2021

THE 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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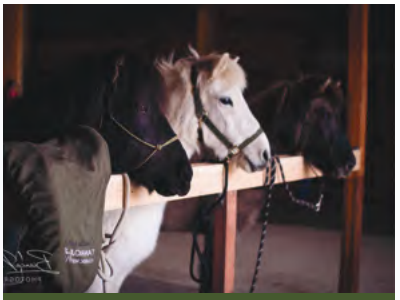
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ICELANDIC HORSE
QUARTERLY

THE ICELANDIC HORSE QUARTERLY

Issue Four 2021

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

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On the cover: Nancy Wines-DeWan has enjoyed driving a one-horse open sleigh, or a cart, or a carriage, for more than 20 years. Here she drives Brenna from Ice Follies (US2009204165) in a sparkling Jingle Bells winter wonderland—Oh, what fun! Nancy has trained all her Icelandic horses to both ride and drive, and she says they really enjoy driving. Brenna is a very forward, willing mare in harness, with a ground-covering trot. They compete in Driving Derbies, Arena Trials, and Obstacle Courses. Photo by Rosemary Whitney.

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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.



Luis Marroquin

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 14 affiliated clubs: 13 regional clubs and an activity club for professional trainers. Our Registry links to WorldFengur, the worldwide database of all registered Icelandic horses (USIHC members have free access to WorldFengur), and we publish *The Icelandic Horse Quarterly*, maintaining an online archive of all issues since 2008.

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

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

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

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

USIHC NEWS

US TRAINER CERTIFICATION

The U.S. Trainer Certification program will become a reality in 2022! We will begin with "Fast Track" applicants next summer or fall, depending upon the availability of judges. These tests are geared toward individuals who are largely operating as trainers now. Each applicant will be judged by a FEIF level IV trainer from Iceland, an Ausbilder from Germany, and one or two "trainee" judges from the U.S.

All Fast Track applicants must have completed a three-month internship (cumulative) with a FEIF level III trainer or above. The trainer must be willing to attest to this in writing.

Additionally, applicants should fulfill six of the following ten requirements:

- Earn 50% of their income as a trainer or work 20 hours per week as a trainer.
- Be included in the national ranking or have a student who is included in the national ranking.
- Have national Icelandic horse judging certification (FEIF Level "C" or above).
- Have ridden or trained a horse judged over 7.80 for ride-ability in a breeding assessment.
- Provide a letter of recommendation from a client who has had a horse in training for three months or more and a letter of recommendation from a student who has been taking lessons for three months or more.
- Have experience hosting a clinic with at least six people.
- Have participated in a demonstration of the Icelandic horse at a public event, such as a horse fair or expo.
- Provide a thorough verbal presentation of the special qualities of the Icelandic horse.
- Have completed Knapamerki levels 1-4.
- Have completed Riding Badge competition level 2 and pleasure riding level 2.
- Have certification in equine studies from a university or comparable educational entity.



August Leisure Rider of the Month Brynja Meehan of Massachusetts.



July Leisure Rider of the Month Susan Johnson at the Columbia River Gorge in eastern Washington. Photo by Jenny McCall.

The examination will involve an oral theory exam, as well as a practical exam with horses (both on the ground and ridden). More information about the examination topics and required skills will be available in January of 2022. Contact Jeff Rose at education@icelandics.org.

BREEDING ASSESSMENTS

Are you interested in hosting a Breeding Assessment in 2022? Are you interested in showing your horse(s) in a Breeding Assessment in 2022? The Breeding Committee would like to help you! Financial help (for hosts) and logistical help is available. Our goal is to have a breeding assessment in each area of the country, as well as Alaska each year. For more information, contact Virginia Lauridsen at breeding@icelandics.org.

FALL SHOWS

USIHC members returned to live competitions this fall, including National Ranking Shows at Harmony Icelandics (Iowa), Sept. 11-12; Montaire Icelandics (Virginia), Oct. 23-24; and Flying C Ranch (California), Nov. 6-7; as well as the Triple World Ranking Show at Léttleiki Icelandics (Kentucky), Oct. 1-3. Scores are posted at https://icelandics.org/national-ranking-show-results.

VIRTUAL SHOWS

The third USIHC Virtual Show received submissions through June 25. The 2021 Virtual Spring Show featured both National Ranking and Schooling Show classes and offered seven Division Championships. The National Ranking Show was judged by five International FEIF Sport Judges: Þórgeir Guðlaugsson (The Netherlands), Nicolai Thye (Denmark), Lutz Lesener (Germany), Hulda Geirsdóttir (Iceland), and Asa William (Sweden). The Schooling Show also had a five-judge panel: Alexandra Dannenmann (FEIF International Sport Judge), Freija Thye (USIHC Sport Judge A), Alex Pregitzer (USIHC Sport Judge B), Jana Meyer (USIHC Sport Judge B), and Lucy Nold (USIHC Sport Judge B). The show had over 102 horse/rider combinations and 134 entries. Winners and scores can be found at https://icelandics.org/virtualshow/.

Due to the wildfires on the West Coast, the USIHC decided to extend the Virtual Fall Show deadlines in hopes that all members and their horses could participate safely. Registrations were accepted until November 12, with videos due by November 19. The judges for the Fall Virtual Show are: Þórgeir Guðlaugsson, Nicolai Thye, Freija Thye, Alex Pregitzer, and Jana Meyer.

S2SS VIRTUAL RIDE

Each month the USIHC Leisure Committee randomly chooses a rider in the Sea 2 Shining Sea Virtual Ride (S2SS) to be the Rider of the Month. This quarter's riders are Susan Johnson, Brynja Meehan, and Lin Campbell.

Susan lives in Monroe, WA and has two Icelandics. "When I joined the Hestafolk Club, one of the members asked if I would be interested in joining S2SS because I do a lot of trail riding and camping with my horses. The mountains are my favorite place to be—it's good for the soul. I have had gaited horses for 20 years and had a friend who was training an Icelandic. I went over and fell in love, so I started researching and the more I found out about Icelandics, the more I wanted one. Then Lucy was offered to me, and when we met she chose me and the feeling was mutual."

Brynja Meehan of Boxford, MA has one Icelandic, Thor, but is fortunate enough to have been around Icelandics most of her life. She, too, enjoys riding out in nature; her goal is to reach 1,500 miles in the S2SS ride. She also enjoys jumping with Thor.

Lin Campbell of Felton, CA has owned Icelandics since 1992 and currently has two. This is her first year in S2SS. "It's been fun



September Leisure Rider of the Month Lin Campbell of California. Photo by Shanelle J. Robertson.

Congratulations to the Alfadans crew on their very successful showing in the USIHC's Virtual Spring Show. "We were so proud of every single one of our riders," says trainer Caeli Cavanagh (second from right). From young students who competed and showed nice riding after only one year of lessons, to division champions in Five Gait Open and Intermediate, Alfadans riders earned a combined total of 10 top three placings.





The stallion Strokkur frá Syðri-Gegnishóli and his owner Heidi Benson wrapped up a busy breeding season by competing in pace at the Toppur Show, held at Harmony Icelandics in Iowa. "It was so fun to compete again after nearly two years off," Heidi says. "The straight track was just awesome! Strokkur approved 100%." Photo by Ellen Parker.

getting to know the other Frozen Tundra Tölters. I enjoy both the camaraderie and the competitive aspect of being part of the group." She and her horse Fjöllungur are currently working through "a very scary experience with a rattlesnake in the bushes (luckily not getting bitten). He was understandably petrified, but we've come a long way since then. R+ clicker training has been perfect to bring his mind back to me." She looks forward to riding in Trail Trials and other obstacle events in the future.

DRESSAGE AWARDS

This year was the first in which the USIHC took part in the U.S. Dressage Federation's All-Breeds Program. Designed to recognize the accomplishments of specific breeds in dressage, these awards are presented to horses declared for a participating registry/organization with the United States Dressage Federation.

Several USIHC members took part in the USDF All-Breeds program. Those who received awards include Terri Mielke with Dynur from Creekside, Virginia Lauridsen with Herkúles from Dalalíf, and Paetra Hennigar with Ísak from Four Winds.

For more information, see https://icelandics.org/usdf-all-breeds-awards or email Janet Mulder at awards@icelandics.org.

MEMBERSHIP FEES

USIHC membership fees have not been adjusted in over 15 years, and with increasing expenses associated with producing the *Quarterly*, handling payments via PayPal, maintaining and developing our website, and just keeping up with general inflation, an adjustment of our fee structure is long overdue. At the same time, we also want to offer discounts to people who commit to more than one year of membership.

We now offer lifetime memberships for both youth and adults. By paying a one-time fee, you never have to worry about renewing your membership on a yearly basis. The youth lifetime membership is good until the member turns 18, while an adult lifetime membership literally lasts for life. We also offer a three-year membership for adults if lifetime is too big of a commitment.

Our new membership fees, effective in January

- Youth: $50/year
- Lifetime Youth (until the member turns 18): $280
- Adult Yearly: $60/year
- Adult Three-year: $150
- Adult Lifetime: $1200
- Family: $80/year
- Foreign Friends: $80/year

2021 ELECTION

Three seats on the USIHC Board of Directors were up for election in 2021, and all three sitting directors (Leslie Chambers, Janet Mulder, and Emily Potts) opted to run for re-election. Administering the election this year were Caeli Cavanagh (chair), Alex Venable, and Elizabeth Robertson. They were appointed by the USIHC president to accept nominations until October 14; prepare, distribute, and accept ballots; and provide the results by December 28. Seats on the board are for three-year terms. For more information, contact Caeli at election@icelandics.org.

BOARD MEETINGS

The USIHC Board of Directors met by Zoom call on August 10 and September 21. Complete minutes, including the monthly Treasurer's and Secretary's reports, committee reports, and the annual budget, can be found online at https://icelandics.org/minutes. USIHC members are encouraged to listen in on board meetings. The agenda and information on how to connect are posted on the USIHC website the weekend before.

In addition to the projects reported on above, the Education Committee submitted a trainer code of ethics document, which was approved by the board. The Leisure Committee reports that it has started preparing for the 2022 Sea 2 Shining Sea Virtual Ride, and the Breeding Committee reports that the infrastructure for a Stallion List on the USIHC website is roughly in place. Finally, the Board has drafted a policy paper describing an American Youth Cup Fund.







WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS

The Icelandic Horse World Championships have evolved into a major event with a multitude of challenges for the event's organizers, the participating member countries, and their teams, as well as for FEIF. A revision of the procedures and requirements, as well as a discussion of the difficulties encountered at past World Championships, is becoming urgent. To start this discussion and to receive feedback, FEIF invited the interested public, as well as the FEIF member countries and the organizers of former World Championships, to answer a survey in August 2021.

You can download a summary of the survey results here: https://www.feif.org/feif/documents/world-championships/ This presentation compiles all the answers given, without any ratings or evaluation. You will see that the answers cover a broad range of ideas.

A newly appointed working group, with representatives from small and large FEIF countries, riders, team leaders, organizers, and other officials has been formed; its members reflect a lot of experience regarding the World Championships and its organization. Beginning in October, this group will steer the World Championship revision process.

2023 CHAMPIONSHIPS

Ticket sales for the 2023 Icelandic Horse World Championships, to be held August 8-13 in Oirschot, The Netherlands, are now online here: www.wc2023.nl/tickets.

Your ticket gives you access to a fixed seat facing the oval track. All seating areas are covered. An early bird discount is available until January 1, 2022.

Come and experience the biggest stars in Icelandic horse breeding and sport competition. And there is more: shopping, lectures, food and drink, and great company. We hope the whole Icelandic community will join us!

If you would like to stay at the Visitors' Campsite, you can book a spot for your own tent or campervan. Or let us provide you with a Log Cabin, a comfortable sleeping quarters with two bunk beds that sleeps four people. Included in the cabin is bed linen, a power supply, lighting, a lockable room, a table and four chairs, and two private parking spaces. Campsites and cabins are limited, so book now at: www.wc2023.nl/camping

NEW FEIF WEBSITE

The FEIF website got a facelift for a modern and clean feel and uncluttered navigation. Check it out at: https://www.feif.org

EQUIPMENT RULES

FEIF encourages a level playing field in the overall Icelandic horse world, including breeding, competition, and even leisure riding. The riding and training equipment should always be used correctly, with regard to its proper maintenance, sizing, and fit, keeping the education levels of both the horse and the rider in mind.

FEIF's General Rules and Regulations Chapter G8 describes what equipment is allowed and what is not allowed. These rules are applicable for both sport and breeding events, as well as for youth events like the FEIF Youth Cup. In addition, there is a list of prohibited equipment on the new FEIF website, with sample pictures of the prohibited bits, bridles and nosebands. See www.feif.org/feif-equipment/

HEADING TO HELLA

This year's FEIF virtual ride, Heading to Hella, got off to a great start on August 9. The virtual ride involves real riding on your own horse along a virtual route from your home to the flagship events of the Icelandic horse calendar: the World Championships and Landsmót. These events are held in alternating years, in Europe and in Iceland respectively. Over the course of a year, the FEIF 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 destination 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? Currently there are 70 registered riders, from 10 different member countries. Most of the riders have formed teams according to the old motto: Shared fun is double the fun. And together they have already covered 1,256 km (780 miles).

At a time when we cannot meet freely, it is doubly important to engage with Icelandic horse friends from all over the world. The virtual ride aims to do just that, with a mixture of actual riding and sharing your experiences with real and virtual friends.

For more information and to register see: www.feif.org/leisure-riding-dept/virtual-ride/

HESTFEST

Congratulations to the Dutch Youth Committee, who turned their recently found "spare time" (due to the fact that many of the usual summer activities were cancelled by Covid-19) into a singing and dancing international online festival. In co-operation with FEIF and the FEIF member associations, the group put together an exciting program.

On July 10, it kicked off with a contribution from Iceland, traveled via Norway to New Zealand, then zigzagged back to the U.S., Australia, and the Faroe Islands, including contributions from many other countries on the way. This whirlwind tour offered glimpses into the different ways in which the Icelandic horse is integrated into the horse cultures across the world, including virtual visits to far-away stables and competitions, and workshops offering practical skills.

Missed it? It is not too late to catch up, as many of the events are on the HestFest Facebook page: www.facebook.com/HestFest-2021-106287394934780

FEIF COMMITTEES

The annual FEIF Board Meeting and Committee Meetings took place over the weekend of October 30-31. According to FEIF president Gunnar Sturluson, the attendees were "quite preoccupied with the World Championships, which will take place in two years' time. We are now reviewing the framework and the rules for the Championships and how to make them even more interesting for the future."

As reported on the FEIF Facebook page, "We can say that a lot of very motivated people attended the meetings, and we thank each and every one for their contribution. Many decisions were made, much brainstorming was done, and we are looking forward to beginning 2022 with many, many new ideas."

YOUTH SEATS

FEIF is looking for interested and active young people, 20-26 years old, to join the Sport and Breeding committees. Help us shape the future of the Icelandic Horse world! Seats earmarked for young people will become available in February 2022, and successful nominees will be confirmed at the Delegates Assembly. Appointees will have the same voting rights as any other committee member and serve for up to two years. They are expected to attend two international meetings per year, usually in February and October.

To apply, write to FEIF directly (you do not need to go through any nomination procedure of your national association). The application, submitted in writing, consists of a CV (curriculum vitae) and a motivational letter, as well as the contact details of two references. Ideally, you should be already familiar with the work of FEIF, having been at a FEIF event either as a participant or a volunteer.

Your application should be sent to office@feif.org before January 2, 2022. With the approval of the FEIF Board, the FEIF Youthwork Committee will select the candidates to join the respective committees (Sport or Breeding).

YOUTH SEMINAR

A Young Leaders seminar, for Icelandic horse enthusiasts between 18 and 26 years old, will be held April 1-3, 2022 in Vienna, Austria at the JUFA Hotel Wien-City. The topic will be "Digital networking in the equine sector: Stay connected through current creation tools."

With social distancing, it becomes even harder to reach out to young people in order to motivate them to join group activities, such as a group ride. This event, with guest speakers Sigrid Brandstätter and Daniel Brandel, will give you inspiration on how to present yourself online and how to use the power of social networks responsibly. But be sure – it will be interactive, inspiring, and there will be lots of hands-on activities.

To attend, contact the USIHC Youth Leader, Lucy Nold, at youth@icelandics.org; she will manage the application process. Each FEIF member country has two places reserved at the event. The cost to attend is 220€.

PHOTO COMPETITION

Nearly 300 Icelandic horse lovers submitted more than 500 photos to the 2021 Photo Competition, which closed October 25. The photos will be judged by a five-member jury: Heidi Seekamp works as an art director in international advertising agencies and as a freelance art director; Katharina Haider is a Young Committee member of the FEIF Leisure Committee; Krijn Buijtelaar is a professional equestrian photographer; Christian Eckert is FEIF Director of Leisure Riding; and Ricah Wolf heads the IPZV office (the German member association of FEIF).

The first prize photo wins an annual subscription worth 300€ for Alendis TV, where you can watch all tournaments and events. Second place is a ticket for Landsmót 2022. Third place is the book, in German, *Anmut und Zauber der Islandpferde*. Places 4-12 receive free access to one IPZV Campus event. All winners will receive the photo calendar and stallion catalogue.

CLUB UPDATES

There are 13 Regional Clubs and one Activity Club affiliated with the U.S. Icelandic Horse Congress. To find the Regional Club nearest you, see the USIHC website at www.icelandics.org. The following clubs filed updates on their activities this quarter.



CIA member Heather Skopik and Neisti frá Saubræ, with Chris Snyder and Dreki from Extreme Farms, celebrate completing the 2021 Virtual Tevis Cup.

CIA

by Helga Thordarson

Happy anticipation is in the air as the first in-person show in California in two years approaches: the Fall CIA Open on November 6-7. All National Ranking shows were suspended in early 2020, and our last live show took place in 2019. So this upcoming gathering, hosted by Ásta and Will Covert at their beautiful Flying C Ranch in Santa Ynez, will feel especially meaningful. We are thrilled to reconnect as a community and to celebrate the efforts of our West Coast riders, trainers, and breeding farms.

Flying C has also recently imported three horses from Iceland and one (Sveppi frá Gauksmýri) is already matched with a new owner. Longtime CIA member Anne-Marie Martin traveled to Iceland this summer, where she selected several riding horses that will be imported later this year.

The CIA welcomes these new horses, along with new members and new resources. We are excited to announce that Alexandra Montan Gray has permanently relocated to San Diego from Sweden. Alex is a certified Icelandic horse trainer, judge, and competitor, and serves on the FEIF Board of Directors; she is available for training and (adult) lessons. Alex maintains the Margaretehof breeding farm in Everöd, Sweden, and Margrétarhófi in Selfoss, Iceland. She also happens to be the daughter-in-law of USIHC member Kimberly Hart. Life has been busy at Kimberly's Sunland Ranch in Encinitas, CA, where five recently imported horses (Bjork, Greifi, Sverrir, Hera, and Háfleygur) were matched to new owners.



CIA members Will and Bella Covert enjoy a father-daughter ride at Flying C Ranch.

Virtual events and online webinars have played an important role for Icelandic riders during the pandemic. Several CIA members participate in the weekly Ask Gudmar seminars with Icelandic trainer Guðmar Pétursson via Facebook. Sandie Mortenson Weaver, for example, regularly practices Guðmar's exercises with her senior mares: Aska, 26, Birta, 28, and Sara, 33. She jokes that their four combined ages equal 157 years! Sandie is a great role model, showing us how to remain lifelong learners and to keep our horses active, engaged, and stimulated as they age.

Heather Skopik recently completed the 2021 Virtual Tevis Cup. The virtual race started on the same day as the real Tevis (July 24) and ran for 100 days. Participants logged their miles for smaller excursions through that time period. Heather and her horse Neisti reached their 100-mile goal on August 9.

Several CIA members are also participating in the USIHC's Sea 2 Shining Sea virtual ride. Our club has riders on the Ice Trekkers team (in First Place as I write this) and on Team Solfaxi, which has also racked up an impressive number of miles.

We've found creative ways to stay engaged and connected throughout this difficult time, but soon will come together to support the CIA Fall Open. It will feel like a reunion!



The Flugnir Drill Team wowed the crowd at the Minnesota Expo. Photo by Susy Oliver.

FLUGNIR

by Dave Loftness, Eve Loftness, and Liz Stimmler

The Flugnir Icelandic Horse Association of the Midwest once again showed well at the 2021 Minnesota Horse Expo, held this year at the end of July at the familiar venue of the Minnesota State Fairgrounds in Saint Paul, MN. Normally held at the end of each April, the Expo was cancelled in 2020—so we were ecstatic to get together again. Flugnir has been a mainstay of the MN Horse Expo for many years, and this year included over 16 volunteer riders and helpers, and over a dozen summer-trim Icelandic horses. In addition to our regional cohort of drill team riders and support staff, Mackenzie Durbin and Mouse Hedrick joined the Flugnir team, traveling from Kentucky. A special guest and demo/drill rider was Expo clinician Dev Branham of Devereaux Sporthorses in Tomball, TX.



Eve Loftness and Vordis showing dressage. Photo by Angela Shield.

A collaboration with the true-to-roots Viking Encampment group led to a spectacular showcasing of the Icelandic horse. Viking Encampment is an education-based performance troupe dedicated to the heritage and history of the Viking Age. This generous and fun group of local Viking re-enactors brought energy and realism to our breed demos and presentations. Our breed presentation, The Viking Horse of Myth and Legend, educated audiences about the history of the Icelandic horse from the founding of Iceland, being the "roads and bridges of Iceland," to present day trekking and sport shows. Kydee Sheetz of Aslan's Country Icelandics once again orchestrated our successful Icelandic circus, from the breed-centric presentations to the 10-horse drill team, showcasing these talented riders and horses that seem to glide effortlessly through the arenas.

While the Expo was occurring, Dave and Eve Loftness represented the breed by competing in the Red Pines Horse Show Association's Dressage Show at Stone Gate Farms in Stillwater, MN. Normally a show-jumping facility, Stone Gate opened their facility to dressage participants at all levels and from all breeds. Dave rode Galsi Fellibylur from Windy Hills Farm to first and third placements in their first-ever dressage competitions. Many of the participants were enthralled by the Icelandic horses, allowing ample opportunity for conversations about the breed. Eve presented Tracy Grandstrand, owner of Stone Gate Farms, with her first Icelandic flag, to display alongside the other international flags flown at the venue.

A September dressage classic hosted by the MN Half Arabian Horse Association had Anika Nadler, granddaughter of member Cindy Nadler, place third in two classes riding Katina from Klakahross; both horse and rider were unfazed by the soggy footing. All three dressage competitors are trained and coached by Rachael Walker, owner of Doubleshot Equestrian in Ellsworth, WI.

In August, Flugnir member Wendy Adams audited the clinic "Dressage Exercises for Your Icelandic Horse" offered by Caeli Cavanagh at Gyetorp II in Cheyenne, WY. Caeli's clinic emphasized the purpose of dressage to obtain and maintain our horses in a healthy, strong physical and mental condition. She presented the levels of dressage for a program she is crafting specifically for Icelandic horses and their riders. Caeli offered to ride each horse to evaluate its abilities and gaits, then educated the riders about their horses. Instruction was provided to improve each horse's gaits via dressage movements, such as leg yielding, renvers, travers, and shoulder in.

Four Flugnir members, Ann-Sofie Kruger, Dave Loftness, Eve Loftness, and Jackie Alschuler, continued their winning ways in the second Long Lake Hounds Hunter Pace of this year, placing second in the jumps-optional Hill Toppers division in Watertown, MN. The hunt trail cut through winding forested hills and green meadows and proved very fast for riding on this perfect August Sunday, with the team coming in just three minutes off the Master's marked time. The sprint included a spirited impromptu jump by Ann-Sofie on Viska from Tolthaven. The team's third event of the year is slated for October. It seems tolting Icelandics are well suited to hunter pace competitions!



FRIDA

by Pat Carballo

The Frida Club had a busy summer. Our members throughout the Mid-Atlantic Region were out hitting the trails alone and in small groups.

The Frida Icelandic Riding Club held a two-day Youth Summer Camp with trainers JoAnne Martin Trostle (far left) and Gray Strausser (fourth from right). Below, (left) Rosie Strausser learns to engage her legs; (middle) Harriet Schwartz picks up the finer points of hand placement; and (right) Julia Lepene works hard to have a fast walk without breaking into tölt. At bottom, the aftermath of the Box Horse Race: The kids learned the footfalls of the different gaits and performed them with a partner. Photos by Mary Schwarz.











Frida Youth Camper Stella Lepene works through a figure-8 exercise with instructor Gray Strausser. Photo by Mary Schwarz.

In July, we had our first in-person gathering since the Covid pandemic began. The occasion was a delicious crab feast at Pat and Al Carballo's home in Maryland. The weather didn't allow us to take full advantage of their lovely swimming pool—competing in the "beer" tölt astride pool noodles had to be aborted due to rumblings of thunder. However, we certainly consumed crabs! Novice crab pickers were schooled on the proper technique, as the party-goers chatted about all things horses. Everyone enjoyed the event, and no one went home hungry!

Our first ever Youth Clinic took place on July 24-25. We are deeply thankful for the hard work of Laura and Gray Strausser, Jo Ann Martin Trostle, and Millie Angelino. Gray and Jo Ann served as instructors, while Jo Ann's Star Gait Farm in Lititz, PA was the site of the camp and provided some very special school horses for campers who either didn't own horses or could not bring them to camp. Laura served as overall camp coordinator, while Millie processed the registration paperwork, brought drinks, ice, and s'more-makings, and embroidered a souvenir bag for each camper and a T-shirt for each of the organizers.

Laura reports: At the FIRC annual members meeting, requests came for more youth activities. The board decided that a clinic geared to the youth in our region would be a great way to help them get Icelandic horsemanship skills and connect with others who share their passion.

The clinic began with evaluations of riding skills and team building activities. Maddie (age 14) said, "I like riding the horses and it was great to be with new people." Rosie (8), echoed this sentiment, saying, "I really like making new friends and learning alongside of them."

As the day progressed, the riders were broken up into groups. While some were instructed in gait training, seat, and transitions, the others were learning the unique footfalls of the Icelandic horse. Riders paired up and began designing cardboard box horses and physically practicing the footfalls. Harriet (9), said, "I liked building the horses and jumping over the poles in the arena." Scott (10) said, "I just came with my sisters, but I ended up joining in! Making the horse with James was the coolest!"

After dinner, the riders and their families enjoyed s'mores by the fire and continued to practice for the cardboard horse competition the next day. Jade (14) said, "I really liked learning the footfalls." These riders took what they were learning very seriously, so they walked, trotted, tölted, cantered, and paced until the sun went down.

Day Two's riding instruction was built upon the lessons of the day before. Emily (14) said, "I like being able to work with a different trainer who isn't my usual one. Learning new ways to get the horse into trot, tölt, and canter were highlights for me." Stella (8) said, "Camp made me feel great. I really liked riding with Gray." Julia (8) said, "Riding a new horse was cool. Thank you, Jo Ann, for loaning me such a nice horse."

After lunch, the cardboard horse competition began! There was serious contemplation on making sure they were giving their best efforts, and winners were crowned in several categories. Hope (6) said, "I really like making the cardboard horse because painting was fun." Bella (11) agreed, saying, "Painting the horse was fun, but cantering in the arena felt like I was flying!"

In the end, our first FIRC Youth Clinic was summed up best by Sophie (14): "I found camp to be a truly unique experience. Between taking lessons with wonderful trainers and our arts and crafts, it was all just so much fun!"

HESTAFOLK

by Lisa McKeen

Summer time is when we all shine, as long as we aren't plagued by fires and high temperatures here in the Pacific Northwest.

Lisa Roland took her horses Krakatindur frá Hæli and Falki from Eichenhof to a mock search. She writes, "Horses can be trained for air scenting and used for search and rescue just like dogs. Terry Novacki, the man behind www.airscentinghorse.com, is a fantastic instructor. Falki has done this a couple of times now and will complete his mounted search and rescue certification by the end of July."

The Hestafolk Club Youth spent the summer at day camp, learning about the



Hestafolk member Mark Anderson plays with Melasol from Alfasaga (red) and India from M&M Stables. Photo by Dianna Anderson.



Hestafolk members Pete Praetorius (right) and Alys Culhane (in pink cap) use their Icelandic horse Hrimfara as a "bookmobile," bringing free books to children in Alaska, with help from clown Sheila Aay. Photo by Debra Carver.

different gaits and how to take care of their horses. They enjoyed taking the horses out on trail rides and riding bareback. Said Lucy, "I love Icelandic horses because they are sturdy, determined, and kind. And, because of their size, they're good to learn new things on. Hestafolk is fun because, instead of being a competitive club, our goal is to get to know each other and the horses, as well as to become better riders, all while having a great time!"

Said Layla, "I like how we learned games to play on the horses. I liked how our teacher showed us the different gaits and the parts of the horse. I had a lot of fun hanging out with the club members and the horses."

Said Serenity, "What I liked about day camp is I got to spend a lot of time with my club members and the horses. What I like most about Icelandic horses is their size and that they can pack both adults and kids. They have so much personality and are so much fun to be around."

Club member Lauren Murphy took her gelding, Andi from Evans Farm, to the Washington State Fair Breed Showcase this fall. "My general impression is that it is a good event to participate in," she said. "People are genuinely interested in the information we had to share. I am tired, but looking forward to next year. I am hoping other club members will come and sit at the booth and share their knowledge with people, but I am fine to do it on my own if necessary. Andi lives close to the fair, so it is not that much of a hardship. I also don't have far to drive and don't have to get a hotel. The organizer of this showcase, Amy Rogala, is great to work with, and I hope she does it next year. The fair is huge; thousands of people pass by the booths and ask questions about our horses. The Quarterlies and brochures were valuable advertising for the USIHC and for Icelandic horses in general."

Here's an opportunity for you to clear out your cluttered bookshelves: Alys Culhane's Hrimfara from Lough Arrow II, an experienced pack horse, recently carried a load of books for library patrons in Sutton, AK. Hrimmi stood quietly while Alys talked with children about the importance of libraries. The event also included a clown, story time, and crafts; it was sponsored by the Sutton Library and the Bright Lights Book Project, for which Alys is Outreach Coordinator. She and a group of volunteers salvage, sort, categorize, clean, and distribute discarded books locally and statewide. Hestafolk members are gathering books and sending them along. For more information, contact Alys at alysculhane@hotmail.com.

KLETTAFJALLA

by Florie Miller

Even though summer 2021 wasn't exactly back to normal, overall there was a lot more happening than in 2020.

Kristina Behringer of Gyetorp II in Wyoming hosted a very successful clinic with Hólar graduate Caeli Cavanagh. Participants traveled from Colorado, Wyoming, and Wisconsin. They learned how dressage is a wonderful way to strengthen and condition your Icelandic horse, whether you trail ride, compete, or do anything


Ten Klettafjalla members traveled to Hestaland, Guðmar Pétursson's farm in Iceland, and experienced a spectacular cross-country trek.



Klettafjalla member Josh Mobley takes his godson for a ride on Ofeigur from Extreme Farms.

in between. Says Kristina, "We practiced the basics and tried some more advanced moves. Did you know that, when done correctly, dressage improves your Icelandic horse's gaits and obedience and can reduce your vet bills? We had a great time and enjoyed both ridden instruction and theory. We are excited to have Caeli back in May 2022 for a tölt clinic."

A shout out to Klettafjalla member Julian Felder (17), who won the green horse tölt with a score of 5.0 at the Toppur competition. He rode Hvatur from Windy Acres; this horse is Colorado-bred by Jeny Feldner, out of Ran from Lough Arrow and Skjór frá Bollastöðum, a Colorado-based stallion owned by Andrea Brodie.

Guðmar Pétursson of Hestaland in Iceland was back at his home-away-from-home, Tamangur Icelandics in Colorado, for the annual Tamangur Icelandic Fall Event. It was a treat to feel like things are getting back to normal. Good horses, good friends, and an inspiring and very well-organized clinic! Due to international travel restrictions there was no National Ranking show, but that leaves us something to look forward to for next year.

Several Klettafjalla members made it to Iceland this summer and enjoyed one of Hestaland's famous treks. For yours truly, this was my first trip to Iceland and it was epic! But that's a story for another time.

As always, keep an eye out for up-to-date information on our Facebook page. And check out our website for helpful information, links to horses and tack for sale, and our upcoming events.

NEIHC

by Jennifer Bergantino and Phebe Kiryk

NEIHC was busy this summer. With vaccine cards in hand, we left our barns in the Northeast and headed to Iceland, finally! Nancy Woods ventured out in September: "I went on my sixth trek to Iceland: the Diamond Circle tour by Riding-Iceland, based at Saltvík Farm. Four Americans plus seven Danes, we made quite a lively group. We rode with a herd of about 40 horses, and stayed in different places each night, including a cabin in the mountains; we averaged 25 miles a day, changing horses at lunch. Oh, those geothermal spas along the way! This was definitely a challenging ride, with narrow passages, desert, rivers, and steep terrain."

Lydia Maurer went to Reykjavík and attended the Svisshólar and Ganghestar's clinic. "I learned a lot. They were unforgettable days with Siggi Matt & Edda Run. We rode in the hall, in the field, and on the track. All excellent horses, safe and talented."

Thirteen of us returned happily to Guðmar Pétursson's Hestaland in West Iceland. This was perhaps the largest gathering of NEIHC members this summer for an adventurous and memorable trek. We tölted Guðmar's wonderful horses through beautiful valleys, up mountains, and through volcanic rock formations. We enjoyed amazing vistas and landscapes. One day we left our herd of 70+ to graze, chose our most steady mount, and headed to the beach at low tide, which for some of us was reminiscent of New England's Cape Cod bay, where the tide pulls back and presents miles and miles of rideable flat sand. The route Guðmar chose for this trek included river crossings, miles of perfect tölt paths, volcano-strewn rocky trails, and challenging steep embankments. The adventure was enhanced by windswept sideways sleet and rain, biting wind and the occasional horse-deep mud! There was nothing, however,



Thirteen NEIHC members enjoyed a cross-country trek in Iceland this summer with Guðmar Pétursson (center) and his Hestaland team.



NEIHC members (from left) Andrea Smith, Lauri P. Fitcher, Nancy Rolfs, Claudia Burnham, and Charity Simard took part in an "adventure trail" obstacle course. Photo by Barbara Shaer. Below, Barbara Shaer and Joann Hayssen enjoy a summer trail ride.



that our horses couldn't handle. Hestaland provided cozy dinners to return to, and wonderful laughter and company. It was an amazing trip, capped off on the last stop by spotting a renewed eruption of the active Fagradalsfjall volcano all the way on the Reykjanes peninsula from afar!

Many NEIHC members stayed closer to home and challenged ourselves and the versatility of our four-legged companions. Emese Dunn rode Bogi frá Efri-Rauðalæk to a blue ribbon finish in GMHA's 25-mile Competitive Trail Ride (CTR) in Woodstock, VT. Bogi and Emese also won awards for both Best Rookie Horse and Best Rookie Rider. This was seven-year-old Bogi's first CTR; he is bred and owned by Jess Haynsworth of Mad River Icelandic Horses. Jess also competed, finishing fifth in GMHA's 50-mile CTR with Vigri frá Vallanesi. Congratulations to all.

Nancy Rolfs, Andrea Smith, Charity Simard, Phebe Kiryk, and Anna Wallston participated in the West Newbury Riding and Driving Club's Adventure Trail Event. A seven-mile trail ride and obstacle course, including tarps to traverse, mazes to navigate, umbrellas, and other "scary" challenges. Their horses performed spectacularly! This crew plus Jennifer Bergantino and Claudia Burnham participated in a clinic with Laurie Penfield Fincher, of Putney VT, an expert in connected horsemanship and confidence in jumping. The group worked with ground poles, gait rhythm, control, and balance at the trot and some took on the cross-rails!

At Merrimack Valley Icelandics in Boxford, MA, Ebba Meehan has been busy with new students, new horses, and new activities. Coached by Erika Tighe, the MVI Drill team perfected a complicated drill routine. The group of 12 completed impressive performances at the Topsfield Fair, in Topsfield, MA. Charity Simard introduced northern Massachusetts fair-goers to a graceful "beer tölt" demonstration, while Nancy Rolfs and Andrea Smith showed pairs in harmony. The MVI Drill team anticipates a repeat performance at Equine Affaire in Springfield, MA later in the fall.

The summer was also filled with tending to our horses and ourselves. Barbara Shaer with Gifta, and Joann Hayssen with Dropi, were on the trails as often as possible. Leslie Chambers, despite having a knee replaced, prepared for the Fall Virtual Show. Leah Greenberger reports some setbacks—she discovered that her gorgeous stallion, Blaer, has genetic issues and is now a gelding, and her five-year-old gelding was diagnosed with Equine Degenerative Myelopathy (EDM) so is resting comfortably in early retirement; despite these, Leah has been "trail riding like crazy" on her 27- and 26-year-olds, who are going strong! Leah will be bringing horses to Equine Affaire and hopes to see lots of NEIHC members there.



NEIHC members Valerie Moore and Kate Kalan lead the Merrimack Valley Icelandics Drill Team to a practice session.

SIRIUS

by Janet Kuykendall

First things first! Please mark your calendars for our club-sponsored Liberty Clinic on April 30 to May 1, 2022. The fabulous Carrie Lyons-Brandt will be the clinician, and the location is the new Taktur Icelandics farm in Crestwood, KY. You won't want to miss it. The Liberty Clinic focuses on establishing a fundamental connection with the horse at liberty and an understanding of how to create a conversation with your horse. The clinic will include liberty training and performance demonstrations, starting the horses at liberty, hands-on lessons both on-line and offline, an introduction to trick training, and a chance to work with a trained liberty horse. Originally developed to train horses for the movies, this incredible tool helps horses of all kinds and types become more emotionally balanced and connected to their humans.

Although the trail riding season is over, the memories live on. In July, Jane Coleman and Ron and Sherry Hoover camped and rode at Pleasant Hill Lake in Perrysville, OH. The trails meandered through forests, farmland, and open fields surrounding the lake. The trio tölted for miles in the farmland and tested their horses' trail riding skills in the forests, with Jane's mare Leela often leading the way. The highlight of the ride was finding the store that sold ice cream! Everyone in camp was talking about it! Thankfully, Ron Hoover just happened to have some money in his pocket. Being the only Icelandic horses in camp, they sure turned the heads of the other horses and campers as they tölted to and from the trailheads.

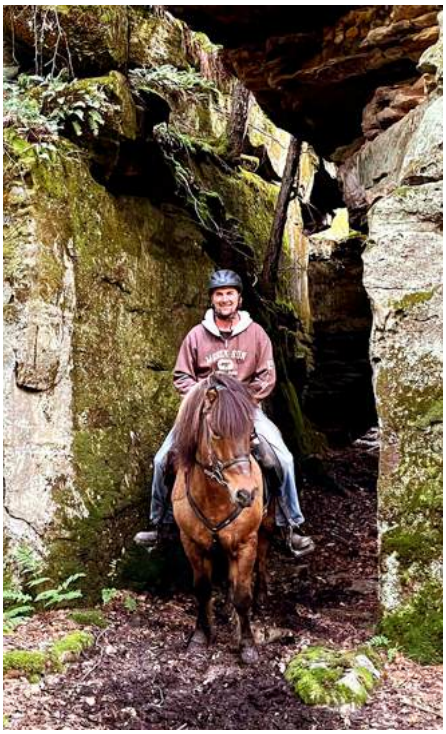


Sirius member Kerstin Lundgren attended the Léttleiki Adult Camp in Kentucky.

Next, the Coleman-Hoover group rode at the club ride at Barkcamp State Park in Belmont, OH. Those trails provided challenging hilly terrain, with some trails connecting by short distances along the camp roads. Often, they found the trail blocked by trees downed in the last storm. That was no problem for the nimble Icelandics: They willingly forged a new trail. Sadly, there was no ice cream on this trip and, with the sweltering weather, the riders were steaming and dreaming about it. Afterward, both horses and riders enjoyed cooling off at the Barkcamp horse wash area.

In September, the Sirius Club ride was in Marienville, PA. The Hoovers joined Jaime and Shawn Jackson for an exhilarating ride in the Allegheny National Forest. After riding up a steep rocky incline, the riders tied their horses and walked into the original rock dynamite storage area used 88 years ago. This mountain is full of history. The Summers Trail area was a Civilian Conservation Camp in the 1930s. The horse stalls were the barracks built and inhabited by the men who worked at the camp. The tales those walls could tell! In addition to enjoying the mountain trails and history, the riders used the level tram roads to pace. (Sherry's older gelding galloped to keep up with the three pacing horses!) Following the ride, everyone gathered for an evening meal—the perfect way to end the day.

Nancy Radebaugh of Utica, OH, has been riding her Icelandic horse Gunner in trail obstacle competitions across the state. An experienced rider, Nancy had long been interested in Icelandics but never felt she could afford one. Then Gunner, whose previous job was pulling hunters' deer carcasses out of the woods, came up for sale. Nancy purchased him, and they have become soulmates. Although she's only had Gunner for a year and a half, they took fourth place in their first competition at the Licking County Horsemen's Council trail obstacle competition. They then entered a fun show trail obstacle class at the Knox County Horse Park and placed second. This competition had fireworks, smoke under bridges, and bendy men (run by air compressors) that hit the horses on their heads. Gunner never wavered! In a recent fun show, the pair took third in bareback as well as horsemanship and trail. They also ribboned in the gaited class. They entered an Equine Trail Sports competition, where they placed third in intermediate competition and sixth in advanced. In a follow-up competition, Nancy and Gunner took first place in trail obstacle.



Sirius member Shawn Jackson and Kol pose at Hazel Rock in the Allegheny National Forest, PA.

Nancy loves her horse, although he may have a little quirk or two. Gunner enjoys the water, so Nancy has learned to take along an extra change of clothes because anywhere he goes, he goes swimming! Nancy doesn't mind and loves to swim right along with him. She says she feels

100% safe with him and has complete confidence that he will always take care of her. Whether it's 50 mph winds or a semi-truck blowing past, Gunner doesn't flinch! He wants to make friends with every horse and child he sees. Nancy says, "He's the most incredible horse I have ever met!"

Shellie Greyhavens of Athens, OH also competed with her horse Bjarmi at the Equine Trail Sports obstacle competition and won a blue ribbon in novice. Shellie's Bjarmi and Nancy's Gunner are now fast friends. Shellie has expanded her skills to include liberty work, as well as mounted archery. She says, "It's really fun," and hopes to form a group close to her home so she can sharpen her skills.

The Feldner family recently moved to Lawrenceburg, KY with their herd of Icelandics. Chris Feldner and his son Julian enjoy the sport of mounted archery. They attended archery clinics at Lettleiki Icelandics in Shelbyville, KY, featuring clinician Christine Marks. The group has 20 mounted archers and is growing. Chris says the hardest part is steering with his legs while he tries to nock an arrow through the bow, and he feels it has really upped his level of horsemanship. Chris has ridden on a working cattle ranch and done a lot of pack camping. He didn't really think Icelandics were suited to that type of work. However, since his wife Jeny introduced him to Icelandics, Chris has come to realize how versatile they are. He says, "These horses can do it all. Icelandics provide a great experience for me and my family together. Our next goal is a pack trip to Colorado."

Sirius member Kersten Lundgren attended Adult Camp at Lettleiki Icelandics. She enjoyed meeting participants from across the country. Some of the activities included a gait presentation, groundwork instruction, an under-saddle lesson, meeting two of the new foals, a Pilates class, a treasure hunt, and a trail ride that involved solving riddles to reach the next destination. The clinic culminated in a fun show, where each participant performed a short presentation to music. Maggie Brandt was once again the perfect hostess and chef, and all the participants offered their thanks.

ST SKUTLA

by Andrea Barber

Recently our club lost one of its founding members, Stephanie Sher. Though Stephanie never exhibited the breed in the show ring or at Equine Affaire, she was an exceptional ambassador for the breed for many years. She was a true friend to the Icelandic horse and our club.

Like many, Stephanie was introduced to Icelandics later in life. She was looking for an amiable horse for her novice rider husband, Larry, to ride, while she continued riding her fiery Arab. Also like many, soon after acquiring her first Icelandic horse, and then another, and another, she found herself riding her Arab less and her Icelandics more. Soon she and Larry had a herd of six Icelandics at their Blasted Rock Farm. The farm was originally located in Boxborough, MA, but after Larry retired they relocated to their dream farm: 140 acres in the Bristol Hills of Naples in the Finger Lakes region of New York.

The matriarch of the Blasted Rock herd was Skutla frá Þverholtum, who our club is named for. But Stephanie's special horse was Ögri frá Sauðárkróki, a jet



St Skutla founding member Stephanie Sher riding her favorite horse, Ögri frá Sauðárkróki, in 2002. Photo by Andrea Barber.



Icelandic horses continued to bring a big smile to Stephanie Sher's face, even as we were losing her to Alzheimer's disease. Photo by Andrea Barber.

black gelding who had been a first prize stallion. Stephanie loved Ögri's forward spirit, and it was often hard to keep up with the pair on a trail ride. Slow walking was not for Stephanie! She always wanted to go, go, go! And Stephanie didn't just ride. She also enjoyed driving her Icelandics (usually at the same spirited clip).

Stephanie kept a herd of Icelandics not only for her own pleasure (she rarely rode any other horse than her beloved Ögri) but to share them with others. Over the years she opened her farm to countless 4H and Pony Club groups, never tiring of seeing a child experience the tölt for the first time. Riders from other breeds were also welcome anytime to take one of her Icelandics for a spin or a carriage ride. Many people in the area learned to appreciate the Icelandic horse as a result of Stephanie's hospitality.

In fact, the reason my husband Steve and I relocated to the Finger Lakes region was in large part due to Stephanie. We would bring our horses up to her farm during the summers, and before we knew it Stephanie and Larry were farm hunting for us. Once we were here, Stephanie was eager for us to start a regional club. At first we barely made the minimum number of members. But thanks in part to

Stephanie hooking people on the breed, our club has steadily grown.

Stephanie was a devoted USIHC member. She wrote numerous articles for the *Quarterly* (she also wrote for the independent *Tölt News*) and was one of the first winners of the USIHC's Pleasure Rider Program. Though she was not interested in showing or breeding, she believed that supporting the national organization was important for all.

After the passing of her beloved husband, Larry, due to cancer, Stephanie's mental health began a gradual decline that would turn into Alzheimer's disease. This was particularly tragic for such an intelligent and independent woman—many of her friends never knew that Stephanie had earned a Ph.D. in immunology at a time when it was extremely unusual for a woman to pursue higher education. She was determined to hold onto her farm and her horses.

Thankfully one of the local residents she had converted to the breed, Deb Callaway, became her angel. Deb helped Stephanie care for the horses and took her out riding. While many things in Stephanie's daily life became difficult, the smile she had when riding her Icelandics with Deb never waned.

Near the end of Stephanie's life, Deb and her husband, Dave, bought a large part of Stephanie's farm and assumed all care for Stephanie's horses; they still care for them, along with their own Icelandics, today. Thanks to Stephanie's brother, who built her a special accessible apartment in one of the farm's old barns, Stephanie was able to live on the property with the 24/7 care she required. Though she was largely lost to the awful disease, I still like to believe Stephanie was able to get some joy from seeing her Icelandics out the window in the grand pastures of Blasted Rock Farm.

Tölt on Stephanie!



Toppur youth member Kruzzy Osborne at her first combined event. Photo by Alison Osborne.

TOPPUR

by Cynthia Niebuhr

Toppur members embraced the summer starting in June with an obstacle course fun day, followed by lunch and a relaxing ride through the beautiful trails at Harmony Icelandics. We welcomed a few new members, and were able to watch a new addition to the Harmony herd.

Most of our members spent the summer fine-tuning their riding skills. Some of us enjoyed the parks and trails — and each other's company — in our surrounding communities. Several of our members participated in combined eventing, dressage, and hunter jumper shows. We congratulate all of those who came in as winners and some even as champions!

Late summer allowed Toppur, with help from Harmony Icelandics, put on our first live event for the USIHC since the pandemic began. We had a blast! Riders and horses gathered from several states, including Iowa, Kentucky, Illinois, Nebraska, Minnesota, and California. Due to the ban on travel to the U.S. for Europeans, we had only one judge and the show was smaller than usual. That gave us the opportunity to offer free seminars in the days before the show. On Thursday, Virginia Lauridsen and Paetra Henningar gave a seminar on riding your Icelandic in dressage shows, and Virginia gave a seminar on Icelandic horse breeding. On Friday, Will Covert gave a seminar on "How to Show." Riders learned what the judges are looking for and how to ride specific classes. We had several first-time show participants and our judge (Will Covert) was able to spend extra time with everyone to help them improve.



Toppur youth member Kingsley Osborne and Henna competing in a combined event. Photo by Alison Osborne.

The weather was gorgeous. The fun classes (dressage, trail, and countryside riding) were a hit! We also enjoyed a wonderful Saturday evening meal outdoors. Visiting riders enjoyed the bridle trails and the pond. We had a helpful group of volunteers, which added to the camaraderie. Special thanks to secretary Deb Cook, announcer Deb Peckumm, scribe Linda Klein, photographer Susan Eleeson, and Toppur members Teresa Harp, Liz Appel, Melinda Studstill, and Kirby and Roxanne Antisdel.



Dave Ferguson and Lyfting at the Toppur Show in September. Photo by Susan Eleeson.

The 100 Mile Ride

by Jessica Haynsworth

On September 5, 2021, Vigri frá Vallanesi and I successfully completed the Green Mountain Horse Association's 85th Annual 100 Mile Ride. According to Hannah Bright, GMHA's Trail Event Manager, Vigri is the first Icelandic horse known to have completed this ride, which is the oldest 100 mile ride in the United States.

GMHA's 100 mile ride is a Competitive Trail Ride (CTR), sanctioned by the Eastern Competitive Trail Ride Association (ECTRA). It takes place in Vermont over three grueling days. The first day is 40 miles, to be completed in an optimum time of between 7:05-7:35. The second day is 35 miles, with an optimum time of 6:05-6:35, and the final day is 25 miles, to be completed between 4:25-4:55. The horses are judged on their recovery time and overall condition before, during, and after the ride, losing points for slow recovery, any bumps or scuffs they might incur on the trail, and coming in ahead of or behind the optimum time. Horses may be disqualified for a particularly slow recovery time, or for coming in more than a half hour over or under the optimum time. The horse with the highest score at the end is the champion, making this ride a true test of horsemanship.

GMHA's 100 mile ride is rich with history. Beginning in 1936, it was originally the first non-cavalry sanctioned 80 mile competitive ride, but in 1937 the 100 mile format was adopted, complete with rules that later became part of the ECTRA rulebook. While everything else at GMHA halted during WWII, the 100 mile ride continued. When the world famous Tevis ride was created in 1955, GMHA's 100 mile ride was already 19 years old. In those days, up to 100 horses competed each year.



Vigri and Jess crossing the iconic covered bridge in Taftsville, VT on the second day of the Green Mountain Horse Association's three-day 100 Mile Ride. Photo by John W. F. Miller.

RIDING WITH LEGENDS

Vigri and I were one of just 14 pairs that competed in 2021. Among the 14 was Steve Rojek, who in 2016 had completed 41 consecutive 100 mile rides at GMHA, and has now completed even more. Also competing were Dan and Sue Boyer, multiple-times champions in the '80s and '90s, as well as former managers of the ride, and Jenny Kimberly, who was riding the only other horse besides Vigri who had not previously completed a 100 mile ride— but Jenny herself has been champion many times, including five consecutive years on a horse called Shyrocco Lyric.

In short, Vigri and I were riding with legends, and boy, did I feel green by comparison! Distance riding is a new sport for me. I began taking an interest in 2016, after bringing Vigri to an Icelandic Sport Competition at Léttleiki Icelandics in Kentucky—a 20+ hour trailer ride both ways, for us. Vigri was exhausted when we returned, and I remembered reading somewhere that one hour in a trailer is as tiring for the horse as walking as long under saddle. I figured that if I could get him fit for long distance riding, he might handle that long trailer ride better, and do better in the Kentucky show the following year.

I started out by training him for GMHA's annual hunter pace, which is eight miles of tough, very steep hills. Once that



Jess had planned to ride Vigri in their first 100-mile Competitive Trail Ride in 2020, but baby Rigel's arrival called for a change in plans. Photo by Emese Dunn.

was easy for us, we progressed to CTRs and endurance rides, all at GMHA—first a 15 mile, where we got Reserve Champion, then a 30 mile, then a two-day 50. The more we trained, the better Vigri's sport scores became, so it seemed my experiment was working! But along the way, we caught the distance riding bug, and I set my sights on the famous 100 mile ride for 2020.

When 2020 came, however, I was pregnant with my son, which made traveling for gatherings of any kind terrifying during a global pandemic. I rode almost all the way through to my son's due date, but of course Vigri and I were not competition-fit, even if it had felt safe to travel. Since the 100 mile ride didn't stop for WWII, it probably comes as no surprise that it didn't stop for Covid, but it took place without us. I resolved that we would be ready for the ride in 2021.

JUST STARTING

Hall-of-Fame rider Denny Emerson has said of distance riding, "just starting is hard, let alone finishing," and that was how it felt this year. My son ended up requiring an emergency C-section delivery, and bringing myself back to full fitness and strength from such major abdominal surgery was not easy, to say the least! I'll never forget, three weeks post-surgery, limping out into the snow and climbing up onto Vigri's back to walk just one lap of the arena. I'd never felt more accomplished. I rehabbed myself like I would rehab an injured horse, by slow and steady increments, always keeping the goal of that 100 mile ride in the back of my mind.

Right up until we did it, it felt like a pipe dream. Finding time to train over long distances wasn't easy, and was only possible because my family stepped up to help me with childcare on days when I needed to take Vigri for longer rides. Competing in any length of distance ride while nursing a baby is a challenge all of its own. I packed a portable breast pump in my saddle bags and let Vigri graze on the trail when I needed to pump milk. The pacing of CTRs is not set to allow for gratuitous walking, let alone stopping for pump-breaks. Endurance rides are more forgiving when it comes to time and pacing.

One month prior to the 100, I signed Vigri up for a two-day 50-mile CTR at GMHA—25 miles per day. We finished strong, with a 5th place ribbon despite some time faults for pump-breaks, and the vets were very impressed with Vigri. I was told by all of the ride officials how unusual and exciting it was to see an Icelandic horse not only participating, but doing well! I asked the vets if they thought I was crazy to even consider tackling the 100, and they encouraged me to do so. I was also given advice for how to spend the next three weeks preparing Vigri for the 100, which I followed to a T. The day I sent in our registration, I felt terrified … and very, very excited.

CHUGGING ALONG

We arrived on Thursday, September 2, for vetting. I had butterflies in my stomach as I carried my tack to the scale to be weighed, and curried Vigri off for his hands-on exam. It felt surreal that we were actually there, surrounded by gorgeous, gleaming endurance horses—Arabians and Morgans, almost exclusively. Vigri was the smallest by at least a hand, and at 14 hands with a large barrel, he is by no means a small Icelandic horse!

Friday was mercifully cool and overcast, perfect weather for riding 40 miles. Vigri felt bright and chipper, and I decided to closely follow seasoned riders—and thank goodness I did, because Saturday's trail had some tricky turns that I would absolutely have missed if I hadn't been following riders who had done it before! I rode a bit too fast, and was positioned to finish ahead of the optimum time. Since this would have resulted in time faults, I stopped to let Vigri graze for a while, and then rode the last mile in at a walk. I resolved to ride more slowly on Day Two.

Saturday's ride was 35 miles, primarily in the town of Woodstock. A lot of dirt road, and some paved road, too, with crossing guards to help us navigate, and families parked outside their homes watching—I believe we inspired many young children to take up an interest in horses that day! We crossed a river into town, and crossed the famous Taftsville Covered Bridge. Throughout the day, Vigri felt excellent—a little stiff the very



Vigri and Jess crossing the river into Woodstock, VT. "I have felt, at times, that we could read each other's minds," says Jess about the horse she started by herself, 10 years ago. Photo by Nick Goldsmith.

first half mile or so after sleeping in a stall instead of his usual paddock (it is GMHA's rule that all horses be stabled at GMHA for the duration of the 100 mile ride), but then bright, happy, and chugging right along for the rest of the day. We did pick up some time faults because I paced things more slowly and wanted to walk the entire last mile home.

Since he felt so well and had pulsed right down at the hold, it was with great surprise that we wound up with some puzzling trouble at the end of Day Two—for the first time in his career, Vigri had trouble pulsing down within the allotted 20 minutes post-ride. Even more puzzling, his respiration recovered immediately, to just eight breaths per minute! Everyone was confused, because he had A's for everything else, his respiration was fully recovered, he looked relaxed and happy, and the vets observed that he had been perky on the trail, but there was no arguing with the numbers: his pulse was slow to come down.

The vets suspected that he may not have been getting enough potassium to make up for what he lost by sweating, although they confirmed that I had been administering electrolytes appropriately throughout the ride, at the correct dosage for his weight. Another rider, Melody Blittersdorf (who ended up as the 2021 Champion with her horse, Perseveranze!) generously gave us some no-salt to feed him, and after the vetting we were also able to buy a different brand of electrolytes that contains a higher concentration of potassium than what I had been using.

Since Vigri did ultimately pulse down within an hour of completing the 35-mile loop, he was officially allowed to continue the ride, but my confidence felt shattered. I was up all night with what-ifs … what if it wasn't a potassium issue and the extra electrolytes don't help, and something was truly wrong with him? What if I didn't actually prepare him for this as well as I'd thought? What if we got out on that trail, with no cell service, and had a real problem?

KEEP GOING

I was the only rider competing who had no previous experience completing 100 mile competitive rides, either through ECTRA or AERC, but everyone took us under their collective wing and encouraged us to keep going with our new higher potassium concentration electrolytes and no-salt. Many of the other riders were able to tell me about times that they, too, had struggled with similar issues on the trail, which was so reassuring to hear. What I heard time and time again, was that every horse is different and it takes time, experience, and some trial and error to get the 100 mile formula right for each one. Vigri and I were still in that process of figuring things out over longer distances, and even the ride officials kept telling me that the first 100 mile ride is a real learning curve for any pair.

Saturday night, I also realized that Vigri had some funny chafing up deep in the folds of his elbows and under his sternum, towards his chest. It wasn't where his girth sits (he wears a custom saddle that sits well behind his scapula, and I use a crupper so I know it doesn't slide forward!) and the irritation didn't look like girth sores anyway. It looked a bit like rain scald. When I



The view through Vigri's ears on a narrow, rocky portion of the GMHA's 100 Mile Ride through Vermont. Photo by Jess Haynsworth.

touched it, Vigri's lips got going, as if it felt itchy, not painful.

Sunday morning, I saddled him and asked the head vet to fully check him over. I still wasn't sure if I was actually going to finish the ride, and I wanted the vet's feedback to help make my decision.

His pulse and respiration were normal again, happily, so I showed the irritation to the vet as well. He diagnosed it as irritation from the dicalcium phosphate on the roads in Woodstock. I had never heard of this, but the vet said they'd seen it before on long multi-day rides. The vet told me that shorter horses are more at risk, being lower to the ground, and that Vigri had more loose skin to trap the stuff than a lighter horse might. Water activates it, so sweat and sponging caused it to irritate his skin. I wanted to put cream on it, but in CTR this is not allowed.

The vet confirmed that my tack was not causing or worsening the problem. I took a deep breath, prepared for any answer, and asked the blunt question: Would you ride this horse in the final 25 mile leg of this ride?

The vet told me that in his opinion Vigri could and should continue the ride. He advised me, at each water stop, to use my sponge to clean out the folds of skin above his forelimbs (not just wet them, which would only further activate the dicalcium phosphate) to keep it from worsening. I was able to talk to other riders whose horses had been burned by the roads in the past, too. Sunday's ride would luckily not be in Woodstock and would have more trail than road.

After agonizing back and forth, I decided to take the advice of the vets and other riders who had encouraged us, and finish the last 25 miles. I planned to ride slowly and forget about the time. If Vigri acted uncomfortable or reluctant at any point, we'd quit. I was still worried about Saturday's pulsing-down issue, especially since we wouldn't know if the additional potassium was working to solve the problem until we got out and tested it.

Sunday's ride started out rainy and cool, for which I was grateful, but I still felt anxious. Vigri is a horse that I started myself, and we have been together for a decade. I have felt, at times, that we could read each other's minds. For the first time in ten years, I found myself doubting my instincts and my connection to my horse.



Vigri and Jess trotting toward the finish line on the final day of the 100 Mile Ride, still "bright, happy, and chugging right along." Photo by Jeremiah Kemp.

Another rider encouraged me to shake off my experience from the previous day, and just ride the horse beneath me today. If he felt good, go forward. And he did—Vigri felt bright, positive, and happy, but he had the day before, too, when we'd had the issue, so I no longer felt confident. What if I didn't know my horse as well as I thought I did?

We rode slowly, following our new electrolyte/potassium regimen and stopping at every single water stop to clean out the folds of his skin above his forelimbs. I had been warned about a steep hill called "Cookie Hill," which I was grateful for because I knew to electrolyte him right before that hill and walk all the way to the top, even when the trail leveled out here and there and looked good for trotting.

Although the road was good, we walked the last mile and a half into the hold, because I wanted to be well and truly sure he was cool before we checked his pulse and respiration. I practiced some deep breathing of my own while pulling off his tack and sponging him down. Either the potassium had been the problem and our new regimen had worked, or it hadn't, and we were about to find out.

FINISHING

It had worked. Vigri pulsed down, and we jogged out for the vet and were cleared through the hold. And just like that, the black cloud above me lifted. Finally, I felt my own mood catch up to Vigri's, and as we tölted out of the hold and off down the road, I felt excited to finish the ride.

Since we'd ridden so slowly into the hold, I'd half expected that the other 100 mile riders would be long gone down the trail, but they weren't! We were able to ride off with the horse we'd spent much of the previous day's ride alongside, a lovely Arab named Kentucky Bay, who had completed Tevis in the past but was also new to GMHA's ride. She and Vigri seemed to like each other.

When we hit the last few miles of trail, I slowed Vigri to a walk. I'd planned to walk the last two miles, no matter how great he felt, but the last five miles were steep with a lot of uphill bits, so we walked even more than I'd intended.

We strolled in well past the optimum time, although I did let Vigri trot and then tölt a bit once the finish line was in sight because he really wanted to. I wasn't sure how far over the optimum time we'd come in (it is my curse in life to be mathematically challenged) so I actually wasn't sure we would get an official completion for the ride, but I didn't care. We'd ridden 100 miles, and my horse felt and looked great. I cooled him off, and he pulsed down, yesterday's trouble forgotten.

Vigri rolled immediately after jogging for the vet, which I couldn't really

begrudge him, although it did mean I had to dump water over him again before the hands-on examination, after which he promptly rolled again. At that point, all I could do was laugh. He deserved it after a long weekend of hard work during the day and being stalled at night. I couldn't wait to get him home to his pasture and herd, but first we had to wait for the final results.

We grazed Vigri while stripping his stall and packing up our belongings. A lot of other riders congratulated us on completing the ride, but I still wasn't sure we officially had! It wasn't until the awards ceremony, when they handed us our ribbon, that I knew for sure we had done it.

LEARNING

Officially, we finished in third place in the Lightweight Division. We lost plenty of points for going over the optimum time, but Vigri and I had completed our very first 100 mile ride together—just nine months after I'd delivered my son via C-section.

What I can say about this ride is that it was hard. I felt very green as a distance rider, and Vigri and I probably looked plenty green next to so many seasoned pairs. This first 100 mile ride was a steep learning curve, but not because we hadn't done enough to get ready for it—it would have been steep either way, and some of these lessons could only be learned by tackling the beast. Now it's done, and we know we can do it again, armed with hard-won experience, next time.

It is an odd feeling to be a professional rider, but still feel so new in an equestrian sport. We ran into some challenges on this ride, no question—and when we did, it felt easy to lose confidence, because I lacked past experience to inform my decisions. When I felt my confidence wane, I put my trust in the vets, and I'm glad that I did. It would have been easy to give up and go home feeling defeated, but instead I listened to the vets and the more experienced riders who encouraged me, and realized that we were capable, after all.

When we got home, I had blood drawn to test Vigri's electrolyte levels, and all were in a normal, healthy range. This tells me that his potassium issue was specific to the level of work Vigri was doing at the 100 mile ride, and is not caused by a baseline deficiency. As the head vet explained to me, everything I had been doing for Vigri had been sufficient up to that point, and only by pushing for greater competitive distances could we have known that his potassium needs would increase beyond what we were already providing. Now I know, and can adjust accordingly for future competitive rides! His skin irritation from the dicalcium chloride also healed up swiftly once we were home, and in the future I will know to be more proactive about cleaning his skin during rides in Woodstock.



Vigri came in third in the Lightweight Division—not bad for his (and Jess's) first 100-miler. "It wasn't until they handed us our ribbon that I knew for sure we had done it," she says. Photo by Jess Haynsworth.

I may be new to distance riding, but I'm not new to equestrian sport, so I can say with confidence that what GMHA has built is truly special—both physically in terms of the land, trails, and space they hold for this sport, but also in the community that's grown up around it. Never before have I felt so welcomed and encouraged, nor have I seen equestrians so eager to share their knowledge and experience. I am full of gratitude for GMHA's wonderfully supportive trail riding community, full of gratitude for my body managing this feat so soon after surgery, full of gratitude for my family for supporting me in this (somewhat crazy) endeavor, and especially full of gratitude for my horse, Vigri frá Vallanesi, who proves time and time again that there is nothing he can't do.

Icelandics in the Sandbox

by Janet Mulder



This year was the first in which the USIHC took part in the U.S. Dressage Federation's All-Breeds Program. Here, Paetra Hennigar and Ísak from Four Winds Farm get ready to perform their dressage routine at the Rolex Stadium in the Kentucky Horse Park.

Dressage is the art of riding and training a horse. According to its official definition by the Fédération Équestre Internationale (FEI Rule Book, Article 401), "The object of dressage is the development of the horse into a happy athlete through harmonious education, resulting in a horse who is calm, loose, supple, and flexible, but also confident, attentive, and keen, thus achieving perfect understanding with his rider." To that list of goals, for Icelandics especially, I would add that dressage also improves the horse's balance.

Dressage riders call the arena in which they train and compete their "sandbox," because dressage is also lots of fun!

Dressage is represented in Icelandic horse competitions by Gæðingafimi in Iceland and the Figures Tests in FEIF Sport Competitions (previously known as "Tölt in Harmony" and described in FEIF Sport Rule S5). Dressage is governed worldwide by FEI, the Fédération Equestre Internationale, and in the U.S. by USDF, the United States Dressage Federation.

USDF competitions are held in all 50 states and are open to any horse of any breed, including mules. USDF offers an All-Breeds Awards program, in which breed organizations can partner with USDF to offer awards for horses in their registry who have achieved the minimum scores in every level of competition, from Training to Grand Prix, in the Open, Adult, Amateur, and Youth Divisions. Riders compete for these All-Breeds Awards nationally, using the scores they earn at local USDF competitions. The awards are presented virtually, and the recipients receive their medals in the mail.

In 2021 USDF partnered with 63 participating organizations for All-Breeds Awards. This is the first year the USIHC has been part of this program. Six Icelandic horses were declared for USDF All-Breeds Award consideration and three received the required median scores (over 60%), one in Training Level and two in First Level. All six of these Icelandic horses are American born and trained. Three-, four-, and five-gaited horses represented the Icelandic breed in dressage competition this year. Their riders came from Alaska, Iowa, and Kentucky, and for most of us it was our first year experiencing the All-Breeds program. Here are some of our stories:

TERRI & DYNUR

For Terri Mielke of Alaska, it was the first year she had ridden an Icelandic horse in dressage. Terri purchased Dynur from Creekside Farm, a four-gaited gelding, in the fall of 2020. Shortly after his arrival in Alaska, she sought out dressage trainer Lauren Eaton of Summit Equestrian to coach them. Terri felt her training time from October to May, through an Alaskan winter, was not adequate to prepare her and Dynur for their first show season. Ideally she wanted to build a better relationship by spending more time with him. Riding dressage in Lauren's indoor arena was the answer.

Terri describes Dynur as a willing and sensitive partner. She did her best to keep his needs a priority, maintaining his mental and physical health with trail rides and balancing her expectations. When they entered the show ring in Training Level, she says, Dynur really seemed to enjoy the atmosphere and all the attention. The work they had done separating his tölt and trot paid off, as the judges liked and rewarded his big trot movements.

Terri and Dynur participated in all four of the Alaska Dressage Association's USDF-ranked shows, the bare minimum to qualify for an All-Breeds Award. Terri was encouraged by the judges, who described her horse as "talented." Next year they plan to compete again: Showing motivates Terri to continue building her relationship with Dynur and continue training.

Her advice to anyone else interested in showing their Icelandic horse in dressage is to have fun and don't get wrapped up in small details. When you are in the ring, she says, everything your horse does feels amplified. Be proud of his effort and keep your expectations realistic. Make sure your horse is enjoying his work.

Make sure you know your test. Ride it in your head, on paper, and walk it on the ground. Accuracy is part of your score. You need to know how to ride the test precisely. Each movement is scored separately. If your horse makes a mistake, move on with the test.

Don't feel intimidated because you

are riding an Icelandic and other folks have horses that are larger, better movers, or trained to a higher level, but do make sure your horse is well groomed. A clean presentation makes a good impression and tells the judge you take pride in your horse.

Your horse will be more fun to ride with some basic dressage, she concludes. He will be more responsive and you will build up your own riding skills.



Terri Mielke began riding dressage as a way to build a good relationship with her new horse, Dynur from Creekside Farm. Photo by Terri Miller.

CINDY & BARON

Cindy Niebuhr rode her horse, Baron from Creekside Farm, at Intro Level in USDF competitions in Iowa this year. In the beginning she had no idea what dressage was about, and her horse was extremely green—just learning the basics of go and whoa.

But Baron was very willing to do his job and wanted to please her, Cindy says. He is very smart, and working through each element of the test as its own goal was very rewarding. Like Terri, Cindy found that Baron enjoyed the attention and the spotlight of being the only horse in the ring. He exuded confidence for both of them.

Many dressage shows are offered in Iowa, where Cindy lives. She and Baron were able to participate in six of them, winning a championship at Intro Level. Next year she is planning to move up to Training Level. The feedback she received from her dressage rides motivated and encouraged her; that's what she loved most about competing in the dressage world, she said. She also enjoyed sharing how versatile and talented Icelandic horses can be.


Cindy Niebuhr and Baron from Creekside Farm were also new to dressage in 2021. "Baron enjoyed the attention," she says.

VIRGINIA & HERKULES

Virginia Lauridsen of Iowa rode her three-gaited Icelandic horse, Herkúles from Dalalif, at First Level Dressage. Since dressage competition only allows walk, trot, and canter, this was a place where he could excel—and they did so well that they made it to the Regional Championships! (See their story in this issue of the Quarterly.)

Prior to this year Virginia had never competed in a USDF-rated show, but in 2020 she did compete in schooling shows, in both Training and First Level dressage, bringing home several blue ribbons. She found the most difficult part of competing this year was preparing for the show. She was uncertain about protocol, so she sought out and found a supportive coach.

Virginia learned to love the challenge of simple things like being straight, and how basic, consistent training gave Herkúles a round croup and visibly strengthened his topline after only a few months. She also saw the immense value of shoulder-in exercises for a variety of movements. Dressage also has the value of training the rider herself: Virginia learned how to be specific in balancing her weight and hands, she says.

Virginia rode in the four local USDF-rated shows, two of the three local schooling shows, and a rated show in Minnesota, as well as in the Region 4 Championships. Although she is a beginner in dressage, her previous show-jumping experience required her to compete in Open Division riding, against seasoned



Paetra Hennigar has been competing in dressage for 20 years, although not on Icelandics. Here she shows Ísak from Four Winds Farm at the Rolex Stadium in the Kentucky Horse Park.

dressage competitors. But Herkúles held his own and brought home many blue ribbons!

Next year Virginia plans to compete in dressage again, perhaps using more of her Icelandic horses. She will also host dressage classes at the Toppur Club Show at her farm. To better prepare, she plans to take videos more frequently, now that she feels she knows what the judges are looking for. The winter months will allow her time to strengthen and supple her horses.

Virginia encourages anyone considering riding dressage to do it! Dressage may be easier on a horse that prefers to trot, she notes, but developing the trot will help all horses. The exercises will also give you a better understanding of the biomechanics of your horse's movements. Herkúles is such a fun horse that she can't stop smiling while riding him, Virginia says, and she was pleased that many spectators wanted to ask about him—or take him home.

PAETRA & ISAK

Paetra Hennigar has been competing in dressage for over 20 years, but prior to this year she competed on "big horses." Riding Icelandics in the All-Breeds program gave her the goal of continually improving her scores, and she saw it as an excellent opportunity to promote Icelandics within a whole different world.

Paetra rode Ísak from Four Winds Farm, a four-gaited gelding, in First Level. Although Ísak had some previous dressage training, he had never competed in a show. They worked together to develop the slower, steadier canter needed for the 15-meter circles and canter serpentine required in First Level; this gait is much different from the large open canter that is shown in Icelandic Sport Competitions on the oval track.

As the marketing director at Léttleiki Icelandics, Paetra traveled with her coworkers Carly Conley and Molly Stotts and Léttleiki horses to 11 dressage shows spanning six weekends in 2021. Riding an Icelandic in a warm-up arena along with big horses was not a challenge for Paetra. Ísak was fearless, she says, strutting around like he owned the place. This was not the case for all the Icelandics at the shows, however. Dugur from Tolthaven was a little intimidated and needed his rider, Molly, to help him build confidence and settle into the new environment. Paetra was proud of both Molly and Carly for riding tricky horses in a discipline they had never tried before.

But Paetra is most proud of Ísak jumping onto the dressage scene to compete in their first show at The Rolex Stadium at the Kentucky Horse Park.

Next year Paetra hopes to ride dressage with an Icelandic horse again—her love of showing dressage was reignited with this year's challenge—but she will avoid shows in August because of the Kentucky summer heat. Her advice to others is to practice throughout the winter to learn the tests you plan to ride as well as you can. Know the layout of the dressage arena and practice your geometry (you can bump up your scores there).

And prepare to be the "talk of the



Janet Mulder introduced two of her Icelandics to dressage competition this year, competing in four shows in Alaska. Here she rides Viktoria from Creekside Farm. Photo by Bryan Mulder.

THE ROAD TO REGIONALS

What a journey! Challenging, demanding, educational, occasionally frustrating but always fun! When I set a goal of qualifying for the Region 4 USDF Championships, I had no idea how much work—and how rewarding—it would be.

Three years ago, I purchased Herkúles from Dalalif, a 10-year old Icelandic gelding, sight unseen. A friend who is a USEA judge sent me a sales flyer he saw at an event in Ohio. The price was reasonable, so I decided to take a chance. Then reality hit. After speaking with some Icelandic trainers who were familiar with the horse, I prepared myself for a difficult challenge. I was not disappointed.

The first time I rode Herkúles, I feared I would be seriously injured. He had amazing athleticism for rearing and spinning. He spooked at the slightest things. I was so baffled by his behavior that I took him to the Iowa State Veterinary School to have his eyesight evaluated. They detected a very small spot in his left eye, but nothing that should cause vision issues. Then I tried an equine chiropractor. She declared him "a mess" but the adjustments did not change his behavior. I tried a saddle fitter, who declared my saddle to be a poor fit, but the new saddle did not provide a miracle cure.

Then luck struck. A nearby boarding facility was hosting a dressage clinic with Barry Fript, an accomplished dressage rider and USDF "L" judge. I signed up and was hooked. Barry is an excellent instructor and, better yet, he likes my horse! He encouraged me to keep working and taught me the fundamentals of riding a dressage test. My pre-Icelandic horse background was in show jumping, so the principles of dressage were not new. But Barry started hammering me about bending, self-carriage, and my outside rein. Slowly, Herkúles began to respond.

Next we entered a few schooling shows. I started with beginner novice combined training classes, and training level dressage tests. Herkúles won everything! Of course the jumps weren't very high, and the dressage tests very basic, but I was astounded. He consistently earned scores over 70% and beat the big horses. I must admit that was especially fun.

Then double luck hit. While showing my Icelandics at the Iowa Horse Fair, I was introduced to Tracey Marozza, the barn manager for international dressage rider Missy Fladland. Any Iowa equestrian has heard the name Missy Fladland. She really is a superstar. I have watched her ride at the International Omaha show, while there with my Icelandics in the Aisle of Breeds. Missy is a stunning rider; she has competed all over the world and undoubtedly has a bright future. When Tracey told me Missy could come to my farm to conduct a clinic, I jumped at the chance. I filled all of the spots in 48 hours. That weekend changed my life.

Missy was not an immediate fan of Herkúles. She wasn't impressed by his mastery of "wheelies" in the corner. She must have seen something though, because she agreed to work with me. I started trailering him to her farm, about 90 minutes away. I spent untold hours on a 20-meter circle to the left, searching for a small release in his neck. We worked on rotation in my waist, and shifting my weight to the outside seat bone. She was insistent that his neck be straight in my leg yield and taught me how to lengthen his gaits without increasing speed. We worked on shoulder-fore and bringing his inside hind underneath his body. She is a master of biomechanics and was able to accurately describe the necessary cue and how it affected my horse's movement. Herkúles responded. Dressage also gave me valuable skills and tools to use with every horse. I believe it is the best foundational training for every discipline.

I competed in my first USDF-rated show in June and started with Level One classes. Herkules won his first class! He didn't win them all, but it was obvious that he was feeling better and could be competitive. Herkules is three-gaited (no tölt!), and so he will never be competitive at a traditional Icelandic Sport Show. When Janet Mulder proposed that the USIHC participate in the USDF All-Breeds program, I was "all in." Here was something to work toward with Herkúles. When I realized he could qualify for Regionals, I was doubly motivated.



Virginia Lauridsen with Herkúles from Dalalif. "Dressage gave me valuable tools to use with every horse."

There aren't a lot of rated dressage shows in my area of Iowa, and I needed two qualifying scores over 66% from two different judges at two different shows in Level One Test Three. I hadn't even ridden that test at our first show. So I headed to Minnesota with Missy for a show on August 29-30. The deadline was August 31, so I was cutting it close. We qualified and entered the Region 4 Championships. Our regional secretary, a huge Herkúles fan, was very helpful in navigating the registration process.

The competition itself was incredibly intimidating. There were 400 horses on the show grounds, and they all looked "fancy." I was told it was the first time an Icelandic had qualified. I don't know if that is true, but I felt honored. I certainly did not see many small horses around. Not wanting to add to the pressure, I decided to just have fun! Missy and her other clients were supportive and helpful. They advised me on attire, and my barn manager, Liz Appel, worked her braiding magic on Herkúles' mane.

The experience was spectacular! I had the best ride I have ever had, motivated by a cheering section on the rail. Several Toppur Club members came to watch, and Barry Fript and his clinic participants were there as well. Herkúles gave it his all. Although the judging was tough, and we ended in the "middle of the class," I was thrilled to have the opportunity and immensely proud of my mighty Icelandic.

show" with your "adorable pony." Enjoy showing off your Icelandic horse, and talk to people about the breed—because they will ask questions!

JANET & PRINS

I rode my five-gaited horse, Prins from Arctic Arrow, in First Level dressage this year. We had previously ridden in Training Level and had received multiple scores above 60%, so I felt it was time to level up.

Prins had been a little off a month prior to the first show, so I decided to also enter my mare, Viktoria from Creekside Farm, in case I needed to scratch Prins. Viktoria is most likely four-gaited (I have never attempted to pace her). Neither Prins nor Viktoria were completely prepared for First Level, and it was evident in our first competition. Prins had been in dressage training all winter with me, then had had almost three weeks off prior to the first show. Viktoria had been giving children's lessons, and we only had a month to prepare. I began the show with unknown expectations. My goals were to make it through the tests, stay in the arena, and show that Icelandics can do this.

Viktoria is a striking blue dun with a self-righteous attitude; she quickly became a fan favorite. I continued to ride her through all four dressage shows offered in Alaska this summer, and we succeeded in our goal of completing every test we entered. We qualified and rode in the First Level Championship Class at the end of the season (Alaska's version of regionals, without the traveling). Viktoria brought home many red ribbons, coming second to Prins most of the time. Prins taught me the importance of riding the moment you're in, while being prepared for the next moment. We had a few fumbles, but finished the season with a blue in our Championship Class.

The dressage show season in Alaska only lasts ten weeks: four shows over three weekends. In 2022 I plan to ride First Level with Prins and hope to see Viktoria being shown by a young rider.

I appreciate dressage competition because scores are given for each element of a test: The judge can reward the things that deserve it, and you learn from the portions you lack. The amount of feedback received from riding one five-minute test provided me with hours of homework, practice, and self-study. We celebrated the 7s and 8s we received and worked to improve the 4s. I learned that much of dressage training takes strengthening, and strengthening requires correct balance. More time riding accurately and correctly will develop the horse's balance and strength.

The best part of riding dressage for me this year was the welcoming atmosphere. The group of local people we have participating in, volunteering for, and organizing events is outstanding. The encouragement from other USIHC members through social media, and feedback from my trainers and mentors worldwide, made me feel proud to be a part of it. My advice to anyone wanting to ride dressage shows in the future is, Go for it! Review and save all of your test sheets—you worked extremely hard for that feedback. But remember to have fun: Your horse is only riding the pattern because you asked him to, so enjoy playing in the sandbox together.



Janet Mulder riding Prins from Arctic Arrow in a dressage show in Alaska: "My goal was to show that Icelandics can do this." Photo by Bryan Mulder.

Driveway Dressage

by Nicki Esdorn & Martina Gates

Winter, when the weather or footing is often not good for riding, is the perfect time to learn the following exercises with your horse. They are all done at the walk, and so can easily and safely be done in a snowy driveway, but any cleared area is fine. You will teach your horse exercises from the ground that will help improve his overall balance and keep his body and mind in shape. Only a few minutes a day can vastly improve your horse and build trust and a better relationship.

Simple leading is often overlooked as being unimportant. However, it is the foundation of your partnership and the basis for all work with your horse, including trailer loading! It is the prerequisite for all exercises and even for riding, as it sets up the horse to respond correctly to your body language and aids.

We will also show you two more advanced so-called lateral exercises, which are dressage moves taught to improve the horse's balance and posture.

Why dressage? Dressage follows a training scale built like a pyramid, with six building blocks. From the bottom up, these are: Rhythm, Relaxation, Connection, Impulsion, Straightness, and Collection. One block builds on the next, and as your horse becomes more advanced, the six elements work in harmony.

These six elements are just as beneficial to Icelandic horses as to other horse breeds. In recent years, dressage has become an integral part of training Icelandic horses. It is part of the horsemanship curriculum at Hólar University in Iceland and is widely used by Icelandic trainers worldwide.

Basic dressage, however, is not just for trainers or competition riders. It can and should be used by all of us, because it keeps our horses healthy and much more comfortable to ride!

Items you will need for these exercises:

- A well-fitted, padded cavesson. A cavesson is basically a bitless bridle, with rings attached to the top of the reinforced nosepiece. It is important that it is well padded across the sensitive bony part of the nose, and that the cheek strap is not close to the horse's eye. Alternatively, you can use the popular Micklem Multi-bridle, which has a ring fastened to the top of the noseband. For Exercise 1, walking with your horse, a well-fitting leather or nylon halter is okay, but a cavesson will give you more control without the risk of inflicting pain. Working with a rein attached to the top of the horse's nose gives the horse very clear signals and makes correct flexing and bending easier.



Jenny (left) models a well-padded cavesson, while Alfrún wears a Micklem Multi Bridle (which can also be used bitless). Nicki and Martina use these instead of halters for leading and ground work, as they allow for excellent control of the horse's head and poll without risk of inflicting pain. Photo by Camille Kusin.

- A soft lead line or rein with a small buckle that can be attached to the center nose ring of the cavesson or bridle. For close-up work we usually simply use a leather rein, which is about 6 feet long. Otherwise, we like a padded lunge line.

- A dressage whip. Our favorite is the Fleck dressage whip sold by many Icelandic tack shops. It is 40 inches long and stiff, not "boingy."

EXERCISE 1: TAKE A WALK

All too often, when we experience a problem with a horse it can be traced back to a lack of training for leading. The horse that rushes or pushes us. The horse that drags behind or is inattentive. A highstrung and nervous horse is especially in great need of correct training in leading. For example, a horse that is easily distracted and seems spooky nearly always carries his head too high and hollows his back. A horse that learns to respond to our body language will relax and move in rhythm. He will learn to trust us. He will calmly follow us into, over, or under any obstacle.

This is the perfect time to build trust. Your horse will not be able to relax unless he trusts your leadership. If your horse stops and looks, or is a bit unsure or afraid of something, go between the horse and the scary object, look at it, and tell your horse you've got this. Let him look and praise him when he is brave.

Some horses are worried about lead ropes. They connect the lead rope with a painful or scary experience, like being pulled harshly, or driven with a swing of the rope, or getting tangled up. Gentle counter-conditioning will help here. This means connecting the lead rope with a pleasant experience. Move the lead rope around and stroke the horse's neck with it, praise and give a treat when the horse stays calm. If you only ever ride your horse and keep leading to a minimum, your horse might be a bit suspicious about this sudden

change of program. Keep calm and carry on, with a sense of humor! If your horse won't settle and stand calmly with his head low, put him back and try again another time. It is not worth the risk: You want to make this training calm, relaxing, and fun!

It is really worth it to pay a lot of attention to rhythm and relaxation. Many people pull on their horses way too much, both on the ground and in the saddle. The horse's poll is a very delicate part of his anatomy; it is hugely important for his balance and for having a soft connection to the rider's hands. When you pull on a horse's lead rope, he will stiffen at the poll, using the muscles on the underside of his neck to brace. It is very uncomfortable, and even scary, to ride a horse with a stiff poll and a braced neck. Look closely: Is your horse supporting his head with tensed underneck muscles, so that the neck looks more like a stick? Or is his neck nicely rounded and extended, with the underneck muscles slack, so that the poll is soft and flexible?

Let's start at the very beginning. This exercise is all about building trust through rhythm and relaxation. Get your horse used to the feel of the cavesson if you are using one. Let him get used to having the lead rope attached to the top of his nose. Lowering the horse's head is key to relaxation. You can do this by offering him a cookie low down near the ground, by stroking along his mane, by gently massaging his poll, and also by massaging the possibly tight underneck muscle. Do not try to pull his head down! This will only make your horse pull against you, and that is up! Praise your horse when he lowers his head. Your horse will not relax and do this if you yourself are tight and nervous. Pay attention to your own breathing, move slowly and deliberately, be relaxed and cheerful yourself! Hang out for a while, there is no rush.

Here is how to walk with your horse: Stand tall next to your horse, between his jaw and shoulder, facing forward. Hold the loops of the lead line in the hand closest to the horse, together with the whip, facing downward and backward. With your other hand, reach over and hold the lead line with light contact. How close to the nose you hold it depends on the exercise, and the amount of direct control you want to have. It should be possible to control the horse with the lightest of cues. Lean slightly forward and encourage your horse with a voice cue to move forward. If he does not move, gently use the whip on his hindquarter to encourage him to move forward. If your horse is doing well, praise him!

Your horse should move actively and attentively next to you in this position. Match your steps to the horse's front legs and keep the rhythm. If he rushes forward or is distracted by other things, use your voice to refocus his attention, and use your whip as a barrier in front of his chest if needed. If your horse is rushing too much, simply turn a small circle and reposition yourself. Stay in a smaller, safely fenced area as long as your horse is nervous and rushing. Watch that lead rope! You are training your horse to respond to you without being pulled on! If the lead rope gets tight, give. Leading should never require strength, just finesse.

When asking your horse to stop, use your voice (or a soft whistle) and add body language: Indicate that you are stopping by leaning slightly backwards. Give him a few seconds to react by saying "Aaaaaand whoa." If your horse does not stop, place your whip in front of his chest as an additional signal. Once he stops, stay rooted to the spot yourself! Praise him!

To back up your horse, wiggle your whip in front of his chest and ask the



Martina is demonstrating a dynamic "walk on" signal—her body language is unmistakable for Zophonias. She is using the Micklem Multi-Bridle with a rein, and a Fleck dressage whip. Photo by George Gates.



Martina is guiding Zophonias to step forward and sideways on a circle around her, crossing both his forelegs and hindlegs. Since he knows this exercise well, he is wearing his bridle with the reins over his neck. Martina is holding the left rein near the bridle ring, and the right rein with her right hand to help him stay straight. Her body position and the (not visible) whip in her right hand encourage him to step over. Note the strong focus and the calm, precise movement. Photo by George Gates.

horse to move backward with your voice ("baaaack") and body. If he does not understand, slowly move the whip up and down, or tap his chest lightly to encourage him to step backward. When he moves backward, praise him!

It is very important to keep to a steady rhythm and breathing, and relaxation will happen! Match your steps to the horse's front legs to move in unison. It may help to sing or hum a song that fits with the walking rhythm. Be cheerful and focused. Be precise, make a game of it, using markers and obstacles. Do lots of bending lines toward you, but also away from you—you can have fun doing arena figures or invent Jackson Pollock lines. Eventually increase and decrease your speed. Your horse should be so attentive as to follow your lead. Figure out how to use your energy, your voice, and your body language to ask your horse to go forward, toward you, away from you, stop, and back up. (For more ideas, see Nicki's article "Groundwork 101" in Issue One 2016 of the *Quarterly*).

Although in this article we are writing about working our horses in a small area, you can expand this exercise to walks in-hand out on the trail. However, stay in a safe, enclosed area until you and your horse trust each other and know how to walk together. Taking your horse for walks may become one of your favorite relaxing and fun things to do. You may not see a difference right away, but sticking with it will be incredibly rewarding in so many ways. Walking well together is the foundation of your partnership.

EXERCISE 2: STEPPING OVER ON A CIRCLE

Here is a wonderful exercise that is really easy to teach from the ground, but goes beyond just walking in circles. It improves coordination and balance, and makes the horse flexible and light on the forehand. It improves hindleg strength and carrying power. It is incredibly physically beneficial.

Do this exercise in the middle of your driveway, away from a boundary. Stand facing the horse, in front and a little to one side so you can see his near eye, but just the rim of the other. Lightly hold directly at the cavesson on the nose, and gently ask the horse to flex his head toward you at the poll and bending the neck a little bit. If the horse does not understand, gently massage the tight underneck muscle. Now point the whip at the horse's belly where the girth would be, raise your energy, cluck, and ask for movement. At the same time, step backwards yourself to allow the horse to come forward a bit and cross the near front foot over the other, and then the near hind foot over the other.

Imagine you are the middle of a clock face and the horse is the hour hand turning around you. Keep the arm and hand holding the cavesson straight and stay a step away from the horse. Slowly move backward and sideways when doing this exercise, to encourage the horse to move forward and sideways, letting him place his hind foot underneath his center of gravity. Imagine his center of gravity right underneath where the rider would sit, in the middle of his ribcage. Do not overbend the horse's head, or he will pop out over the outside shoulder. When you see this happening bring your whip gently around to the outside shoulder and tap it.

The horse should step calmly and evenly around you. The movement is very slow, and both hind and front feet cross over. Remember to be light with your hands and to use a lot of praise. Never hold the cavesson tightly with your hand or force the horse in any way. That would just encourage bracing and is completely counterproductive! This exercise requires a lot of trust and focus from the horse—and from you! Stop after just a few steps, or even just one good step, and rest, and praise him.

Change sides to work the other direction. One side will probably be easier for the horse than the other. That is normal,

because all horses are right- or left-handed, just like us. Eventually the horse will get strong and flexible enough to turn on both sides equally.

Once you have mastered this exercise, its elements can be used for a "pre-flight-check" before mounting. Does the horse flex at the poll and bend his neck from a gentle signal on the rein? Will he step forward and underneath himself from a small signal of the whip right behind his girth? On both sides? In other words, is he in a good frame of mind and does he respond immediately to your rein and leg aids? If not, you should not ride, but do some walking and yielding exercises until he does!

EXERCISE 3: SHOULDER-IN

This exercise is one of the most essential schooling movements and is part of the foundation of dressage. Done correctly, the shoulder-in helps to straighten and supple your horse, as well as develop his ability to collect and carry more weight. If you can teach your horse to do this exercise from the ground, it will be so much easier to perform it under saddle. It is a great exercise to improve tölt!

Imagine this: When you are walking straight ahead along a wall or fence, your horse's feet follow two tracks parallel to the wall: the right front and hind are on one track, and the left front and hind are on another. For shoulder-in, you ask the horse to flex and bend his head, neck, and shoulders away from the wall. Since his hind legs are still moving straight ahead, he now moves on three tracks: the inside front foot on the first track, the outside front foot and the inside hind foot on the middle track, and the outside hind foot (closest to the wall) on the last track. It looks like his front legs cross, since his shoulders are no longer perpendicular to the wall. What happens now is that the horse steps under his center of gravity with the inside hind leg and improves his carrying power. At the same time, he takes his weight off the inside shoulder, rounds his neck nicely, and stretches the outside shoulder. Voilá: a perfect gymnastic exercise!

Here is how to do it: You will do this exercise along a wall or a fence (or a snow bank) to give the horse a barrier to follow and to make sure you stay on a straight line. Just before you get to the wall, walk a small circle, with a nice bend in the horse's neck toward the inside. As you get to the wall, keep going just a step more on your circle until his hindquarters reach the wall, but keep the inside bend. At this moment, you start stepping sideways along the wall to mirror the movement of the horse's front legs. Your whip points to the horse's belly at the girth, or supports the inside hind leg at the hock. Now the inside hind leg will step under his center of gravity and follow in the track of his outside front leg. This is very easy to observe from where you are leading the horse (especially in the snow, where you can easily see his hoofprints).

Again, rhythm and relaxation are the prerequisites for this exercise. Keep walking rhythmically, breathing evenly, with no pulling on the lead—just a gentle ask. Don't overbend the horse's neck—a little goes a long way. Start with a few steps or even just one good step, then straighten and relax and praise your horse for every effort! This bending and stepping under is hard for a horse not used to it—just like a new gym routine is hard for us!

Make sure you do this exercise from both sides. One side will probably be quite a bit easier for the horse than the other one at first. It's also important to remember to straighten out after the shoulder-in, rather than to continue around the corner or onto a circle still in the shoulder-in position.

While there are serious reasons to do these three exercises, please remember this should be winter fun! Keep it light-hearted, turn on some nice music, use your physical environment as an obstacle course, take frequent breaks, and praise your horse enthusiastically! If you relax and have fun, your horse will love this work. We hope you will enjoy your



Jenny is performing a lovely shoulder-in. From this angle it is easy to see how she travels on three tracks and the inside hind leg steps underneath her in the same track as the outside front leg. Her front legs mirror Nicki's movement. Note her relaxed neck and poll, and her soft and focused expression. Photo by Joerg Esdorn.

Alvar's Story of ECVM

by Danielle Walton Fulsher

I want to share the story of Alvar: the beautiful well-bred gelding who ended up being a mess inside.

Alvar came to us as a promising six-year-old. His previous owner said he was a bit cold-natured and sensitive, but as an intermediate rider she was fine to ride him. He'd had some sore lower lumbar issues while in training with another trainer, but chiropractic work had apparently solved the problem. He was reported as having been very friendly and easy to start as a three-year-old, and had been ridden by interns at that farm.

He arrived here at Wild Rose Icelandics in Alberta, Canada very cold toward people and very sensitive. He did not want to be touched, and was like a horse ready to explode. The trailering trip to our farm had been very long—three days, covering 1170 km (727 miles)—so we gave him some time to settle in. We suspected ulcers, and treated him with omeprazole for 30 days. But he didn't change.

Thus began a long process of trying to figure Alvar out.



A portrait of beautiful Alvar, who was living with pain that couldn't be fixed.

PANIC & TRUST

I had to work with him when I was alone in the barn, because if another person's energy was too high (if that person was an extrovert, for example, or was excited or nervous), it would set Alvar off into a pulling-back panic. He would pull back and fight if tied up, and pull back and run backwards if not tied.

Lunging was tough on him. He would try to run around—again in a bit of a panic—refusing to walk. Any movement from me set him off. Using a whip was impossible. For me to even carry a lunge whip made him run—here's that word again—in a blind panic, sometimes hitting the round pen walls. It took several years for me to teach him to communicate with me softly and tell me when he needed to stop working.

Riding was tough, the first challenge being saddle-fitting. He was very picky. If he didn't like the saddle, he flattened his ears. Riding him was risking a rodeo each time. And when he let loose, he bucked hard. So for the longest time I had to ride him in the round pen to keep him from losing it in an open area. My endurance saddle fit him the best; he didn't rodeo with that one, and no ears back. But I could still only ride him for 15 to 20 minutes maximum before he would start jigging. At random times he was also aggressive toward other horses: He would chase them for hours, driving them around and around the paddock.

In Year Two with us, he developed slight neurological symptoms. He was stumbling often, was uncoordinated (especially over trot poles), and was a head shaker, constantly shaking his head with no visible reason as to why. I had him checked by a veterinarian and chiropractor, but nothing obvious popped up. We thought maybe he had slipped and hit his head on a tree or something. I figured his uncoordinated movements were because he was so tall and lanky. He had grown two inches, to his full height of 14.3 hands, since he had come to us. He had arrived underweight and was a hard keeper, so I had been pumping food into him. He had free-choice hay in winter and free-choice pasture in summer, plus high-fat concentrates.

Over time we built up a relationship and he began to trust me, to the point that in Year Three he started being affectionate with me. But his behavior under saddle never improved with training. Riding him meant always playing by his rules and stopping the work when he said softly, "I've had enough," as I'd taught him to do. He could only travel with his head down low and had anxiety when bending to the right. Arena work made him anxious, but he was fairly calm (for him) out on the trail. Gait training took six months before he could be somewhat relaxed in a slow pacey gait. Before that he would travel high-headed, neck-inverted, stiff, and doing vixl (rapidly switching gaits).

Under saddle he became more stable. I stopped doing arena work once I figured out that turning or being ridden on a circle was what made him most anxious. While riding him, I had to stay very still and couldn't rock with his movements, or he would hunch his back and threaten to buck. I couldn't adjust the saddle if it wasn't straight, or he would hunch. He loved me finally, and knew I was trying to figure him out, so he gave me warnings instead of shouting (bucking) immediately. I listened to him and adjusted to what he needed. But he still could only be ridden for 15 to 20 minutes at a time. Riding him five days a week shortened that time limit further. He was best working only three days per week.

In Year Four with us, his neurological signs seemed to go away, except for his head shaking and neck stiffness. He was much less explosive under saddle, but would still hunch up if his saddle was shifted. He was not spooky of anything trail-related and had no issues with steep downhills. He had limited speed in trot.

By Year Five, he had to be kept alone because of his aggressiveness toward other horses, and he had episodes of sensitivity and anxiety around people at times, too. He would lay his ears back at people and show aggressive body language, as well as trying to bite while being lead.

Then I noticed his back was starting to really take on a deformed shape, pitching upwards at the croup. He had to camp out his hind legs when eating from the ground, and he slobbered excessively while eating. So, following the advice of someone with experience in biomechanics, I decided not to ride him anymore. I started to suspect that his problems were internal.

DIAGNOSIS: ECVM

At the same time, the story of a thoroughbred with spinal deformities came out and a friend of mine shared her concerns about her warmblood's spinal deformities. Their symptoms were similar to Alvar's. So I did some research.

At that time the understanding of spinal deformities in horses was very minimal—and it's still in the very early stages. But I was able to find out, through having special X-rays taken and corresponding with a specialist in the U.S., that Alvar had ECVM (Equine Complex Vertebral Malformation). Specifically, he had a variation called bilateral absence of the caudal ventral tubercles of C6. I had these findings checked by a veterinarian specialist here in Alberta and she confirmed that, yes, Alvar had ECVM. "Kissing spine" was strongly suspected, as well; it has been found in horses with the same C6 malformation. This deformity is something that gets worse with time, as was evident in Alvar's peculiar croup shape. As a young horse he didn't have many symptoms. But as he got older, the pain worsened. Trailering aggravated his back, and I think the long trailer ride when he came to our farm really put him in pain.

Unfortunately, ECVM is genetic. With further testing of Alvar's siblings and half siblings, the gene was determined to come from Alvar's sire, who has since been gelded, thanks to the responsible actions of his owner. Six other offspring also have ECVM, as confirmed by X-rays. Several others have similar symptoms, but ECVM is not yet confirmed. Like Alvar, they seem to be off-balance and uncoordinated, falling down at times; they are sensitive and reactive (like a bomb ready to go off), cold-natured, and can be aggressive toward other horses.

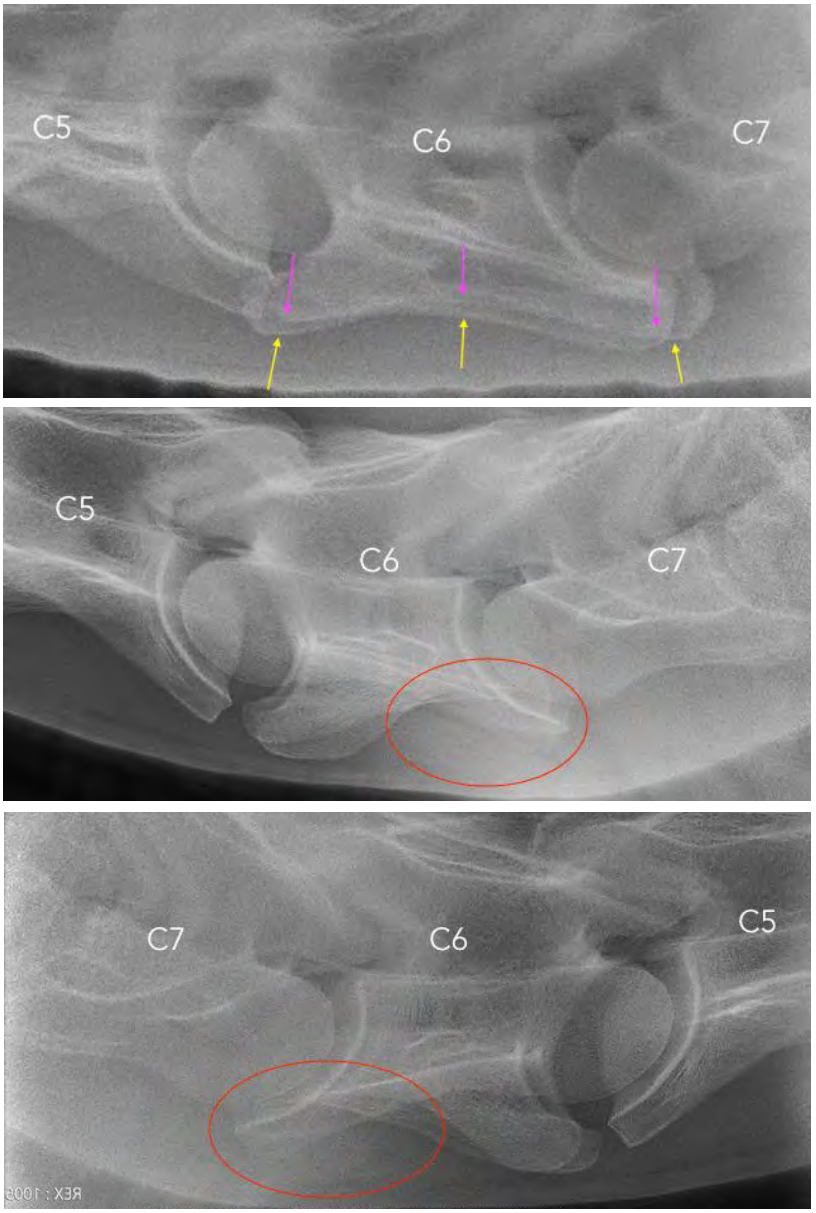
There are also offspring of Alvar's sire that do not have the malformation, however, and are wonderful riding horses with no issues. Of those horses confirmed to have ECVM, the problems in some are much more severe than in others. One offspring that was found to have the malformation shows no signs of pain and is a great riding horse. Some others show only subtle signs and are still rideable. But three offspring that we know of have extreme symptoms, as does one grandson (the father does not show the malformation, but passed it on to his son). These horses are dangerous to be around and are not rideable.

Alvar's unpredictable nature and his unpredictable aggression toward other horses suggests that he was living with pain that we couldn't fix. And over time his condition was deteriorating. So, after finding out why my poor horse was having so much trouble, I made the tough decision to end his pain and euthanize him.

ON-GOING RESEARCH

We have sent Alvar's DNA to an ECVM specialist and to a company in the U.S. for on-going research. To learn more about ECVM I recommend you consult the Facebook page "Eq-Soma Osteology & Anatomy Learning Center." For example, X-rays need to be taken at a certain angle to be able to see the malformation. Most veterinary specialists do not know how to take these X-rays, so it's best to contact Pamela Blades Eckelbarger (who is an administrator for the Facebook page) for instructions on how to have the X-rays done properly. Also see Pamela's web page on ECVM: http://www.equus-soma.com/ecvm/

ECVM is being found in many horse breeds now, with varying degrees of severity. It was first found in thoroughbreds, but is now known to occur in warmbloods, quarter horses, Arabians, etc., as well as Icelandics. There are always reasons why horses act up in extreme ways. Always.



The pink and yellow arrows on the top X-ray show a normal horse's C6 vertebra. The X-rays with the red circles are Alvar's X-rays, showing both sides of his deformed C6. Taking the X-rays at the right angle to show the deformity can be difficult for veterinarians unfamiliar with ECVM, making the disease hard to diagnose.

Fast Forward

by Alys Culhane

The low-lying areas in the Matanuska Moose Range near our Alaska farm are swampy; this is why, several years ago, we put in a six-mile series of trails that run along the higher ridgeline. Our circuitous routes wind through stands of birch, cottonwood, and spruce. This enables us to prepare for lengthy pack trips in which we maintain a three-to-four mile-an-hour pace.

Winter came early this past year and with it, snow. Lots of snow. By February there was so much snow on the ground that I couldn't see over the snowplow berms when walking our horses the mile to the nearby trailhead. I rode my three mares on the snowy trails from October until mid-February when the snowpack softened and became punchy. By my calculations it would be another month and a half before I'd be able to resume riding.

I mentioned this to my husband, Pete, who reiterated what I'd already figured out. The alternative was to start road riding. "Boring," I said. I agreed with his final statement, which was that road riding was "better than not riding at all."

There was ample snowpack on the roadsides, so I'd be able to continue to ride. However, my sense of euphoria was momentary. On February 16, Pete rode Raudhetta and I rode Hrimfara. Raudi moved out like a freight train; Hrimmi lagged along behind, like a caboose. I then remembered what trainer Guðmar Pétursson once said about slow-moving trail horses. They become adverse to expending energy when they perceive that they'll have a long riding day ahead of them.



Is this what they mean by "armchair traveler"? Nothing bothers Hrimmi. But calm doesn't mean pokey. Photo by Pete Praetorius.



Hrimfara from Lough Arrow II (Hrimmi) working as a pack horse on a tricky scree trail in the Bob Marshal Wilderness Area in Montana. Here, her sustained, steady walk is a big advantage. Photo by Pete Praetorius.

FIND THE TARGET

Hrimmi's gait of choice on long treks in the Lower 48 and on our Alaskan trails is a sustained, steady walk. Like Ferdinand the Bull, she likes to amble along and smell the flowers. I had to do something about my supposed peanut roller.

Her breeder, Andrea Brodie, was right: Icelandic horses are born and bred to move out. So I decided to do as my Centered Riding mentor, the late Susan Harris, suggested, and "chunk things down." The use of positive reinforcement training on the trail would further complement what I'd been doing with Hrimmi since birth. The use of targets—in this instance, yellow supplement bucket lids—had worked in teaching her to stay out of my space in the enclosure and in navigating obstacles in the Playground of Higher Learning (our arena).

Icelandic horse owner Claudia Sihler had used targets in an arena setting, and in this way had gotten her horse Indy to move forward in a focused fashion. An arena setting is ideal for forward movement training, since there are no distractions, level footing, and places to hang targets.

Alas, the residential road leading to the Glenn Highway, the only place I could ride in February, is winding and icy in the winter. I'd have to think outside the box. The best way to do this would be to treat our lightly trafficked mile loop road like an arena. I could then use distractions (dogs, snowmobilers, and snowplows) to my advantage. Hrimmi would also have to search targets out, which was something she'd learned to do in mounted search and rescue training.

LET'S TRY KEMP

Hrimmi's KEMP (or Keep Equines Moving Program) began in an auspicious fashion. Every day, I take my 31-year-old Icelandic, Tinni, for a morning walk around our mile loop. On the first day of Hrimmi's training, I put 16 targets in my backpack and laid them an equal distance apart on the side of the road, making sure to place one on each of the four corners.

I next took Hrimmi on an outing around the loop, with me on foot. We both moved at a trot, stopping only to touch the given targets. I clicked and reinforced this behavior intermittently in order to keep her guessing as to whether or not she'd get a treat. I didn't carry a




Calmness makes Hrimmi a pack horse extraordinaire, but a little more impulsion is nice in a riding horse. To teach Hrimmi to pick up her pace on the snowy roads near their home in Alaska, Alys adapted her target-training routine. Photos by Alys and Pete Praetorius.

crop, since the use of negative reinforcement had never worked with her. Proof positive: I'd taken her to several clinics, and when she stopped in the arena, I did as the clinicians told me to do—which was to whap her on her butt. Much to the chagrin of these individuals, Hrimmi remained firmly rooted.

Hrimmi was now more forward, so much so that I had to wear running shoes. Over the next week I reduced the number of targets from sixteen to zero. I then repeated the above, under saddle. Her trot remained steady and smooth.

IMPULSION!

It was now early March. Hrimmi understood that I expected her to move out when under saddle. And my reliance upon target training had taught her this. I was sorely tempted to take her out on a longer ride. However, I reasoned that I'd be best off continuing to continue to ride Hrimmi around the loop; this way she'd expend more energy over a shorter distance.

My friend Terri Mielke had been taking her Icelandic gelding, Dynur, to an arena and working with him there. When Terri talks, I listen, for she has both trail riding experience and an equitation background. In recent years, she's combined these two interests and excelled in trail trial competitions in California.

I decided to follow Terri's lead and do basic equitation exercises with Hrimmi. The timing was good; her now being more forward would lend itself to much-needed impulsion and vice-versa. I expanded our loop road work by working with her on backing and sidepassing, as well as serpentines, leg yields, and shoulder-in, exercises that are impossible to do unless the horse is working off her hindquarters. I broke up the monotony by interspersing these activities with trot- and tölt-based target practice. Twenty-meter circles were near impossible, because by this point in time the road was like riding in a tunnel. The berms of plowed snow were not only high, they now extended out into the already narrow road.

The day Hrimmi tölted around the mile loop without stopping, sans targets, was the day I decided to take her out on a longer ride with Raudi. My rationale was that she would keep pace with Raudi, who was always more forward. Pete and I rode the two horses a mile down the road, then, at a bend, headed back to our place. Side-by-side, Raudi and Hrimmi alternated trotting and tölting.

The day came when I took Hrimmi out on her own, up and down the longer residential road. We walked to the turnoff at a brisk pace, and when we turned around it was a quick trip back to basecamp. I continued a quarter-mile past our place, turned around, and asked for a canter. Hrimmi obliged. This was my finest moment as a horse person, for my supposed peanut roller was now more forward. I'd done this by both thinking outside the box and chunking tasks down.



Learning to increase her speed under saddle, when asked, didn't affect Hrimmi's skill as a packhorse. She'll still steadily carry anything, anywhere—as here, through a flowery meadow on the Lander Cut-Off of the Oregon Trail in Wyoming. Photo by Pete Praetorius.

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Andvari US2019105414
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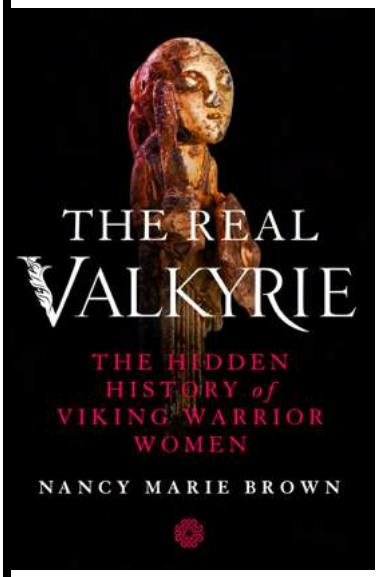
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