, despite having a busy life as a mother, being employed full-time, and giving riding lessons after work and on weekends.

Currently, Janet owns AK Ice Farm in Anchorage, Alaska. She is a FEIF Level 1 Trainer and a Tölt in Harmony Instructor Level 1, and has served on the USIHC Board of Directors for many years, first as head of the Leisure Committee and currently as secretary. She is the "Icelandic Horse Guru" of our community. When Janet isn't doing all of the above, she can

be found trail riding with her favorite horse, Prins, in the Alaskan Wilderness. She and Prins were featured on the cover of the last issue of the *Quarterly*.

After I purchased Tryggur, I kept him at a small barn in Anchorage that had an indoor arena, so we could escape the frozen ground during training. Janet and I proceeded to meet once a week for five months. She would have us practice several dressage movements to help relieve our stiffness and find balance. What I love most about Janet's instruction is how much variation there is in each one-hour lesson. One moment we will be practicing shoulder-in, then turn on the

haunches, then 20-meter circles, then back to shoulder-in, then gait transitions. It kept both Tryggur and me sharp, and it was amazing how quickly his body and movements would change. We found our tölt very quickly, and with each lesson it became stronger.

LEAVE YOUR COMFORT ZONE

Tryggur's behavior also changed. Prior to our lessons, he would often rear when he was reluctant to do something. Especially when leaving the barn. One of my lesson days with Janet was spent outside the barn for that reason. We walked about a mile from the barn, with Janet by our side. She gave me instructions on how to correct his bad behavior and how to be patient with him. The best piece of advice she gave me for this was when she told me that the more time we spent outside of our comfort zone, the better we would become. I rode Tryggur further from the barn almost every day. The rearing lessened with each ride until one day he just stopped.

Although we met once a week,



Janet riding Njáll in a show. In Alaska, Janet is the "Icelandic Horse Guru." Photo by Jeff Points.

Janet's instruction was not limited to the lesson day. I proceeded to call and text her with questions ... at all hours. "Who do you use for pet insurance?", "Does this look normal on his hoof?", "Do you think he is overweight?" At 9 p.m. on a Wednesday night, I found myself calling Janet to help shop for new tack for Tryggur. Growing up, I had had hand-me-downs and I was not up-to-date with the newer, nicer tack that was available. Janet and I were on the phone for an hour filling my online shopping cart that night. I'm not sure which one of us had more fun.

A GUIDE AND FRIEND

In the spring, Janet held a mini-clinic series at AK Ice farm. This genius idea came from another member of the Alaskan Icelandic horse community, Alana Wright. She had commented on how we were all always texting or calling Janet with random questions about Icelandic horses. The topics in the mini-clinics included "Tack and Equipment," "Beginning Training of Young Horses," "Awareness and Partnership," and "Intro to Tölt." New and returning members of our Alaska Icelandic horse group participated. The clinics were full of useful information and included demonstrations, lectures, and an open forum for questions. Though the series likely didn't reduce the random texts and calls Janet got, we all learned something, and it brought the community together.

Janet also held a two-day riding clinic at Arctic Arrow farm this summer. I set an alarm on my phone to sign up, knowing spots would fill very quickly. Riders had two lessons per day, with lunch in between. The "lunch" was more of an "eat while interrogating Janet with questions" session that I'm not sure was included in her itinerary. Nonetheless, she answered all of our questions regarding riding and Icelandic horses, while still managing to eat her lunch.

Tryggur now lives on a farm in the upper Anchorage Hillside. He enjoys the company of six other horses, a pig, chickens, goats, and sheep. He has a large pasture and believes he is the wild stallion. When on trail rides, he often leads the expedition. His ears forward, head held high, he walks excitedly through the woods. He rarely spooks and tölts quite often. We often incorporate the dressage



Millie Carney and Tryggur now make a good team, thanks to Janet's patient instruction, through individual lessons, clinics and mini-clinics, and answering endless questions.

techniques Janet taught us while on the trail. With each ride, his movements have become more animated and purposeful, his stride more forward and engaged. He carries with him all the confidence to take on the rugged Alaskan terrain. With style.

We would not be at this point in our training today if it weren't for our work with Janet. She not only acted as a guide for our training with tölt, but for everything else too. She has a passion for the sport and shares it with excitement. I hope every Icelandic horse community has a "Janet" to look up to and have as a guide. I value and am thankful to have her as an instructor, a leader, and a lifelong friend. I know if I ever have a question about Icelandic horses, I can ask Janet.

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FARRIER SCHOOL

by Mouse Hedrick

There's a saying in the farrier world: No Foot, No Horse. Hoof care is a contentious topic at the best of times—from barefoot to hoof boots to glue-ons to traditional nail-on steel shoes, everyone has their preference—but in the Icelandic and gaited horse community, there seems to be even more controversy. In Iceland itself, many trainers and horse owners know how to shoe and trim; they may not shoe all their horses, or even shoe on a regular basis, but they can easily tack a shoe on in a pinch, or discuss shoeing strategies with their farrier to address movement or gait issues.

Over the last three years, I have been working at Thor Icelandics in Hudson, NY, alongside owners Kristján Kristjánsson and Jóhanna Guðmundsdóttir, helping to start their young horses under saddle. When I first began working for Kristján and Jóhanna, I had the bare minimum of farrier knowledge. I could theoretically pull a shoe, I could tell when something was blatantly wrong—a missing or twisted shoe, a sprung heel, etc. Then I started helping Kristján with the shoeing, mostly just handing him tools, holding legs, and bugging him about why he was doing what he was doing (I'm not sure that last one counts as "helping"). Eventually, I asked him to teach me to shoe, and he agreed—he's since told me that he didn't expect me to make it through one leg, let alone a whole horse.

In any case, I made it through those first trims and began pulling shoes for him, learning to drive nails and eventually shoeing my personal horses under Kristján's guidance. One thing that caught my attention was that the tiniest changes, like a slightly thicker shoe, a few millimeters' different placement, or a slight adjustment to the balance of the hind hooves, could noticeably change how the horse felt under saddle. I think the moment I decided I really wanted to become a farrier, not just learn how to tack on a shoe, was when we changed the shoeing on my horse's hind end just a bit—and the next day he felt completely different to ride. He was by no means perfect, but at least his shoeing wasn't making the movement I was asking him for more difficult.



Steve Kraus of the Cornell Farrier Program teaches Mouse Hedrick how to remove glue-on shoes from Katherine Forrest's endurance horse Njóla. (Read about Njóla on pages 32-33.)

THE CORNELL PROGRAM

The more I learned, the more I realized just how much I didn't know and I decided to apply to the General Farrier Program offered by Cornell University's College of Veterinary Medicine. I wanted to learn to work on non-Icelandic horses and to have the time to really focus on my farrier skills. The instructor in the Cornell Program, Steve Kraus, an AFA Certified Journeyman Farrier and an inductee into the International Farriers Hall of Fame, is well respected in the farrier and horse community for his therapeutic shoeing. I was especially eager to explore the therapeutic side of farriery. For much of my life, I wanted to become a large animal vet, so the opportunity to work on horses in Cornell's vet hospital, and to learn how farriers and vets can work together on lameness and pathologies, was a dream come true.

I spent four months learning to shoe Cornell's polo horses (which is about as different from shoeing Icelandics as you can get), trimming the research horses, and observing hospital cases. In my free time, I learned to forge, making handmade shoes, modifying pre-made shoes, and learning what modifications could be used to help different pathologies and conformation

issues. Although I don't currently utilize forging in my everyday shoeing, I'm trying to keep up my forging skills to prepare for taking my Certified Farrier test in the next year or so.

When I was preparing to begin the Cornell program, I received two pieces of advice. First, to learn from the people there, but not forget what I already knew, and second to not, under any circumstances, tell Steve that Icelandic horses need to be shod differently from other horses. I think I made it almost a week before breaking that second rule. I talked Steve and my classmates' ears off about Icelandic horse gaits, training, and shoeing. It's honestly a miracle that Steve put up with me for 16 weeks. My classmates sometimes didn't put up with me, which is fair. (Sorry guys!)

SHOE FOR THE JOB

Despite that warning, one of my biggest takeaways from the course was that you shoe the horse for the job it will be doing. The core principles stay the same: hoof balance, proper hoof-pastern axis (HPA) alignment, correct palmar and plantar angles, etc., but different horses will need different overall set-ups. Our job as farriers is to help a horse do its job as successfully and safely

as possible. A foxhunter, a reiner, and a dressage horse will be shod very differently. Fox hunters need traction, such as studs to dig into soft ground and prevent slipping, as well as an extremely tight perimeter fit to minimize the risk of pulled shoes, and often rim pads to reduce concussion. Reiners may need sliding plates in the hind, a wide, thin shoe with very little traction, and an extended fit on the heels for caudal support, all designed to minimize joint stress. A dressage horse might have a wide-webbed, heavier shoe fit with a lot of expansion in order to minimize sinkage into deep composite footing, and maximize propulsion and swing for the big movements desired in modern dressage tests.

Shoeing and riding are inextricably linked in the same way as sports and footwear are. You wouldn't train for long distance running in your riding boots, or play soccer in your bowling shoes. It would be difficult at best, and at worst, could cause lasting harm.

All this is to say that, yes, Icelandic sport horses absolutely should be shod differently than other horses, even than other Icelandic horses. Equally, an Icelandic horse ridden in endurance, or trained for liberty, driving, dressage, mounted games, or any other area of riding/horsemanship, should be shod for success in that area. A horse who is barefoot or in glue-on shoes



Mouse at her first forging contest in August 2025. "I don't hot shape in my everyday shoeing," she says, "but I love forging and practice it when I can find the time."



Mouse and her Icelandic sheepdog, Sæta, showing off her certificate on graduation day. "Sæta attended most days of farrier school with me," Mouse says.

may have a hard time achieving the same scores on the oval track as a horse shod for Icelandic sport, but it might be very successful in other disciplines, such as endurance or liberty. A horse shod for the oval track in wide-webbed, flat shoes may not be able to handle some of the terrain a horse with traction designed for trails can, and shouldn't be asked to for safety's sake. This doesn't mean you should never take your sport-shod horse on a trail ride, or your endurance-shod horse onto the track or into a dressage ring, just that you should adjust your plans and expectations accordingly.

Personally, I love competing, so training and shoeing for the oval track is my primary focus. But I know that's not everyone's goal with their horse. Part of the reason Icelandic horses are so well loved is their versatility, so it is up to us to set them up for success with the right shoes. I'm definitely not saying that everyone should go to farrier school or trim their own horses' feet, but I strongly recommend educating yourself

about hoof structures and the mechanics of a horse's leg (dissection videos are amazing for this if you aren't squeamish). Learn about best shoeing practices and considerations for your chosen discipline, and work with a farrier who understands what your horse's job is and how to help them do that job safely and well.

RESOURCES

Here are some resources for learning more about your horse's feet. For the average horse owner, definitely Steve Kraus's *Shoeing the Modern Horse*. It's written for horse owners. For the nerds and aspiring farriers, Doug Butler's *The Principles of Horseshoeing* (P3) and Chris Gregory's *Gregory's Textbook of Farriery* are the books that the written portion of the AFA's certification exam are based on, and are hands-down the best textbooks. For more information about Cornell University's Farrier Programs, see <https://www.vet.cornell.edu/education/visitor-professional-programs/farrier-program>.

THE YOUTH CUP

by Lucy Nold

The North American Youth Cup 2025, held June 22-29, continued the tradition of connecting youth from around the country in their love and passion for the Icelandic horse. This event was the fifth North American Youth Cup (NAYC) to be held. The goal of the event is to foster new friendships and teamwork, along with learning and competing. This year, Harmony Icelandics in Truro, Iowa, generously opened their 1000-acre farm for these young riders to enjoy. The facilities included an indoor riding arena, an outdoor arena, a 250-meter oval track, a 300-meter pace track, trails, ponds, and a swimming pool.

Nineteen young riders attended.

At the beginning of the week, they were divided into four teams, each with a team leader. Members of the Green Team were Braelyn Cabell, Kelly Candeaux, Finja Meyer-Hoyt, and Evelyn Kaufman, with team leader Jade Trostle. Team leader of the Purple Team was Carly Zaayer, and team members were Anna Bella Covert, Tessa Hamilton, Keira Butler, Laura Shalhoub, and Vivian Dye. The Red Team was led by Karli Schmutz; team members were Grace Dillingham, Anika Nadler, Miette Jennings, Julia Koritko, and Alexandra Melonuk. The Blue Team was led by team leader Kentigern Octavo; team members were Abby Cruiser, Brooklyn Knowlden, Zo Zinke-Haschemeyer, Balakaji Flanigan Gurung, and Ruben Koch. Maria Octavo assisted the team leaders of the Green,



Members of the Green Team at the 2025 North American Youth Cup were Braelyn Cabell on Ljúfur from Tolthaven, Kelly Candeaux on Dama frá Bergi, Finja Meyer-Hoyt on Ögn frá Ketilsstöðum, and Evelyn Kaufman on Holder vom Rappenhof. Team leader (in green) was Jade Trostle and assistant team leader (in black) was Maria Octavo.

Purple, and Blue teams, while Samantha Harrigan was the assistant team leader for the Red Team.

The riders were allowed to bring their own horses to Iowa or could borrow a horse. They took lessons on their horses throughout the week in preparation for a National Ranking competition on the weekend. This year, Ásta Covert of Flying C Icelandics in California and Lucy Nold of Five-Gait Farm in Oregon taught the lessons on the oval track, while Alexandra Venable of Alfadans Equestrian Arts in Oregon taught the trail obstacle lessons, and Virginia Lauridsen of Harmony Icelandics taught the dressage classes. The four trainers also gave a couple of lectures

about the gaits, the rules of competitions, and how judging works in competitions. The week of training was a huge success. The riders told us they learned so much, and we trainers could see how they grew with their horses throughout the week.

The teams also engaged in team-building activities throughout the week, such as making team flags and writing a team cheer, building a cardboard horse, and preparing and giving presentations about the classes and rules of competitions.

On Friday, the horses got the day off, and the trainers, team leaders, and participants went on a field trip to the Junior High National Finals Rodeo in Des Moines. It was very fun to see a completely different style of riding and competing.

The National Ranking competition on the weekend, judged by FEIF International Sport Judge Will Covert, was a great success. The team leaders and their assistants worked hard to help all the participants be ready and warmed up at the right time, and success was achieved by all the riders on the oval track.

Saturday evening, we held one of the favorite Youth Cup events, the cardboard horse show, where the teams present their cardboard horses for scores in a mock “breeding evaluation.” This event is guaranteed to bring lots of laughter and a few tumbling horses, and is a good reason to come watch the next NAYC competition.



The Red Team, aka “The Red Lobsters.” Team members were Grace Dillingham on Koldumm frá Miðási, Julia Koritko on Léttind frá Hallkelsstaðahlíð, Alexandra Melonuk on Dimmir frá Hallkelsstaðahlíð, Miette Jennings on Kiljan frá Korpu, and Anika Nadler on Hlíer frá Gullberastöðum, with team leader Karli Schmutz.



The Purple Team, aka "The Galloping Grapes." Left to right, Anna Bella Covert (and Icelandic sheep-dog Ophelia) on Gosi frá Lambastöðum, team leader Carly Zaayer, Tessa Hamilton, Keira Butler, Laura Shalhoub, Vivian Dye on Brák frá Hraunholti, and assistant team leader Maria Octavo (in black).

HOW TO APPLY

The next NAYC will take place in June 2027, with the exact dates and location to be announced soon. The tryouts will take place in the spring prior to the event. Although the exact process might change for the 2027 NAYC, knowing how the 2025 participants were selected will help youth riders and their parents plan ahead.

Along with a one-page application form, the participants applied by submitting a "raw and true" 10-minute video showing them riding a registered Icelandic horse. Without being instructed by a coach or trainer, they needed to show walk, trot, tölt, and canter, and at least two of the four seats: full seat, half seat, posting, and/or two-point. Their freestyle program had to include at least three different figures (such as serpentines, circles, and chang-

es over the long diagonal of the arena) in order to demonstrate their ability to control the horse's direction. They could also include dressage exercises or other maneuvers to demonstrate their riding skill, but all exercises and figures had to be performed in both directions. Each video also needed to include an equipment check, zooming in on the horse's mouth and feet.

The videos were judged differently from those in a regular competition, like the USIHC Virtual Shows. "We are looking to evaluate riding skills such as speed control, direction control, transitions, ability to engage the horse and ride correct gaits, as well as seat, aids, and horsemanship skills," say the Judging Notes. "Therefore, the movements of the horse will not be judged, and imbalance in the horse will



Blue team member Ruben Koch is surprised by an ear-kiss from his horse Eðall Ífill from Azur at the North American Youth Cup.

not necessarily be penalized, provided that the rider appears to be handling the imbalance correctly and makes correct adjustments."

Along with the video, applicants needed to provide a description of the horse, including such things as its age, experience, and level of training, their familiarity with the horse, and "any difficulties that a rider of this horse would face." Another questionnaire asked them to describe in detail their own general horsemanship experience, their Icelandic horse-specific experience, and their competition experience. They needed to arrange for two letters of reference to be sent separately: One from their riding instructor and a character reference from a teacher or group leader. Finally, applicants had to be 10-17 years old (born between 2008 and 2015, for the 2025 NAYC) and be members in good standing of the USIHC or its Canadian equivalent, the CIHF.

The cost to attend in 2025 was \$1,700, which covered transportation from the airport, sleeping arrangements, three meals a day, horse rental (if required), horse boarding, riding instruction, daily events, a field trip, and participation in the National Ranking Show. Participants were expected to finance their own airfare to Iowa and to bring proper riding attire, including a helmet. Some sponsorships were available to help participants cover the cost of the fee.

For more information about the North American Youth Cup and other USIHC Youth programs, contact Youth Leader Lucy Nold at youth@icelandics.org or 831-332-5328.



The Blue Team, aka "Storm Riders." From left are assistant team leader Maria Octavo (in black), team members Abby Cruiser, Brooklyn Knowlden on Spaði frá Hallkelsstaðahlíð, Zo Zinke-Haschemeyer, Balakaji Flanigan Gurung, team leader Kentigern Octavo, and Ruben Koch.

TREKKING ICELANDIC STYLE

by Nancy Rohlf

Thinking of going on a horse-riding trek in Iceland? Are you adventurous, confident, and unafraid of going outside of your comfort zone? If you answered yes, a trek might be the perfect vacation for you.

There are many companies that offer a variety of treks in different locations in Iceland. Most involve group riding with or without a loose herd. Some treks are a few days long; some are longer rides. You can ride on the beach or along grassy riverbanks, up and over mountains, or through beautiful valleys. You can stay in a guesthouse and return to it each night, or enjoy a more remote trek where you stay in huts and sleep in sleeping bags. Almost all Icelandic trekking companies have websites that you can review to choose the trek that best suits your interest, riding level, and comfort level.

HOW TO PREPARE

Preparing for your trek is important. Before leaving for Iceland, it is a good idea to focus on your overall fitness and to ride as much as possible. Riders should be experienced and comfortable with long days of riding, usually covering 25-30 km per day. Although the gait of choice is tölt, you may experience all gaits during your trek—including some fast gallops. If you are a fearful or cautious rider and do not have much experience in trail riding, a long-distance trek might not be for you. That doesn't mean you should skip a vacation in Iceland; most horse-tour companies offer shorter treks or day rides that can be just as fun.

You also need to give some thought to packing. All used riding clothes must be cleaned thoroughly before bringing them to Iceland. Iceland is isolated and therefore is free of strangles, flu, and other equine diseases. Be sure to follow the directions carefully for washing and disinfecting your riding clothes before packing them for your trek. If your tour company did not provide directions, you can find them here: <https://www.mast.is/en/import-export/import-of-riding-equipment>.

Saddles, bridles, and other riding equipment, as well as leather gloves that



"On our trek," says Nancy, "each rider switched to a new horse during our lunch break, as each day's ride would be too long and tiring for only one horse." Photo by Elizabeth Bergantino.

are not brand new (with tags attached) are prohibited, for this same biosafety reason. Leather boots can be disinfected, but it is better (and safer) to buy new ones for your trip. The same is true for helmets, even though they are not leather. Bring a new helmet to Iceland, or borrow one from the trekking company. Most companies have a range of helmet sizes available, but I've heard it's helpful to bring a buff or ear-warmer to wear under the helmet if your head is on the small size.

Summer in Iceland can be chilly and very windy, or warm and sunny, so be sure to pack clothing that is suitable for rain, cold, or sun. I use my weather app

to check the conditions before I go and pack for the unpredictable weather of an Icelandic summer.

To make the most of your trekking adventure, layering is your friend. Wool underlayers with a softshell riding jacket will keep you warm and also block the wind. Throw in a t-shirt or two for those impossibly sun-filled days that happen in Iceland from time to time. I usually ride in winter riding pants, but summer pants will work if they are not too thin. Bring wool long underwear, just in case.

Most treks ride when it rains, so a comfortable raincoat and pants that fit over your other clothes are indispensable.

Some trekking companies provide rain gear, but many do not. Bring along some rubber bands to help keep your rainpants from riding up.

Tall boots that are waterproof are good for river crossings, but short boots can also work if they can be dried out—and you don't mind getting your feet wet. Wool socks are a must.

Bring a buff—wool, again, is best. It works under your helmet in windy, cold conditions or around your neck to keep the midges at bay during sunny days. Did I say midges? A fly net to wear over your helmet will save your sanity on some rides, especially near lakes and rivers.

THE ULTIMATE TREK

I have been on eight treks with Hestaland, which is based on a working farm in West Iceland owned by Guðmar Þór Pétursson and his wife, Christina Guzik. Hestaland offers treks and specialty vacations all summer. They also breed, train, and compete during the off-season. Their treks start and end each day at their comfortable guesthouse. In the summer of 2025, I rode on their Ultimate Trekking Adventure. We rode for approximately 25-30 km a day, which equals about 15 miles and four to five hours of actual saddle time. We were away from the guesthouse for about seven hours total. We would stop for breaks and lunch, and most times we would be met by the truck and trailer for cookies, hot chocolate, and coffee. Here is a day-to-day roundup of what you can expect on a trek.

DAY ONE

We arrived at the BSÍ bus terminal in the city of Reykjavík and were picked up by a Hestaland bus at 10:30 a.m. The trip to Hestaland is about an hour from Reykjavík. An eclectic group, we came from as far away as California and South Africa. Once we arrived at Hestaland, we put our luggage in our nicely appointed guest rooms and headed to lunch. Afterward, we met with Guðmar at the stable and talked about our experience riding horses. Guðmar does this so that he is able to choose the best horse for each rider according to their ability. Safety comes first.

Next Guðmar reviewed some rules of trekking, namely: Stay with the other riders and do not get mixed in with the herd. We had 73 horses total for this trek, some being ridden and others running loose. Riders are assigned either to the front or

the back of the loose herd, depending on their horse's preference. Some horses do better riding in front of the loose herd, and some horses are fine riding behind the herd.

My first assigned horse, Sesar, was a nice strong horse with a good tölt. The first afternoon included a trail ride for a little more than an hour, so we could get to know our horses. The trail ride was fun, and we came back ready for dinner. Christina is the chef, and she cooks traditional Icelandic dishes as well as more Ameri-

can-style fare. On our first night we had local salmon, which was delicious.

DAY TWO

We enjoyed a quick breakfast and started the day getting to know our second riding horse for the trek. My horse was named Gígja, a chestnut mare. She was super sweet, and we had a good time together. We went out for a ride around the farm to familiarize ourselves with our horses and to make sure that everyone was a good match with their horse.



"Our guide, Guðmar Pétursson, leads a long tail of horses back to their home at Hestaland farm in West Iceland. We had 73 horses total for this trek, some being ridden and others running loose." Photo by Vibeke Thoresen.



"Our horse-of-every-color herd waiting to return to Hestaland. The volcanic crater Grábrók, or 'Grey Pants,' is in the distance."

The weather forecast was for a light rain, and we had sprinkles, but nothing heavy. It was a nice cool day about 50 degrees F, which was perfect for riding. In the afternoon, we did another trail ride with our other horse. This time the weather was rainy, and I unfortunately found out that my raincoat was not exactly waterproof anymore. Dinner was delicious spaghetti and meatballs with a salad.

DAY THREE

Our trek begins. We left Hestaland and rode to Jafnaskarð, then to Hreðavatn, passing the crater Grábrók to end the day at the farm of Brekka. The trip was 15 miles. It was a nice scenic ride in good weather. Grábrók, or "grey pants" in Icelandic, is a crater that was formed over 3,400 years ago from a fissure eruption.

It is a tourist area, and people can hike up wooden stairs to the top of the crater. We saw a few tourists waving to us from the top of the crater as we tölted by. The ride from Hestaland was on a mixture of hard-packed dirt roads and grassland. We crossed a few small rivers and tölted over some volcanic rock areas. We switched horses during our lunch break, as the ride would be too long and tiring for only one horse. The horses were left at Brekka to spend the night in a big grassy field. We headed back to the guesthouse for a meal of chicken marsala with a salad, corn, and rice. We were all famished after such a great ride.

DAY FOUR

We were greeted in the morning with the news that a foal had been born overnight

at Hestaland, which had several mares in foal while we were there. It was exciting to see the new foal, so cute and barely a few hours old, walking beside its mom on the driveway. They were being moved to a new pasture for the next few weeks.

After the 20-minute bus ride from Hestaland to Brekka, we started the riding day by checking our horses for lost shoes and any injuries that might prevent them from continuing the trek. Lost shoes were no problem, since Guðmar travels with a blacksmith kit with extra shoes and tools to replace any of them. Iceland is very rocky, so all horses need four shoes on the treks. Our route on the fourth day was to travel from Brekka over Grjótháls, a passage over a mountain to Þverárrétt, a sheep herding station where the horses would spend the night.

We started by going under Iceland's main highway—the famous Ring Road, or Highway #1—through a very large horse passage that looks like a large storm drain. It seems incredible that the horses will just enter this dark tunnel, but they do and we popped out on the other side of the highway. We rode again mostly on a hard-packed dirt road over the mountain. We stopped once we got to the top and rested by a small stream, so the horses could get water, as it was a very warm day for Iceland at about 64 degrees F. We rode only about 12 miles in total, but the horses were very hot and so were we. Little by little we stripped off our fleeces, and most of us were down to our T-shirts



"Tired horses and tired riders take a rest after lunch next to the river." Photo by Kelli Gerrior.

by the end.

When we finally got down the other side of the mountain, we went along the river and, as we passed through the river, some of the horses did not follow the herd. I was riding in the front, so we just kept going and waited a little bit for our back riders to find the errant horses and get them on the path again. Having a herd of loose horses along on the trek adds some extra excitement, because sometimes they don't always do as they are "told." We finished off the day with a wonderful dinner of vegetable lasagna and crème brûlée for dessert.

DAY FIVE

We started our day with a ride along the nearby river Þverá, which is relatively shallow. Tölting along the riverbanks in the grass is a peaceful and cool ride that is easy on both horse and human. Everyone loves to ride down by the river because it is so calming. After our lunch break, we headed out over Svartagil, a lower pass over the mountain to head back to Brekka. We traversed the horse tunnel one more time and arrived back at Brekka. The trip was 14 miles. The horses were happy to be in a familiar place for dinner and eagerly went into their lush green pasture for the evening. We boarded our



"This foal, named Mia, was born during our stay at the farm." Photo by Jean Ervasti.

bus and returned to the guest house at Hestaland for a dinner of baked haddock, salad, and dessert.

DAY SIX

Our last day of the trek. We headed out from Brekka and passed by Grábrók and Rauðbrók craters. We tölting on nice grasslands between lava rocks. This would be a 15-mile ride back to Hestaland. The weather was unseasonably warm for Iceland. It was 74 degrees F with bright sun. It was extremely lovely, but was rather hot to be riding and we all used quite a bit

of sunscreen. The view back over Lake Hreðavatn was beautiful. The horses kept up a good pace for much of the day. When we finally made it back to Hestaland, it was so exhilarating to ride past the guesthouse and right into the farmyard. The horses were put out in a pasture and had a good long drink that they greatly deserved. We had ridden about 60 miles in total. Our final dinner featured a delicious local leg of lamb with mushroom sauce, a strawberry salad, and local potatoes. Dessert was an ice cream bar. We were definitely spoiled by Christina's fine cooking! It was a good vacation!

DAY SEVEN

Wrapping up our final day, we said our farewells and departed for the BSÍ bus terminal. Several of us took the Flybus shuttle to the airport and home, while others spent a few more days in Reykjavík. We were tired, but very happy.

Trekking is a unique vacation that is hard to describe, but so rewarding. For those of us lucky enough to ride Icelandic horses, treks are a wonderful way to connect with horses and the natural beauty of Iceland. Many thanks to Guðmar, Christina, and their barn manager, Kirsti (the horse and people wrangler), who helped make the trek so special. Most of all, I am thankful for the amazing horses I rode during the trek. One piece of valuable advice if you ever find yourself on a trek: trust the horse. A tölting horse plus the beauty of Icelandic nature equals memories for a lifetime. Takk fyrir Sesar frá Laugavöllum, Gígja frá Skipanesi, Tibrá frá Brávöllum, and Stólpi frá Flaggjarnarholti.



"Our temporary corral for this rest break was the Þverárrétt sheep sorting pen." Photo by Nancy Rohlf.



MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

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

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Farm: _____ Owners: _____

Address: _____

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Individual	\$60/year \$150/ Three Year Membership \$1200/ Lifetime Membership
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Please make checks payable to "USIHC" and mail to the address below:

USIHC c/o Sabrina Bateman

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(866) 929-0009 [ext 1]

info@icelandics.org

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

ALASKA

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

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

CALIFORNIA

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

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

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

Montaire Icelandic Horses
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WASHINGTON

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Icelandic Thunder
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Svartigaldur from Beat N' Branch Icelandics

Svartigaldur US2020105620

First Prize Assessed Parents

F.: IS2007188906 - Hrókur frá Efta-Dal II

M.: US2010204585 - Kvika from Four Winds

At Harmony Icelandics

June 2025 Breeding Assessment

Svartigaldur as a 5 year old scored
8.22 Confirmation 7.97 without pace

He will be assessed in 2026

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