Issue Two 2023

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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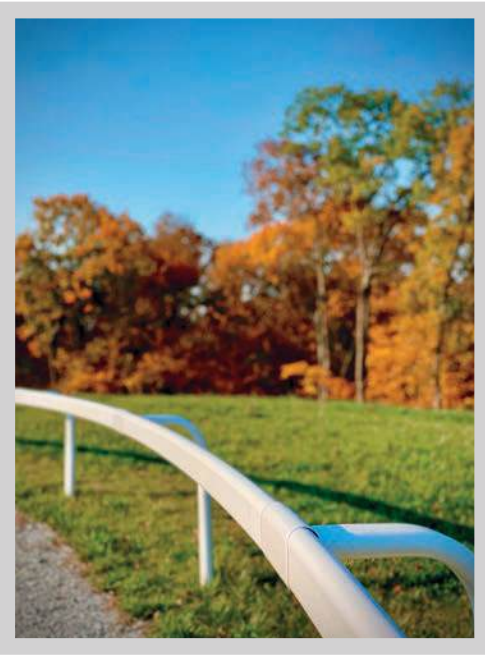

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QUARTERLY

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Issue Two 2023

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:
Laura Benson of Valkyrie Icelandics led the 2022 FEIF World Ranking in T4 (Group Loose-Rein Tölt) with a total score of 7.265. Laura (aka Lala Boosh) also ranked second in the two-year T4 World Ranking, with three scores averaging 7.167. Congratulations to Laura and the stallion Geysir frá Kvistum, owned by Catherine Luo, shown here at Taktur Icelandics' 2023 Gamankeppni in Kentucky. Photo by Cameron Durbin.

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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.

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 13 regional clubs; activity clubs can also be formed.

Our Registry links to WorldFengur, the worldwide database of all registered Icelandic horses (USIHC members have free access to WorldFengur), and we publish *The Icelandic Horse Quarterly*, maintaining an online archive of all issues since 2008.

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

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

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

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

SHOW SEASON

The 2023 National Ranking Show season kicked off on April 15-16 with the CIA Spring Open, at Flying C Ranch in Santa Ynez, CA, hosted by Ásta Covert (info@tolt.net).

The Locust Hill Spring Show (Gamankeppni) was held April 28-30 at Locust Hill Farm in Prospect, KY. A pre-show clinic with Laura Benson was held April 26-27. The show and clinic were hosted by Carrie Brandt (takturllc@gmail.com or 502-409-1924).

The Triple Ice Championships—three World Ranking Shows and a National Ranking Show in one weekend—were held May 26-28 at Léttleiki Icelandics in Shelbyville, KY, hosted by Maggie Brandt (maggie@lettleikiicelandics.com).

Two shows will be held at Harmony Icelandics in Truro, IA. The Toppur Spring Sport National Ranking Show is scheduled for June 3-4 and the Harmony Triple World Ranking Show (following the same format as the May show at Léttleiki) on September 29 to October 1. Contact Virginia Lauridsen (virginia@harmonyicelandics.com).

Three shows are scheduled at Sólheimar Icelandics in Tunbridge, VT, on July 8-9, August 19-20, and October 14-15. At the end of the three shows, a "triple crown winner" will be crowned for open, intermediate, novice, and youth. The rider has to have participated in all three shows and ridden the classes designated for the scoring of the triple crown winner. Contact Sigrún Brynjarsdóttir (sigrunbry@gmail.com).

The cherry trees were in full bloom at Montaire Icelandics in Virginia, when members of the Frida Club met for a clinic with trainer Nicole Kempf. Left to right: Shelley Shearer, Nicole, Merja Kantola, Suzi McGraw, Julia Hutter (hidden), Claire Wolfe, and Antje Freygang.

The NWIHC Show is scheduled for September 23-24 at Alfadans Equestrian Arts in Newberg, OR. Contact Caeli Cavanagh (alfadansequestrianarts@gmail.com).

Watch the USIHC Events calendar at https://icelandics.org/events/ for announcements of additional 2023 shows.

The FEIF Sport Rules and Regulations (updated April 1) can be found here: https://www.feiffengur.com/documents/FEIF%20Sport_2023.pdf

A list of permitted bits and other equipment can be found here: https://www.feif.org/feif-equipment/

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT

The USIHC Board is excited to announce a new program to encourage members to compete and to strive for new heights in their horsemanship: Lifetime Achievement Medals. These medals acknowledge significant achievement throughout a competitor or a horse's life on the oval track. Similar programs are popular in both dressage and working equitation and allow for the rewarding of overall progress over the course of a competition career. This can be very motivating, as people can now go to shows to earn points toward their, or their horse's, lifetime achievement medal, allowing them to "win" by contributing to this goal even if they do not win their class or get close to the top in National Ranking.

Scores as far back as 2007 will be able to be submitted to the program. For all medals, the applicant must submit six qualifying preliminary round scores. If a contributing competition has fewer than three judges, the same judge or the exact same judge combination cannot contribute to more than three qualifying scores (except in cases when that judge or combination of judges are part of a team of four or five judges).

Scores submitted must be from US shows or from international competitions where horse or rider competed under the banner of the United States or as a representative member (for example, at the FEIF Youth Cup or World Championships). Horses and riders can receive medals in Tölt, Loose Rein Tölt, Four Gait, and Five Gait.

See https://icelandics.org for more information on how and where to send in your qualifying scores and receive your medals.

	Pewter	Bronze	Silver	Gold	Platinum	Diamond
Tolt	5.0 or above in T8, T7, T5, T3, T1	5.5 or above in T5, T3, T1	6.0 or above in T3 or T1	6.5 or above in T1	7.0 or above in T1	7.5 or above in T1
Loose Rein Tolt	5.0 or above in T6, T4 or T2	5.5 or above in T6, T4 or T2	6.0 or above in T4 or T2	6.5 or above in T2	7.0 or above in T2	7.5 or above in T2
Four Gait	5.0 or above in V6, V5, V3, V2 or V1	5.5 or above in V3, V2 or V1	6.0 or above in V2 or V1	6.5 or above in V1	7.0 or above in V1	7.5 or above in V1
Five Gait	4.5 or above in F3, F2 or F1	5.0 or above in F3, F2 or F1	5.5 or above in F2 or F1	6.0 or above in F1	6.5 or above in F1	7.0 or above in F1

Categories for the new USIHC Lifetime Achievement Medals. Scores as far back as 2007 can be submitted to the program.

WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS

Try-outs for the US Team at the 2023 World Championships in Oirschot, the Netherlands, were held as part of the Virtual Spring Show, which closed May 19. The team members were announced while this issue was in press.

To qualify for the team, riders needed to achieve the scores used to compete at the master level in Iceland: T1 (6.5), T2 (6.2), V1 (6.2), and F1 (6.0). Riders needed to qualify on the horse they will take to the Netherlands. For the full US Team Selection Criteria, see https://icelandics.org/client_media/files/docs/2023WCTryouts.pdf. For information on the 2023 World Championships, see https://www.wc2023.nl/.

BREEDING EVENTS

The USIHC Breeding Committee is organizing three events in 2023. A Breeding Assessment was scheduled for May 13-14 at Montaire Icelandics in Virginia. A clinic on "How to Ride a Breeding Assessment" will be held September 24-25 at Harmony Icelandics in Iowa. A young horse and foal assessment will be held September 30 to October 1 in Colorado. Contact Virginia Lauridsen (virginia@harmonyicelandics.com) for information.

The March S2SS Rider of the Month is Bella Covert of California. Photo by Asta Covert.

The FEIF Breeding Rules and Regulations (updated April 1) can be found here: https://www.feiffengur.com/documents/FEIF%20Breeding_2023.pdf

FAST-TRACK TRAINERS

This year will be the final year that the Fast-Track option will be offered for trainers currently working in the US. After 2023, applicants for US trainer certification will need to complete certain educational modules (now being developed) before they qualify for testing. Trainers interested in applying for this year's Fast-Track exams can find more information and an application form at https://icelandics.org/usihc-fast-track-testing. Tests are being organized for the fall in a few different areas. The final dates and places will be chosen to suit as many applicants as possible, so anyone interested is encouraged to complete the "rolling" application.

A list of certified trainers working in the US can be found here: https://icelandics.org/horse-trainers

YOUTH CUP

The 2023 North American Youth Cup will be held at Montaire Icelandics in Middleburg, VA on July 10-16. The application packet was released in January and due on April 1. It consisted of the primary application; a questionnaire; instructions for submitting a video of a ridden freestyle program, created from a list of recommended figures, maneuvers, and dressage exercises; a reference from a riding instruction; and a character reference. The videos were judged on balance and seat, speed control, direction control, systematic application of the aids, contact, ability to cue the gaits, ability to ride with engagement of the hind end, a feeling for the gaits and beat, a consciousness of the abilities of the horse and rider (as shown by the program), and general horsemanship.

Twenty participants will be selected, and upon arrival will be placed in four teams. Throughout the week, the teams will work together and take lessons from four trainers, in preparation for the weekend competition.

According to the USIHC Youth Committee, "The past three Youth Cups

Serenity Perigo of Washington is the February S2SS Rider of the Month. Photo by Ashley Perigo.

have been extremely successful, and the Youth Cup has become an important part of the development of young riders in this country. This event is a wonderful blend of education, camaraderie, and team-driven competition. Bringing these kids together helps Icelandic horse youth, who are often very spread out and may be far from qualified instructors, to find a shared community, receive training from high level educators and learn about Icelandic horse competition in a supportive and fun environment."

At its March meeting, the USIHC Board created an ad hoc committee tasked with making the North American Youth Cup a regular USIHC-sponsored event. For more information, contact Lucy Nold at youth@icelandics.org.

VIRTUAL YOUTH SHOW

The 2023 Virtual Youth Show will offer the classes T1, T2, V1, F1, V6, ad T8 for riders 18 years of age or younger. The show will follow the same rules and guidelines as the other USIHC Virtual Shows. The registration deadline is July 28, with video submissions due August 4. For more information on the virtual show format, see https://icelandics.org/virtualshow/.

The USIHC also plans to offer a Virtual Youth Show in February 2024, to coincide with the FEIF Youth Cup Tryouts. This show will allow for videos submitted to be filmed up to six months in advance, so that riders in cold weather areas are able to film before the bad weather hits. Please plan according-

ly if your youth rider would like to submit videos to the 2024 Virtual Youth Show/FEIF Youth Cup Tryouts.

PEN PALS

The USIHC Youth Committee encourages youth members to sign up for our pen-pal program to get to know other youth members from other areas of the country. Youth members can sign up by filling out a form on our website and writing their first letter to their pen pal. They will then be connected with another youth member to exchange letters over the year. A list of topics and ideas for these letters will be provided. Each year youth participants will receive a new pen pal, but can decide to also continue writing with their previous pen pals. We hope this will forge new friendships for youth who love Icelandic horses. See https://icelandics.org/youth for more information.

FEIF YOUTH CAMP

Congratulations to youth members Mia Mulder, Wells Wappett, and Milly Wappett, who were chosen to represent the USIHC at the 2023 FEIF Youth Camp in Ypäjä, Finland, June 14-19. Susanna Rose Clawson is the reserve. The FEIF Youth Camp brings together young people (ages 14-17) from different countries to better understand cultural differences in our approaches to the Icelandic horse. The common language is English. Campers do not need to own (or bring) a horse, but should be interested in Icelandics and have some riding experience. The challenging program—with and without horses—aims to foster international friendships and raise the standards of all aspects of horsemanship.

RIDERS OF THE MONTH

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 Scott Smith of Andover, MA; Serenity Perigo of Bellingham, WA; and Bella Covert of Santa Ynez, CA.

Scott Smith and his wife, Shelby Walker, have three Icelandics. They are members of the Merrimack Valley Icelandics S2SS team. "In October 2021, I went to Colorado for a weeklong back-country ride in the mountains. When I returned home, Shelby said she had found a farm in Boxford which had Icelandic horses. We went to MVI, where Ebba Meehan was holding a clinic with Guðmar Pétursson and Carrie Brandt. That is where I first saw the Icelandic horse. I was hooked immediately." Scott and Shelby now take lessons three or four times a week. Last year, they were part of the MVI drill team that performed at the Topsfield Fair.

Serenity Perigo has one Icelandic horse, the 16-year-old Bjarki from Extreme Farms (known as Bear). She joined S2SS "to learn new things with my horse and to challenge him to learn new things as well. To build his confidence, I love to blaze new trails through the woods, over creeks, and up mountains. I taught him how to pull a cart, and we've started doing mounted archery and playing soccer. I want to try as many equestrian sports as possible with him."

Bella Covert, age 8, has two Icelandics: a mare named Karafla frá Miðási and a gelding named Skuggi from Windsong. She was invited to join the West Coast Tölting Girls, an S2SS team of six active youth riders. "My goal is to be a really good Icelandic horse rider and have fun with my horses both nationally and internationally. I hope to someday win a National Ranking Iceberg award. I really like showing them at competitions and participating in riding clinics and lessons. I also love riding when visiting family in Iceland."

WORKING EQUITATION AWARD

The USIHC is now taking part in the National Breed Performance Championships of the USA Working Equitation organization (USAWE). The 2023 High Point Breed Award winners will be the highest scoring Icelandic horses across all divisions and all levels of the USAWE Leaderboard. Rankings are based on the top four scores earned under at least two judges during the competition year, regardless of the number of competitions entered.

Working Equitation started as a discipline in the mid-1990s in four countries: France, Italy, Portugal, and Spain. Currently, the World Association of Working Equitation has 22 member countries. The discipline combines four tests: dressage, ease of handling through obstacles, speed through obstacles, and cattle sorting. For more information on working equitation competitions in the US, see https://usawe.org/.

Scott Smith of Massachusetts is the January S2SS Rider of the Month. Photo by Erika Tighe.

USIHC ANNUAL MEETING

The 2023 Annual Meeting was held by Zoom on February 25, beginning at 12 pm EST. The guest speakers were Jana Meyer and Henning Drath. Over 30 USIHC members participated.

Treasurer Lori Cretney reported that memberships and registrations were up in 2022, leaving us with a net income for the year of $22,748. Our income increased by 35%, while our expenses only increased by 19%.

Registrar Ásta Covert noted there was

a slight increase in domestic registrations, with 43 foals (under 12 months) and 25 adult horses registered in 2022. There were 58 horses imported from Iceland, and 7 from Canada and other countries. Currently in the database, there are 3,592 US-bred horses and 3,233 imported horses registered in the US, for a total of 6,825.

Affiliated Clubs chair Leslie Chambers reported that we have 13 Regional Clubs and no Activity Clubs. Membership in the Regional Clubs has steadily grown since 2019, and about 60% of those club members are full USIHC members. The committee's request to continue Policy 31 funding, to help Regional Clubs hold clinics, has been modified to encourage the use of the trainers and judges listed on the USIHC website. Funding has been increased from $3,500 to $6,500.

Breeding leader Virginia Lauridsen discussed the two breeding events of 2022. An educational event took place at Montaire Icelandics in Virginia in May, at which seven horses were presented for mock assessments. A FEIF assessment was held at Harmony Icelandics in Iowa in August, at which five horses were presented: two full assessments, one conformation only, one mock assessment, and one mock conformation. Stáli from Fitjamyri (CA2013102485), owned and trained by Lucy Nold, was the highest evaluated horse, with scores of 8.26 (conformation) and 7.58 (rideability), for a total of 7.82.

The 2023 winner of the Anne Elwell Breeding Award, for the highest evaluated ridden stallion or gelding bred in the US, was Viðar from Five-Gait Farm (US2017105220), owned and trained by Lucy Nold. His scores were 7.86 (conformation) and 7.09 (rideability), for a total of 7.36.

Janet Mulder, chair of the Leisure Committee, reported that 103 riders took part in the 2022 Sea 2 Shining Sea virtual ride, which followed the route of Annie Wilkins in The Ride of Her Life. Pierre Lesard was the top individual rider, with 1,272.4 miles. Eleven of the 19 teams completed the 4,000 mile ride, with the West Coast Tölting Girls finishing first; the team went on to complete the ride a second time, racking up a total mileage of 8,051.72. The team with the most miles, however, was Ice Trekkers, with 8,497.2.

Registration opened in January for the 2023 S2SS ride; as of the meeting, 16 teams and a total of 71 riders had registered. This year's route is 2,400 miles long and follows the historical Route 66 from Chicago, IL to Santa Monica, CA. Teams can reverse the route and return to Chicago, for a total of 4,800 miles. Each checkpoint counts for 150 miles, or about 38 hours of riding. The ride ends on December 31, 2023.

Promotions director Emily Potts noted that the Farm List was one of the most visited pages on the USIHC website, with 6,500 visitors per year (compared to 17,000 total visitors for the whole website). Viewers can now filter the listed farms by services as well as location, and each farm has its own landing page with a logo, short description, map, and contact information. Farms on the Farm List also receive one free Stallion Listing (with photos and videos); additional stallion listings can be purchased.

Four clubs received Policy 21 funding to support expos and promotional demos: Toppur appeared at the Iowa Horse Fair, Sirius at Equine Affaire in Ohio, Flugnir at the Minnesota Horse Expo, and the NEIHC at Equine Affaire in Massachusetts.

This year the USIHC placed full page advertisements in *Young Rider* and in *Horse Illustrated's* Best of Breeds issue. Combined, these two magazines reach 100,000 print readers.

Sport director Ásta Covert reported there were 22 National Ranking events in 2022, counting the Virtual Shows and each competition in the Triple World Ranking events. Shows were held in Alaska, California, Colorado, Iowa, Kentucky, Minnesota, New York, Oregon, and Vermont. The best US-bred horses in the Green Horse competitions were Álfasyrpa from Aslan's Country, who scored 6.00 at the Flugnirkeppni, and Viðar from Five-Gait Farm, who scored 5.77 at Toppur Show I. The top scorers in the National Ranking were reported in Issue One 2023 of the *Quarterly*.

Congratulations to Laura Benson, who led the 2022 FEIF World Ranking in T4 with a total score of 7.265. Laura was second in the T4 World Ranking list over two years, with three scores averaging 7.167.

Youth leader Lucy Nold announced the 2023 Virtual Youth Show, reported above.

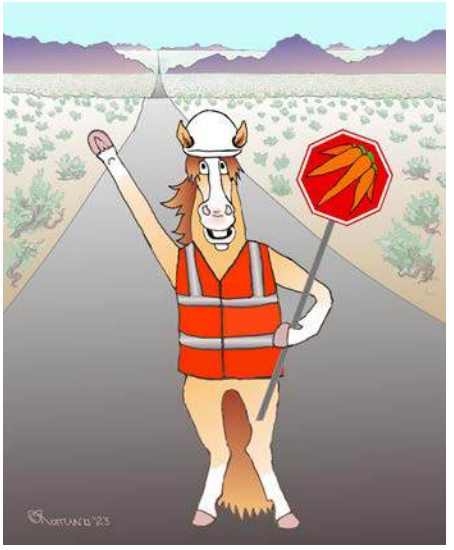
BOARD MEETINGS

The USIHC Board of Directors met by Zoom call on January 10, February 7, and March 14. 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 news reported above, the newly elected board members were welcomed in January. Virginia Lauridsen was elected president and Sara Stewart volunteered as secretary; Ásta Covert became chair of the Sport Committee. See profiles of the current USIHC Board in *Quarterly* Issue One 2023.

The 2023 budget was approved at the February meeting. The Congress's income in 2022, from membership dues and other member contributions, non-member fees, and the Registry, totalled $72,729. Major expenses for 2023 include approximately $3,500 for breeding events; $4,000 for WorldFengur and FEIF membership fees; $4,500 for youth events; $5,000 for education, including the trainer certification program and the virtual education series; $5,000 to manage the USIHC website; $5,500 for promotion; $5,500 to cover the Registry's expenses; $6,500 to support Schooling Shows and clinics; $6,500 to cover World Championship expenses; $10,000 to support US National Ranking Shows and Virtual Shows; and $18,000 to publish *The Icelandic Horse Quarterly*. The precise figures, as well as additional budgeted items, can be found in the February meeting minutes.

At the March meeting, the Board approved an all-breed award in working equitation and discussed the pros and cons of holding a national championship show, as well as approving the proposal for lifetime achievement awards, reported above.



2023 CONFERENCE

USIHC President Virginia Lauridsen filed this report: The 2023 FEIF Annual Conference was held in Stockholm, Sweden, with 14 of the 21 FEIF countries represented. Will Covert, who is the former USIHC president, and I represented the United States. The FEIF Conference is a wonderful way to connect with other Icelandic horse advocates around the world, share ideas, and come together as a community. There is always a guest speaker and each committee has the opportunity to gather and discuss pertinent issues. The 2024 Conference will be in Luxembourg.

ELECTIONS

Will Covert was elected as the new FEIF Sports Leader. Congratulations, Will! Other election results were: Jean-Paul Balz from Switzerland, as the new president of FEIF. Gundula Sharman from Great Britain was re-elected as FEIF Director of Youth. Atli Már Ingólfsson of Iceland, as a member of the FEIF Board. Cosima König of Germany was re-elected as a member of the Arbitration Council. Annette Hodel, as a member of the disciplinary board. Maja Nymann of Denmark was appointed to the Youth Work Department, and Svenja Rumpf of Germany to the Education Department.

KEYNOTE

This year the keynote speaker was Mike Weishaupt, PhD, from the Veterinary University of Zurich. Mike discussed the "Social License to Operate of the Horse World." His lecture was very engaging and highlighted important current issues that we all should consider.

Here are my notes from his talk: Social License to Operate (SLO) is a dialog between the public and the horse industry. There is currently a great deal of public criticism about the use of animals in sport, and many people think our SLO is under threat. Animal welfare is the central issue. The circus, the fur industry, science experiments, and the entertainment industry have all been affected.

Perception is key: Social media can and does drive this discussion, and we should all be aware of it. Should we regulate or be regulated? In other words, should we be pro-active in regulating our own activities before the activists succeed in prompting the government to enforce regulations? With an unresponsive industry, governments will likely institute regulations.

Legitimacy, consent, and trust are necessary for our sport to operate. We must adhere to ethics and accept responsibility and conviction. We must prioritize animal welfare! We must uphold our rules and sanctions, and educate all of our industry. We must beware of the overuse of horses, and factor in the right amount of recovery time. The weight of the rider is also an important welfare issue.

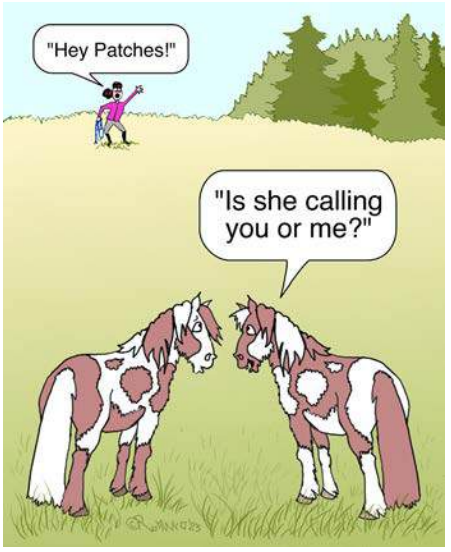
We should all be mindful of our actions and the perceptions of the community. Documentation is key. If you don't document it, you can't manage it; if you can't measure it, you can't manage it. We should put our energies into public relations within our own community, and then reach outside.

CHAIRPERSONS

In the FEIF Chairpersons Meeting, we continued the discussion about animal welfare; we also discussed sexual harassment guidelines and promoting leisure riding. Many FEIF countries require clubs to have a license to operate. This license can be revoked, so these issues are important.

We all agreed that animal welfare is a priority within our community. We also agreed, however, that it is difficult to assess the pain and discomfort of Icelandic horses, as their tolerance is greater than most breeds. FEIF will form a working group to create a video about our commitment to horse welfare.

FEIF may need to implement a standardized system for harassment education, such as Safe Sport, which is used by the United States Equestrian Federation. The Icelandic horse community has not had many problems in the past, but with



the advancement of technology, the world is moving quickly and it is better to be pro-active.

Most Icelandic owners are leisure riders. What can we do as a community to support these riders and bring them together? We have competitions for sport and breeding, but perhaps we should find new ways to support and encourage our leisure riders. Some ideas that were offered include: (1) Connect Regional Clubs to share information. Showcase one club at a time; then that club would nominate the next club. (2) Encourage better use of the Riding Horse Profile, so that there are fewer accidents. Have a seminar for trainers to "certify" the Riding Horse Profile. (If anyone in the USIHC has other ideas, please let our Leisure Chair, Janet Mulder, know!)

SPORT

In the FEIF Sport Committee, a new rule was passed that all five judges' scores will be used in both the preliminaries and finals. Previously, the high and low scores were dropped. The committee also finalized the list of "permitted" bits and the photos to be used. You can see that list at https://www.feif.org/feif-equipment/.

The Annual Sport Leader Meeting decided to extend the trial period for a more attractive third section in T2. In addition it was agreed to add a break between the loose rein sections. In the final round, the finalists will be instructed by the speaker as follows: 1. Any speed tölt. 2. Slow, steady and calm speed tölt, then return to walk and change rein. 3. Slow to medium speed tölt, holding both reins in one hand, clearly showing no rein contact with the horse's mouth. Then return to walk, change rein, and remain in walk for 60 seconds. Then slow to medium speed tölt, holding both reins in one hand, clearly showing no rein contact with the horse's mouth. The judges will give a single mark for the whole third section of the test, which is then doubled in the calculation of the final result.

BREEDING

The FEIF Breeding Committee voted to standardize the Young Horse and Foal Assessment. A committee will develop criteria for judges of young horses and foals, and a new form will be available on the FEIF website. Mike Weishaupt visited the breeding committee meeting and discussed animal welfare in relation to our breeding goals. Questions he asked us to consider included: Are we risking the health of the Icelandic horse by trying to breed taller and slimmer horses? Does our breeding goal encourage problems such as hypermobility?

WORLDFENGUR

WorldFengur will likely need to raise its prices to grow and keep current. This is a large and important international database which is an invaluable asset to our community. Costs for maintaining it have increased, but income has not.

WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS

The 2023 Icelandic Horse World Championships will take place August 8-13 in Oirschot, Netherlands (they also hosted in 2007 and 2017), which is near Eindhoven. It will be a festival! The opening ceremonies will be Wednesday evening. There will be 30-minute breaks after each group of 15 riders. On Saturday there will be the B Finals, and the presentation of the Breeding Mares, and two A Finals. Sunday will be the remaining A Finals, and presentation of the Breeding Stallions. Please consider joining us to cheer on the US riders.

YOUTH CAMP

The FEIF Youth Committee reported that the 2023 Youth Camp will be held in Ypäjä, Finland, June 14-19. The camp brings together young people (ages 14-17) from different countries to better understand cultural differences in our approaches to the Icelandic horse. The challenging program—with and without horses—aims to foster international friendships and to raise the standards of all aspects of horsemanship.

CLUB UPDATES

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

ALASKA

by Bev Short

Riding events and clinics come to a halt in the depths of winter for members of the Alaska Icelandic Horse Association (AIHA). It often feels like we are merely trying to get through each week of cold and dark. Because there have been no formal organized horse events since our last update, I have instead chosen to offer some insights into horse ownership in the Arctic.

Living 140 miles south of the Arctic Circle presents its challenges. Winter, in particular, with extreme temperatures of -40 degrees F and short daylight hours (sunrise at 10:50 AM and sunset at 2:45 PM), has taught my family and me how to be creative in caring for and exercising our horses. The hardiness of the Icelandic horse amazes me every day. Icelandic horses are much more resilient than other horses.

Lessons learned about keeping horses in the depths of winter:

1. Trimming hooves in lower than -10 degrees F is very challenging! Imagine trying to nip blocks of ice. If the horses need trimming, we hope for a day above 0 degrees, or bring them into the garage to warm up. At -40 degrees, it takes about 20 minutes of being indoors to thaw hooves to a point where they can be comfortably trimmed.

2. Riding in the cold is hard on humans! It is impossible to wear boots that are warm enough to keep your feet from freezing, yet small enough to safely fit into stirrups. Likewise, there are no gloves or mittens that keep your fingers warm enough, while at the same time allowing you enough dexterity to hold onto the reins in a meaningful way. Sheepskin saddle covers are worth their weight in gold.

3. Leading your horse for exercise is more efficient than riding your horse when it's very cold. You are able to stay warm, since you are moving your feet, and the metal of the bit doesn't freeze near the horses' lips, since you can use a halter instead of a bridle.

4. Tack doesn't work as well in the extreme cold: buckles break, leather cracks, and hands get cold trying to get it all adjusted to fit properly.

5. Horses' eyelashes keep up with the riders' eyelash ice build-up!

6. An old chest freezer is a great winter trough. Once it has been thoroughly cleaned and sanitized, and a heating device has been placed in the bottom, it will keep your water in the liquid state even at -40 degrees.

Blankets are used sparingly. When you live as far north and central as we do, the snow is very cold and dry. When the snow falls, the horses' hair provides such good insulation that the snow lands on their backs and doesn't melt from escaping body heat. It will simply fall off as the horse moves, because it remains in its original powdery state. I only use blankets if the horses get sweaty from exercise.

7. Hay consumption increases tremendously in the extreme cold!

8. Riding horses in the dark, crisp cold can be beautiful, and riding under the Aurora Borealis is enchanting.

9. You don't have to worry about mosquitos.

Though the winter has taught us so

AIHA members Milly Wappett on Rán and Wells Wappett on Randver out for a frosty midwinter trail ride.

Members of the Cascade Club performed a drill team at the Northwest Horse Expo. Left to right: Lori Birge, Lisa Roland, Caeli Cavanagh, Sammy Harrigan, Alexandra Venable, and Shauna Flanigan. Photo by Katie Daly Media.

much, it does feel very long at this time of year (the last week of March). We have had snow on the ground since the first week of October, and we still have over 4 feet on the summer trails. We are eager to get back on our normal trails and to ride in the arena that is still blanketed in snow. The only barrier between riding season and winter that remains is shedding season! Just this week we have started to see the shedding process begin.

AIHA anticipates several riding clinics, beginning on Memorial Day weekend, along with youth group activities, trail ride get-togethers and general equine fun as we emerge from the cold and dark of winter.

CASCADE

by Lisa Roland

Several members of the Cascade Icelandic Horse Club participated again in the breed demo at the Northwest Horse Expo in Albany, OR this March. Together with the NWIHC and Alfadans Equestrian Arts of Oregon, we showed off our horses and their versatility.

We have a few additional activities scheduled this year, including a trail ride in honor of Karen Brotzman and our annual beach ride in Long Beach, WA in July.

FLUGNIR

by Eve Loftness

As of this writing, Flugnir Icelandic Horse Club members and their horses remain buried under several feet of snow. We are hopeful that spring will come eventually, so we can resume riding outside. Our members in northern Minnesota are enduring the snowiest winter in history with over 12 feet of snow. Now that the glitter of snow is mixed with the sparkle of shedding Icelandic horse hair, we can dream of outside adventures once again.

Our annual Flugnir Winter warm-up party was attended by a few hearty souls who braved a foot of fresh snow and strong winds to meet on April 1. We had already rescheduled the event twice due to previous blizzards and couldn't bear the thought of yet another cancellation. It was great to get together to plan our 2023 Icelandic horse happenings.

Álfadans frá Ingolfshvoli, owned by Flugnir member Kydee Sheetz, in the Minnesota winter. Photo by Jonina Frische.

The riding season gets started with the Minnesota Horse Expo the last weekend in April. Our team of horses, accompanied by approximately 20 riders and volunteers, is committed to putting on multiple exciting demonstrations every day. Our fast and furious drill team performances are a highlight for many of the 25,000 attendees every year. To encourage and educate our local Icelandic horse community, we will also be hosting our own series of lectures at the event, covering such topics as bit biomechanics, mastering mental blocks in horsemanship, physical fitness for riders, and prepping your horse for healthy and stress-free travel.

Several Flugnir members are already working hard to prepare their horses for the Icelandic sport shows in Kentucky and Iowa this spring. The Resonant Riding virtual course offered by Laura Benson and Carrie Brandt has inspired some of us to work hard to improve our horsemanship as well. People are also looking forward to the five-part clinic series that Katie Livingood is coordinating with Carrie. It will combine in-person instruction with scheduled video assessments. Aslan's Country Icelandics is planning to

offer two informal weekend events, combining trail riding along beautiful Lake Superior with the fun of obstacle course competition. Members are also excited to field one or more teams for the Long Lake Hounds hunter pace series, and to compete in the Red Pine Horse Show Association dressage circuit.

Finally, Avalon Icelandics and Aslan's Country Icelandics are excitedly looking forward to June and have high hopes that strong, healthy, and talented foals will then be running through their fields.

FRIDA

by Suzi McGraw

The Frida Icelandic Riding Club's 2023 Season Kickoff and Annual Meeting took place on March 12 as our first-ever hybrid event. Members in the DC metropolitan area attended in person, but those who couldn't make it had the option to join the meeting via Zoom. Bob Shoemaker and Carrie Laurencot were our gracious hosts, and members brought various tasty entrees, appetizers, sides, and desserts to share. Everyone was happy to be together after our long Covid-driven hiatus.

Club member Pat Carballo began the afternoon's meeting with a presentation about her experiences buying a horse in Iceland. Members had previously expressed interest in learning more about

Antje Freygang with Halldor von Birkenlund at the Frida clinic. Photo by Suzi McGraw.

buying horses abroad, and Pat's presentation was full of beautiful photos, abundant humor, and tremendous joy. Joining in the conversation and answering questions after the presentation were Sophia Koch, Heidi Benson, and Antje Freygang. Sophia, Antje, and Heidi were with Pat when she tried horses and selected her new equine partner.

Club president Suzi McGraw next presented an overview of last year's club activities and whetted our appetites with plans for 2023. Among these are several Zoom presentations on topics of interest. Guest speakers for 2023 will include Caeli Cavanagh, Laura Benson, Carrie Brandt, and Alex Pregitzer. The tradition of Zoom presentations began in 2020 due to Covid, but has proven to be a wonderful way to more actively involve members who live farther away.

During the last weekend in March, some of our members participated in the first 2023 clinic with Nicole Kempf at Montaire Icelandics in Virginia. Icelandic-like wind and rain greeted horses and riders on Saturday, but dampened no one's spirits. Nicole encouraged riders, motivated horses, and provided tremendous insights to improve communication, balance, and gaits. Antje Freygang and Mike Padgett opened their beautiful home to the chilly riders, offering a roaring fire and a delicious surprise lunch.

On Sunday, everyone was overjoyed to have brilliant sunshine and warm temperatures. Nicole demonstrated her consummate teaching and training skills, as she coached riders and horses in the indoor arena and on the oval track.

Claire Wolfe (left), riding Álfagló frá Ketilsstöðum, and Merja Kantola, riding Ljúfur from Tolthaven, took part in the Frida clinic with Nicole Kempf. Photos by Suzi McGraw.

Several guests came out to watch, providing a mini show-like atmosphere. The clinic ended with exhilarated participants looking forward to Nicole's next visit to Montaire in May.

HESTAFOLK

by Lisa McKeen

New members are such fun and energize all of us! Carol Yusem-Meyers and her handsome gelding, Skór frá Halldorsstöðum, moved to Redmond, WA in February, along with Laura Benson and her Valkyrie Icelandics herd. They are now riding at Ferrell-McWhirter Park and at the excellent training facilities at Smokey Wood Farms. Skór was imported from a farm near Akureyri. He was originally boarded at Sunland Ranch, with Kimberly Hart and Alex Montan Gray, in Encinitas, CA.

Lisa Greenfield,of Port Townsend, WA lost her beloved Arab last October and began poking around on Dream-

Abby Cruser from Léttleiki Icelandics in Kentucky visited Hestafolk members at Avondale Icelandics in Washington.

Carol Yusem-Meyers and Skór frá Halldorsstöðum are excited to join Hestafolk and be a part of the Icelandic community in the Northwest. Photo by Laura Benson.

horse, even though she was not even remotely ready to think about another horse. Icelandics weren't on her radar at all, but a little guy in Tacoma caught her eye. Lisa got to ride an Icelandic for the first time last Sunday! What an experience! She was hooked before, but now, well, she will do what she can to be involved via clinics, lessons, and the Club. She is already signed up for one Vinur Farm clinic and is considering another.

Lauren Murphy and Andi will be attending the Spring Fair in Puyallup, WA on April 20-23, representing our wonderful breed. When she went to the fair last September, several club members came to help. "They sat at the table so I could get some time to eat and look at stuff, and they talked to people while I rode in the arena. Also, trainers sent me cards or flyers about their barn to share with attendees." Cascade Club members are invited to help again, to support Lauren and/or to share information.

Our club has chosen to continue our educational Zoom meetings with trainer Freya Sturm for the year. So far, the topics are girths, bits, and bridles.

In the Seattle area, Doreen Shoda has had a couple of out-of-town visitors come to her small horse farm at Avondale Icelandics. Each visitor was a club member from the East Coast, who was in town visiting family. They met her super trailworthy geldings, as well as a feral one. They took some unique lessons on the ground and in the saddle, with different tack, and hit the trails in the park right next door.

We had a visit from Abby Cruser, Ice Championship Triple World Ranking Four-Gait Junior Competitor from Léttleiki Icelandics. Abby knows a great four-gaiter when she sees one, and she confirmed that our Odinn from Curtis was indeed one. She also rode our five-gaited Uffie from Pineridge. Due to her age (14), she is not allowed to ride five-gaiters back home. She had never ridden bareback before, which is Spói frá Hellnafelli's speciality. Abby also did some liberty with a 12-year-old feral Icelandic, who is just being started. Abby said she would never forget these amazing Icelandics, all so different to ride, and tölting in the fairytale forest.

The importance of us reaching out to connect a broad variety of stakeholders in the Icelandic community cannot be overstated. The affiliated clubs are an essential part of the USIHC and of promoting the good treatment of Icelandic horses in the US.

KLETTAFJALLA

by Ellen Lichtenstein

We've had a slow (and snowy) start to the year here in the Rocky Mountains. January through March were mostly used for planning purposes, which means we've got tons of great events coming up the rest of the year. Whether these events are organized by the club itself, or by our individual members' farms, it's going to be a busy and exciting year.

Upcoming highlights include Guðmar Pétursson teaching at Tamangur Icelandics in May; clinics with Vibeke Thoresen, Caeli Cavanagh, and others at Gyetorp II this spring; and our club-sponsored Fun Keppni and overnight camping trips.

We're also working on member engagement across this large region, where we can't always make it together in-person. In February, we held our first virtual social hour for members.

In Colorado, Klettafjalla member Ellen Lichtenstein and her Icelandic horses hosted students training for their certification in Equine Facilitated Learning.

In March, business member Leg Up Learning Solutions LLC held its first three-day intensive training for equine-facilitated learning practitioners, with the help of their three Icelandic horses, and certified four new professionals in The HERD Institute's Equine Facilitated Learning (EFL) program. See the article in Quarterly Issue Three 2022 for more on EFL.

NEIHC

by Jennifer Bergantino

Late winter usually gives the members of the Northeast Icelandic Horse Club (NEIHC) much to complain about. Cold, snow, and ice make for challenging riding conditions. This season, however, was spectacular! Throughout much of our region, it was dry and ice-free—we wondered why we had bothered with snow studs. Winter made a last gasp in early March, bringing some pretty but slower riding through snow. Our club remained active in the ring and on the oval tracks, learning and suppling our horses, as well as on the trails. Many of us close to the coast took to the beach.

Ebba Meehan and her riders at Merrimack Valley Icelandics (MVI) in Massachusetts were very busy this quarter. In January, Ebba held a community Meet & Greet, introducing our amazing breed to over two dozen interested attendees. The group enjoyed watching Ebba demonstrate warm-up, training, and the gaits. Five students also participated, delighting the crowd with their gait demonstrations. Ebba has additional Meet & Greet events planned for April and May.

The MVI crew also had fun with new lesson formats, including "switching seats," where riders swap and try each other's horses. They also learned how to pony a second horse. Ebba reports it's a "good opportunity to have fun with extra 'horsepower!'" Outside of the ring, the MVI crew frequently enjoyed rides on Crane Beach and, on those few days when we had snow, they found "snow riding to be perfect with the right amount of snow and correct temperature on trails."

MVI riders Greeley O'Connor, Shelby Walker, and Scott Smith, and (in a separate trip) Nancy Rohlfs, all participated in winter workshops with Guðmar Pétursson at Hestaland in West Iceland. "It was fun and I learned a ton!" Nancy writes; she was able to watch a horse show at Hvanneyri, the Agricultural University of Iceland near Borgarnes, and was delighted to see the Northern Lights. Ebba and her daughter Brynja also spent a week at Hestaland learning and training. A highlight of their trip was watching the Meistaradeild (Master's Competition) live.

NEIHC member Barbara Sroka, on Náttfari, takes a lesson from Stefán Sigurðsson in Connecticut.

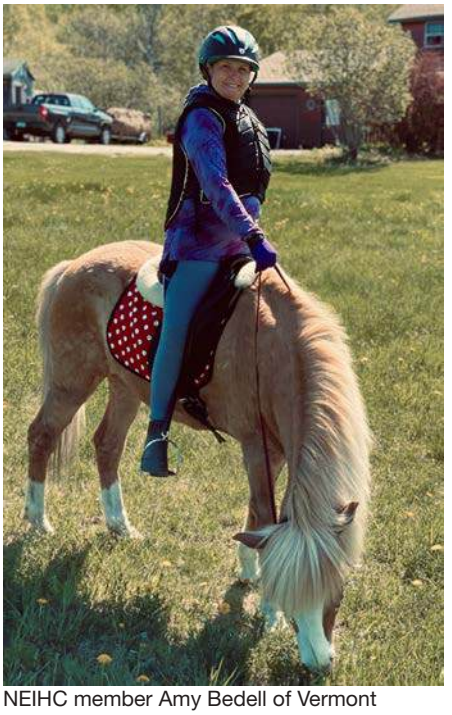
In other travel news, Nancy Woods spent 10 days at Horizon Horseback in South Africa, northeast of Johannesburg in a giant game preserve. Nancy reports, "We rode large horses: Boerpferds, between 15 and 16 hands. Mostly walk and canter. NEIHC members would love it there!"

NEIHC members practicing switching seats (i.e., riding each others' horses) at MVI in Massachusetts.

NEIHC Member Sharin Skolnik stayed closer to home, enjoying the Assunpink Preserve in New York and Colliers Mills in New Jersey. Sharin and her new horse, Kjói, ride with a friend whose mount is a super large Canadian horse, but Kjói is often well in the lead. Never underestimate the power and spirit of the Icelandic horse!

Member Barbara Sroka enjoyed instruction from Stefán Sigurdsson, an Icelander who has been training horses and riders in Iceland and the US for many years. Barbara reports, "We're delighted that he has offered riding instruction to our riders at Further Lands Farm in Stamford, CT."

Instruction was also found at Cedar Tree Stables (CTS) in Ipswich, MA, home to eight Icelandic horses. The CTS riders spent their early winter evenings learning online with Alex Pregitzer and Jana Meyers. Alex and Jana offered an excellent Gait Webinar series. "We deepened our understanding of how our horses move and ways to improve our horses and our riding in each gait," writes Jennifer Bergantino. "We put the learning into practice in the ring and on the trails of Willowdale State Forest, Bradley Palmer, Appleton Farms, and, of course, Crane Beach. To top off our winter learning, Jana came to CTS for a clinic in early March. The weather cooperated and gave



NEIHC member Amy Bedell of Vermont passed away suddenly last winter. Her passion for the Icelandic horse will be missed.

Jennifer Bergantino takes a lesson from Jana Meyer in Massachusetts. At right, Ona Kwiatkowski and Kjarkur won second place in the NEIHC video context. Photo by DJ Kwiatkowski.

us dry perfect footing and sunshine!"

This past quarter we welcomed four new members, bringing our total to just under 200. Welcome to Dashiell Rae (Fairlee, VT), Ashley Bishop (Redding, CT), Teresa Halperin (Belchertown, MA), and youth member Miette Jennings (South Royalton, VT).

It is with a heavy heart that we report the loss of member Amy Bedell of Vermont, who passed away suddenly last winter. Amy was an active member logging hours in the Sea 2 Shining Sea virtual ride, and was always one of the first to welcome new members when she received an email announcement. Amy loved animals, especially her three Icelandic horses. Amy's philosophy on happiness is one we can all embrace: "We make our own, and it truly comes from appreciating the small things." She is greatly missed by her family and will be missed by our club.

We ushered in spring with our annual meeting on March 4. Forty-plus NEIHC members attended over Zoom, some solo from their own homes and others gathered together at Thorrablót celebrations. Awards were given in a fabulous Virtual Fun Video Contest. Members posted videos on the club's Facebook page with winners determined by receiving the largest number of "likes." Susan Gibbons, Susan Matheke, and Polly Barnes took first place, with Ona Kwiatkowski a very close second. Jull Sture and Martina Gates placed third and fourth, and fun was had by all!

In addition to club business and brainstorming events for the coming year, the group enjoyed a presentation by Ebba Meehan on member activities throughout the year and a talk by Brynja Meehan, the Board Youth Representative, on "Clipping the Icelandic Horse." The evening wrapped up with member and author Nancy Marie Brown, who shared her thoughts and some excerpts from her new book, *Looking for the Hidden Folk: How Iceland's Elves Can Save the Earth*. The group was fascinated by Iceland's obsession with these mystical beings and the powers they possess.

Zo Haschemeyer and Emelia Stewart pose with Ali from Dalalif and Sunna from Flying C Ranch, two domestic-bred half-siblings, at Howard Buford County Park in Eugene, OR. Photo by Lucy Nold.

NWIHC

by Caeli Cavanagh

The Northwest Icelandic Horse Club (NWIHC) is happy to be starting up again after a long hiatus due to the Covid pandemic. The group has started off strong, with two fabulous trail rides at Tryon Park near Portland and Howard Bufford County Park near Eugene, OR. It was fabulous to see old friends and new faces coming together again.

We also worked with the Cascade Icelandic Horse Club to put on a fabulous demonstration at the NorthWest Horse Fair and Expo in Albany, OR, showing everything our horses can do.

Coming up we have a number of exciting events, including more trail rides,

Above, NWIHC members enjoy an Easter egg hunt at Five-Gait Farm in Oregon. Left to right: Zo Haschemeyer, Evelyn Kaufman, Annika Gunnarson, Louisa Stewart, Emelia Stewart, and Laura Shaloub. Below, the six riders are joined by Bella Covert of California (second from left) to show off their medals from the Five-Gait Fall Open, the first nationally ranked Icelandic show held in Oregon. Photos by Melissa Gunnarson.

clinics with Sigvaldi Lárus Guðmundsson in April, a virtual show filming day in May, and a National Ranking competition at Alfadans Equestrian Arts in Newberg, OR, in September.

Outside of our club events, our members have been very busy! Five Gait Farm held a fun Easter egg hunt, where youth riders searched for 20 hidden eggs around the property while on horseback.

NWIHC members Caeli Cavanagh and Alex Venable have been competing regularly in Working Equitation in Eugene, OR; several NWIHC members have come down to watch and are now itching to try this new discipline. Both Caeli and Alex have qualified for the Zone Championships in their levels.

In Icelandic Sport competition, several strong competitors are making the journey to the CIA Spring Open show at Flying C Ranch in California in April, including the trainers at member farms Alfadans Equestrian Arts and Five Gait Farm. As of this writing, we do not know how it went, but I am sure they will do a fabulous job representing the club! We are excited to see how the rest of the year shapes up, as our first one back in full force since the pandemic.

SIRIUS

by Janet Kuykendall

Members of the Sirius Ohio Kentucky Icelandic Horse Club are sharing and promoting their Icelandics with new and exciting adventures!

Nathan Glaza, VMD, husband of vice president Laura Stautberg Glaza, borrowed Laura's Icelandic mare to use as the demo horse for a clinic on equine emergency preparedness and first aid at Licking Valley Veterinary Services in Butler, KY. Nathan specifically chose Dagmar from Kaldakur to help because of her good temperament. Dagmar stood patiently while clinic participants practiced bandaging her and applying pressure to imaginary wounds. Nathan also has interesting veterinary podcasts on a variety of equine subjects available on his YouTube channel: See Vet Talk: The Veterinary Podcast (https://www.youtube.com/@TheVeterinaryPodcast).

Club secretary Nancy Radebaugh had a wonderful day when she took her Icelandic, Gunnar, to an assisted living facility to visit a very special person. Wanda was Nancy's next-door neighbor when she was growing up, as well as Nancy's mom's best friend; Wanda's daughter, Nancy's childhood bff, was also there. Gunnar was kind and gentle with everyone who wanted to give him attention, and Nancy loved seeing the smiles on so many faces. Gunnar's presence led several residents to tell Nancy about the horses they had had when they were younger. Others admitted they had never petted a horse before and took advantage of Gunnar's sweet disposition to check that off their bucket lists. Even a delivery driver, who was terrified of horses, worked up enough courage to give Gunnar a quick pat on the nose. Nancy summed up the day by saying, "My heart is officially full."

Also, Nancy and Cindy Gray-Stanley had a great time at a Sip and Paint class hosted by club member Lisa DesJardins. Lisa wanted to do paintings with a horse theme, so the instructor had all of the participants send pictures of their horses to her. She did a rough pencil sketch of each horse before the class. The participants then painted their own horses—and the results were phenomenal! Lisa had a great idea, and the instructor is going to use it going forward.

Club member Jaime Jackson recently received a nice surprise in the mailbox: The USIHC Sport Committee mailed her a beautiful trophy for being the top nationally ranked rider in the P2 100 Meter Speed Pace. Jaime competed in the Triple Ice Show at Léttleiki Icelandics in Shelbyville, KY. This was Jaime's first time competing in a world show, and she was very proud of her horse, Irena from Klakahross (aka Holly).

In other news, our club purchased a year-long subscription to Zoom, and it has been a very worthwhile investment. The annual membership meeting was held via Zoom, and everyone enjoyed seeing, well, everyone! It also gave us the opportunity to vote on club actions in real time with instant results. We voted to do Zoom clinics, as well as to have "club member discussions" on topics of interest. The Zoom meetings are recorded and are available for two weeks. The officers also have monthly executive sessions, which are open to all members. This is so helpful for making our members, who are geographically scattered over several states, see an additional benefit of their membership.

On February 24, Carrie Brandt of Taktur Icelandics presented our first Zoom clinic of the year on "Collection and Carriage for the Gaited Horse." Carrie emphasized that this should be a topic of interest to everyone, because it directly impacts the use and longevity of your horse. Carrie asked, "Is your horse a

Dagmar from Kaldakur was a model patient during a clinic in equine emergency preparedness and first aid held by Sirius Club member Nathan Glaza.

truck vs. a unicycle?" The comparison was easy to follow. She tied several training problems to this image. Also, she used a Slinky analogy to describe a horse's back. It was a very worthwhile clinic, and everyone took away practical suggestions for improving their own horses' collection and carriage.

The top vote-getter for our new member conversations was "How to Best Photograph Your Trusty Steeds!" Nancy Radebaugh and Becky Gray presented this Zoom talk. Nancy is an amateur photographer with many photo contest wins to her credit. She exclusively uses her cellphone for pictures. Nancy spoke about photo composition and how pictures tell a story, along with cellphone tips. Then she shared some helpful apps for editing pictures. She also encouraged us to download the Neigh App. Becky Gray is a professional photographer with a BFA in photography. Becky covered how to use "real" cameras and shared pictures she had taken while touring the western US and Alaska with other professional photographers. She showed a variety of pictures and explained why each one was interesting and why the elements were important. (Everyone was secretly wishing they could have taken those pictures.) Becky's extensive background as the photographer for The Ohio State University in public relations, veterinary medicine, and medical photography resulted in crisp, amazing pictures. The Zoom talk was well-attended, and everyone picked up worthwhile photography tips.

We have several upcoming Sirius Club events to round out the year. The first is a weekend trail ride on July 14 at Dillon State Park. Dillon is a beautiful park in southeastern Muskingham County, Nashport, OH, featuring 15 miles of bridle trails. Nancy Radebaugh is the contact person for this ride.

The second annual Sirius Fun Show will be held September 9-10 at Lettleiki Icelandics in Shelbyville, KY. Have you always wondered about Icelandic shows? This is your opportunity to try it all for one low price. It's a single fee for the whole day. There will be food, prizes, medals, and fun! This is your chance to shine—because we clap and cheer for everyone! If you don't have a horse, or can't trailer in, there are "rental horses" available. Join us in Shelbyville for a weekend of fun and fellowship with the best breed ever!

October 19-22 will be the annual Hocking Hills ride with camping at the Pine Creek Horseman's Camp, South Bloomingville, OH. That's always a fun ride, even when muddy, and the scenery is spectacular.

The last ride of the season will be in November, with a date to be announced, at Mammoth Cave, KY. Mammoth Cave is a national park featuring the world's longest known cave system. The park is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and International Biosphere Reserve. There are 60 miles of trails to explore, and you can also go on a tour of the caves. Patrick Neill is the contact person for this ride.

Until next time, happy trails!

Nancy Radebaugh shows off the painting she finished at a horse-themed Sip and Paint class hosted by Sirius Club member Lisa DesJardins. Below, Nancy and Gunnar visit an assisted living facility.

Best Practices for Shoeing

by Gabriele Meyer

Editor's note: The USIHC organized four educational webinars during winter and spring of 2023. The first in this series was given on January 28 by Sigurður Torfi Sigurðsson (Siggi) who, besides being a master farrier, breeder, trainer, and educator, works as a consultant for the Icelandic Agricultural Advisory Center (RML) in Selfoss, Iceland. After introducing himself and several of the people he has learned from and worked with, Siggi presented his topic, "Best Practices for Shoeing Your Icelandic Horse," in three parts: (1) The Structure of The Hoof and Daily Hoof Care, (2) General Shoeing and Trimming, and (3) Shoeing for Sport and Breeding Competitions. This article is based on Siggi's presentation. After each part, he answered questions.

A well-shod hoof, showing correct hoof-pastern alignment. Proper shoeing can prevent wear and tear, improve traction, and correct gait problems. Improper shoeing, however, can hinder the hoof function and harm tendons, ligaments, and joints.

HOOF BASICS

Hooves have many biological functions: Hooves carry the horse's weight, they reduce impact when the limbs strike the ground, they are resistant to wear and tear, they provide support and traction on various surfaces, and their mechanism facilitates the flow of blood and lymph fluid back up the lower limb.

Siggi explained the anatomy of the hoof and the lower leg (see illustrations) and described details such as the hoof capsule, the structure of the hoof wall, the tubules and laminae, the size and shape of the frog, the lateral cartilages, and the digital hoof cushion. He pointed out that hoof growth starts in the coronary band. He then went on to explain what a correct hoof-pastern alignment looks like and how important that correct alignment is to avoid stresses on the horse's bones and ligaments.

A number of factors affect hoof growth, such as genetics, gender, environment, exercise, nutrients, metabolic rate, physical state, parasite burden, age (old horses tend to grow hooves more slowly), and feed. It's best to feed your horse grass or hay, and it is important to neither overfeed nor underfeed. When you need to feed oats for more calories, make sure to add some fiber-rich roughage, like straw, to the horse's rations. When asked about feeding alfalfa hay, Siggi felt it was okay to feed to some horses but, because of its higher protein and energy content, it might not be suitable for all horses. One participant inquired about hoof supplements, and Siggi said that they could be used if needed. There are a number of good products on the market that contain biotin, vitamin D, zinc, sulfur, and more.

Water is usually the best hoof conditioner, Siggi said. Commercial hoof conditioners can be used, but they are meant to keep any moisture in the hoof, rather than adding moisture to the hoof. When asked about the use of any specific hoof conditioners, Siggi's advice is to only use a product that you also would put on your own skin. Asked what to do if hooves become too dry, he recommended trying to soak the feet in Epsom salts, which would soften the horn and improve blood circulation.

For healthy hooves, the horse's environment should be clean and with lots of space to move around, because movement stimulates hoof growth.

Generally, hoof care consists of three different aspects: daily hoof care, trimming and/or shoeing at regular intervals, and special treatments when necessary. Siggi's advice is to clean your horse's hooves every day. He explained how to clean the collateral grooves correctly, that is, by drawing the hoof pick from the heel toward the toe, not the other way around.

While preparing this report, I had the chance to ask Siggi to explain why he recommends this directional cleaning of the hoof. He replied, "Dirt, small stones, and other things that get stuck in the hoof travel from the front to the back. If those things are too big to get out of the clefts of the heels or the frog, they may cause a bruise if you try to force them backward. Therefore, it is better to clean from heel to toe."

GENERAL SHOEING

Why do we shoe our horses? Shoeing, Siggi explained, aims to prevent wear and tear on the hooves, it improves traction on different surfaces, it can correct gait problems, and it can be used for different therapeutic reasons. However, Siggi pointed out that it is important to keep in mind that improper shoeing or trimming can hinder the hoof function and, in the long term, can negatively affect the horse's tendons, ligaments, and joints.

Beside the hoof-pastern alignment mentioned earlier, in his discussion of the anatomy of the horse's lower leg (see illustration), Siggi said it is very important to balance the hoof correctly in both dimensions: side-to-side and front-to-back. To shoe a horse, Siggi starts by finding the base of the hoof during the trim. After the webinar, I asked him by email to expand on the idea of "the base of the hoof." He wrote, "The base of the hoof is where the hoof would normally wear under the best natural conditions, meaning that the horse is living on land where the hoof wears constantly as it grows to maintain soundness and durability. The hoof then wears to the same point as the sole; white line and hoof-wall come together."

In a dorsal view, the hoof should be symmetrical; that is, a vertical line can be drawn that dissects the hoof and the lower limb into two equal parts. Additionally, an imaginary line drawn between any two comparable points on the coronary band (left and right of the vertical line) should be parallel to the ground. The goal is to make the base of the coffin bone parallel to the ground.

Siggi explained that the average length of the dorsal hoof wall of an Icelandic horse is 8 centimeters (cm) or a little less. This number was established during a research project for which Siggi measured a number of hoof parameters on 89 randomly chosen healthy Icelandic horses after each had had a fresh standard trim.

Siggi also advises keeping the hoof wall strong; if there are any flares, these do need to be addressed. Pads can be added to stimulate the frog if more hoof growth is needed. When asked about using shoes with toe clips, he agreed that the clips help to hold on the shoe, but warned farriers not to hammer the clips in, as this can lead to bruising. Instead they should hot shoe or, if cold shoeing, they should cut the hoof wall out to fit the clip.

The correct way to measure a hoof, using calipers. The average hoof length of Icelandic horses is around 8 cm. The maximum for breeding shows is 8.5, while in sport competition hooves can be 9 cm or even longer for tall horses.

Siggi showed a number of images of horses' feet with not-so-correct alignments and described how those problems could be mitigated with shoe modifications like rocker toes, roller toes, and trailers. He also described shoeing modifications for gait problems such as forging, cross-firing, and elbow hitting. When asked about shoeing a horse with two different-sized front hooves, he said to try to make them as even as possible without infringing on best practices. For a horse with a long toe or low heel, he said those problems can be addressed either barefoot or with shoeing. Trimming or shoeing must be done frequently—every four weeks. For a horse with high heels or a club foot he recommended shorter shoeing intervals as well. Asked about how to deal with vertical cracks, Siggi said that the farrier should try to get the load off the affected area, and also maybe use pads with packing all the way down to the bottom of the shoe.

When asked about which shoeing interval he would recommend for the average Icelandic, Siggi said that a five- to six-week shoeing cycle is best. Asked about using just front shoes, he said it was fine—if it worked for the horse. The same goes for using hoof boots instead of shoes, or shoes made of composites, rather than metal. In fact, that was his answer to many questions: Fine, if they work for your horse.

When writing this report, I wondered if Siggi would recommend that the shoe follow the coronary band at the hoof quarters. I felt that many farriers, or at least those where I live, make the shoes too narrow and short in the heel area. Siggi wrote back, "I always use the coronary band as one of the main references when I'm shoeing, and I often shoe with heel support, especially lateral heel support. I have heard that many farriers who shoe Icelandic horses fear that the horse will pull off the shoe if they leave the shoe too wide at the back quarter and the heel. My

theory is, if you keep the hoof in correct and good balance and use the coronary band, frog, white-line, and heel alignments as references, the horse will not step on the shoe—unless something else is causing it to do so. And in that case, the horse will pull off the shoe anyway, even if you fit the shoe tight."

SHOEING FOR GAITS

Siggi reminded us that the term "shoeing for balance" can mean different things to different people or in different countries. To some people, "shoeing for balance" means to shoe for the horse's ideal hoof balance. But to others, it can mean to shoe for optimization of gait balance—two very different interpretations!

He went on to emphasize that if you need to balance the hooves to improve the horse's gaits, avoid trying to achieve that by growing the hoof longer. Some horses are shod equal all around, for example with normal shoes that are 8 millimeters (mm) thick and 20 mm wide. Other horses, however, may benefit from having slightly heavier front hooves. This goal should be achieved by using front shoes of greater thickness or width, not by making the hoof longer.

While we are all aware that horseshoes can be bigger or smaller in size, I will add here that it is maybe not so common knowledge that shoes appropriate to Icelandic horses can also be thicker or thinner (from 6 mm to 10 mm) or super narrow or wider (from 17 mm up to 23 mm). As a rule of thumb, the bigger, thicker, or wider the shoe is, the heavier it is.

When shoeing to balance the gaits, Siggi gave these pointers:

Walk and canter are not normally influenced by any special kind of shoeing, he said. They require good standard shoeing, as explained above, using pastern alignment, medial-lateral balance, and the symmetry of the hoof capsule as guiding principles.

Horses with a good two-beat trot don't need any special shoeing. The typical standard shoeing is to use an 8 mm-thick shoe on both the front and hind feet. If a horse tends to lateralize the trot (that is, to have more of a broken trot), a slightly heavier shoe in the front may help the horse to find the clean two-beat rhythm.

Tölt is a four-beat gait where the individual beats are evenly spaced. There are always one or two feet on the ground, so there is no suspension phase. Horses with a good quality tölt do not need any special shoeing. However, some horses lateralize their tölt, meaning that they have the tendency to be "pacey." These horses might benefit from having slightly heavier shoes in front and lighter shoes behind, for example, 10 mm shoes in front and 8 mm shoes behind. Horses that have a tendency to diagonalize their tölt, that is to become "trotty," might benefit from a slightly lighter shoe in front and heavier shoes on the hind feet. Siggi added that for general riding, a change in the thickness of the shoe is often enough to help the horse find a clean four-beat tölt. For high-performance sport horses working a lot on hard ground, pads may be added.

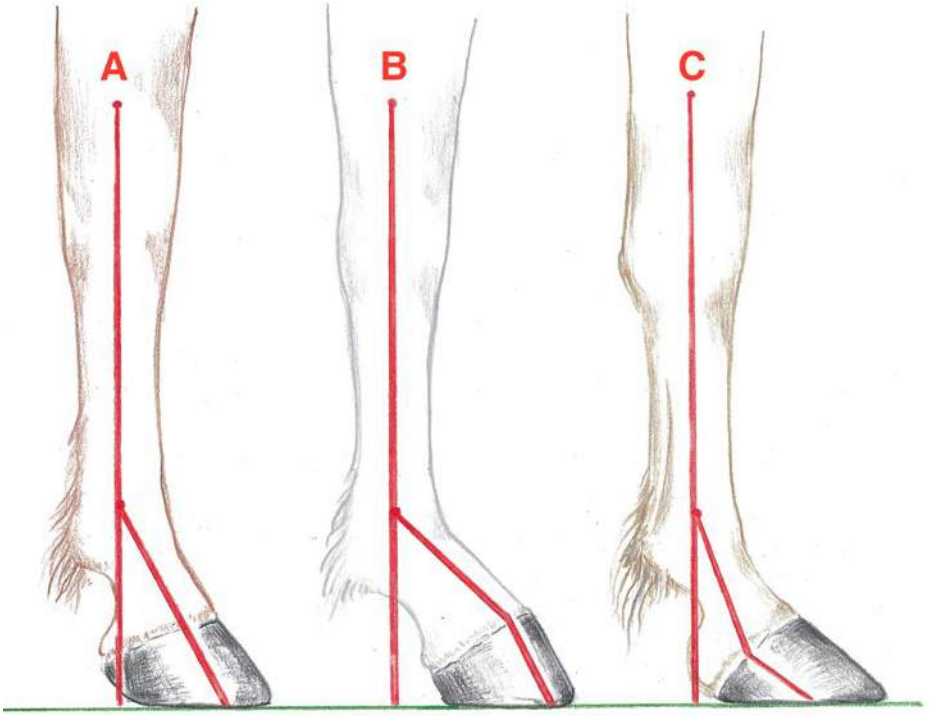
A question was asked about the use of pads and if they increased the toe length—which Siggi had said earlier was not recommended as a means for gait correction. Siggi's response was that yes, pads do add to the hoof length, but this can be counterbalanced by increasing the break-over.

Horses with a good flying pace rhythm, Siggi continued, don't need any special kind of shoeing. Standard shoeing for pace is 8 mm shoes all around. If the horse has a tendency to be on the four-beat side in pace, it might benefit from having a slightly lighter front shoe and heavier hind shoe to be able to find the clear two-beat pace. However, if the horse tends to change from pace into a canter or disunited canter, heavier front shoes and lighter hind shoes might help.

FOR COMPETITIONS

Different rules apply for shoeing a horse for sport versus breeding competitions. If you want to ride in a competition, look up the current FEIF Rules and Regulations

What a hoof should look like after the base trim (left) and after a shoe has been put on (right).



After a proper trim, your horse's hoof-pastern alignment should look like drawing A (left). Drawing B (middle) and C (right) show incorrect alignments: B is broken forward, while C is broken back. Problems caused by these "not-so-correct" alignments can be mitigated with shoe modifications.

(updated yearly) for the type of competition you want to enter. There are strict regulations, with regard to hoof length and shoeing, as well as the addition of pads and fillings.

Sport rules can be found here: https://www.feiffengur.com/documents/FEIF%20Sport_2023.pdf

Breeding rules can be found here: https://www.feiffengur.com/documents/FEIF%20Breeding_2023.pdf

In general, Siggi suggested, it is best to keep the shoeing as simple as possible, with the least amount of weight differences and/or other modifications, to help the horse stay sound. Additionally, he advises anyone wanting to show their horse in sports or breeding competitions to prepare early, so that there is sufficient time to make shoeing changes slowly and gradually and to have everything perfect by the day of the show.

In Sport Competitions, shoeing is not mandatory. But if shoes are being used, all four feet need to be shod. All four shoes must be of the same material—no steel in front and aluminum behind, for example. The maximum allowed thickness of the shoes is 10 mm, the maximum width is 23 mm. If a horse has pads, the maximum shoe thickness is 8 mm, except for rim pads, for which the maximum thickness is 10 mm.

The hoof length is strictly regulated as well. While the average hoof length of Icelandic horses, as Siggi had noted earlier, is around 8 cm or a little less, there are maximum lengths established under FEIF rules which depend on the size of the horse.

The maximum distance from the beginning of the coronary band to the end of the hoof (not the end of the shoe) can be 9 cm (or 9.5 cm if the horse stands taller than 145 cm). The correct way to measure the hoof length is to use calipers.

The shoeing rules for breeding competitions, Siggi stressed, are different from those in sport competition! For breeding competitions, horses shown under the rider must be shod. The shoeing should be as close to natural and ideal as possible; the angle of the hoof must be in line with the pastern.

In a breeding show, the hoof length must be natural and may not exceed 8.5 cm (vs. sport competitions, where the standard is 9 cm). Exceptions to the 8.5 cm rule can be made when the horse's height, measured with a stick at the withers, is 137 to 144 cm; these horses are allowed a hoof length of 9.0 cm. Horses that have a stick measurement of 145 cm or more are allowed a hoof length of 9.5 cm. Front and back hooves can have a maximum length difference of 1.5 cm.

In a breeding show, the horse must wear four shoes and the material of the shoes must be identical and not exceed the weight of iron shoes. Pads of any kind (including rim pads) are not allowed. The maximum width of the shoes is 23 mm and the maximum thickness is 8 mm, but the difference in thickness between front and back shoes can be up to 2 mm.

TAKE-AWAYS

When asked what the biggest mistakes were that farriers make, Siggi mentioned allowing a long toe or low heel, balancing the gaits improperly, and not listening to the horse's owner. But he also cautioned the webinar attendees to try not to judge. Shoeing is complicated, and farriers are professionals.

There were more questions, but because we were running overtime already, they could not be addressed. My key takeaways were these:

The shoeing of the Icelandic horse follows the current best practices that apply to all horses. Within this framework of best practices, the weight of the shoes can be adjusted to accommodate different gait problems a specific horse might have, but we should avoid using the hoof length to balance the gaits.

The shoeing interval of five to six weeks that Siggi recommended is much shorter than what previously has been customary!

Siggi was very open to trying alternative hoof protection devices, repeatedly stating, "Fine, when it works for your horse, do it."

We must be mindful of different interpretations of "balance." The phrase "shoeing for balance" can have different meanings to different farriers: to shoe for hoof balance or to shoe for gait balance.

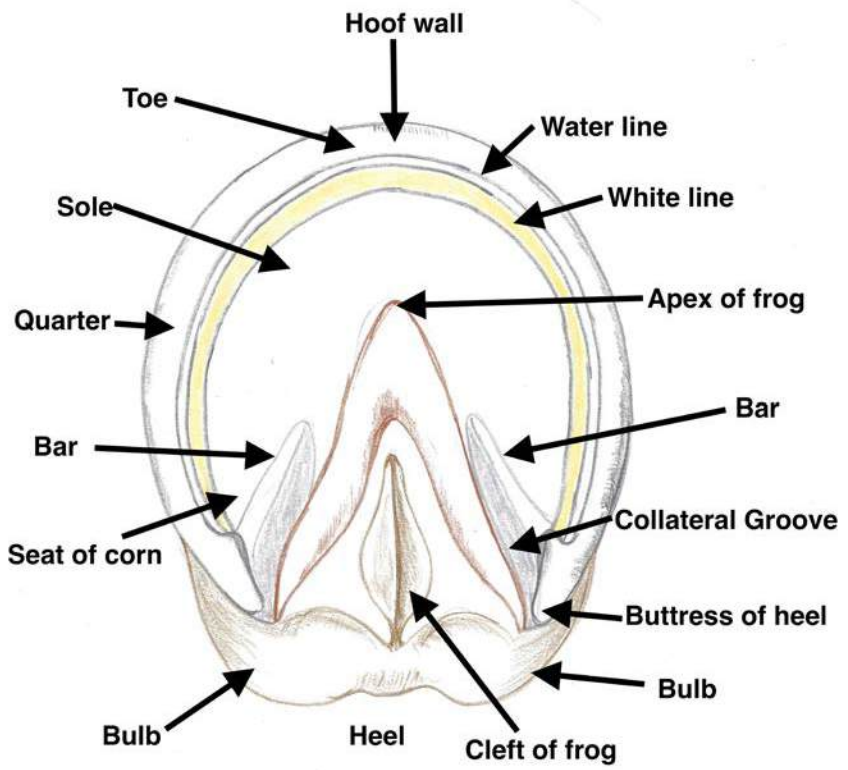
If you show in any kind of competition, make sure you inform yourself about the rules early on, so that you can make the required changes to your horse's hoof size or shape or shoeing regimen gradually.

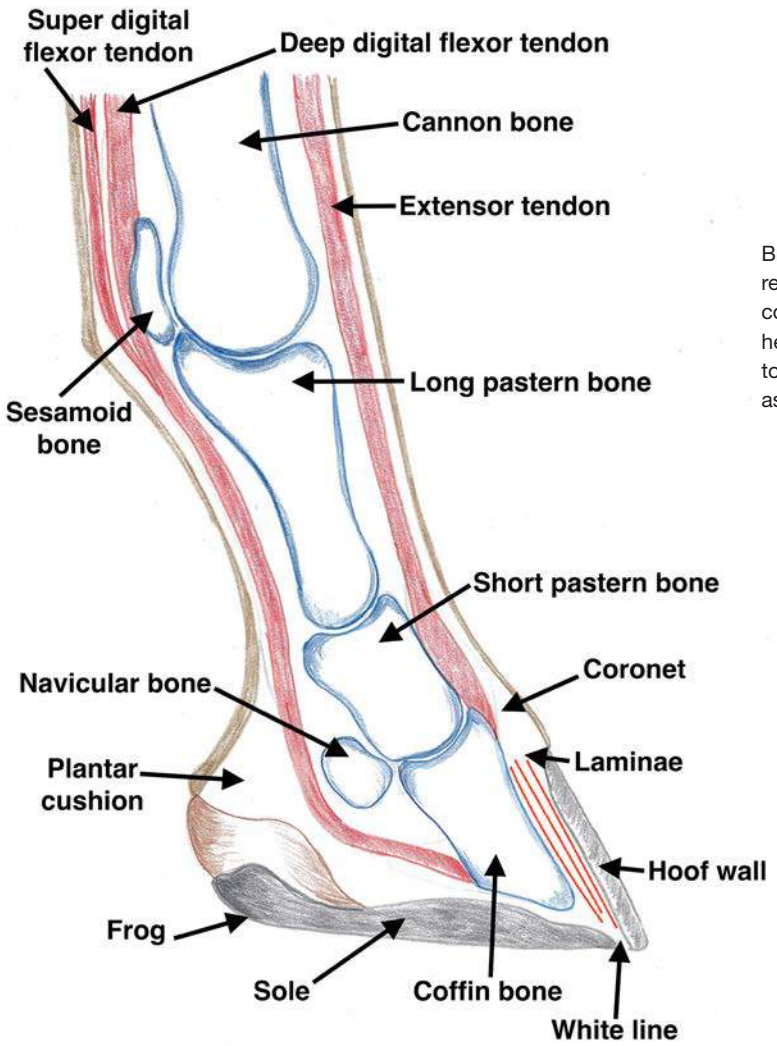
This seminar was very helpful. I, like many Icelandic horse owners, have had difficulties at times communicating with my farriers. Sometimes the problem might have been that I was not able to describe precisely enough what I wanted (and what I did not want), and sometimes the farrier was not patient enough to listen to what I

was trying to explain.

I also think we have to realize that there are misconceptions about shoeing gaited breeds. I suspect that some of our farriers here in the US are wary of the concept of using shoes to create a better gait balance, because they fear that the use of shoes with different weights is a step toward the extreme gait manipulations used in some of the other gaited horse breeds here. Also, any farrier new to the world of Icelandic horses will most certainly not know that we, unlike the riders of other gaited horses, want to be able to ride our horse in all of its gaits, may that be four or even five.

Siggi's webinar provided many good insights and excellent guidance on what constitutes "good shoeing" of the Icelandic horse. This knowledge will help us, as owners and riders, to communicate with our farriers in a better, more comprehensible way.





Brush up on the basics! Shoeing is complicated, Siggi reminds us, and farriers are professionals. To better communicate with your farrier—and keep your horse healthy—you need to know your hoof terminology and to understand the anatomy of the horse's leg and foot, as shown in these illustrations by Nancy Wines-Dewan.

MEET ALEX V

by Nicki Esdorn

Alexandra Venable was certified as a FEIF Trainer Level 1 in 2022 through the USIHC's Fast-Track certification process. She is currently a trainer at Alfadans Equestrian Arts in Newberg, Oregon.

For many years, domestic Icelandic horse trainers and instructors have struggled to find a way to become FEIF certified. Certification within the United States was impossible, with the exception of two successful seminars held in Georgia about 15 years ago. The only option since then was to travel to Germany or Iceland, which required a substantial sacrifice of time, effort, and money. Recognizing this problem, the USIHC Education Committee created a program specifically for America.

This year will be the final year that the Fast-Track option will be offered. After 2023, applicants for US trainer certification will need to complete certain educational modules (now being developed) before they qualify for testing.

Trainers interested in applying for this year's Fast-Track exams can find more information and an application form at https://icelandics.org/usihc-fast-track-testing. The dates and places for this year's tests will be chosen to suit as many applicants as possible.

As more trainers achieve their US certification, we will introduce them in the pages of the *Quarterly*. In this issue, we present an interview with Alex V, based on questions initially developed by Alex P, that is, Alex Pregitzer—not to be confused with Alex D (Dannenmann) or Alex MG (Montan Gray), all of whom are also US certified Icelandic horse trainers! For a list of all currently certified trainers working in the US, see https://icelandics.org/horse-trainers.

Alex and 26-year-old Ægir on the beach in Oregon, performing their winning routine in the 2020 No-Stirrups November video contest.

WHAT IS YOUR BACKGROUND?

My mother was into exotic animals so I basically grew up in a zoo. I was always surrounded by animals and learned how to take care of a variety of them, with all sorts of needs. We had a green tree python, an albino pacman frog, some mice, and tadpoles we raised to frogs and then released. Also some more normal critters, like fish, birds, and cats. Probably her favorites, however, were bats. She was a wildlife rehabilitater who specialized in bat rehab and education. She would bring me along on rescues, and also when the bats were released back into the wild. It always felt so rewarding to see them fly away into the sky, knowing that we had helped them be healthy again. I attended many of her lectures about bats, and learned so much about how education can make such a big difference in how people interact with the environment.

Alex and Oddi competing in trot at the 2022 CIA Open at Flying C Ranch in California.

WHAT IS YOUR HORSE EXPERIENCE?

I've been working with Icelandics for 23 years. I like to learn a bit from all sorts of trainers and to integrate that knowledge into my practice of horsemanship. These trainers have come from all sorts of disciplines, such as natural horsemanship, three-day eventing and, of course, the Icelandic horse world. With my first Icelandic horse, I did a little bit of gymkhana, jumping, and three-day eventing alongside Icelandic competition. As a teenager, I worked for various Icelandic trainers in the US, including Laura Benson, Steinar Sigurbjörnsson, and Guðmar Pétursson. Once I turned 18, I started to travel to Iceland. There, I worked under various Hólar graduates, such as Jessie and Hörður, Eyrun Ýr, and Ómar Ingi. The last two years I have been working with Caeli Cavanagh (also a graduate of Hólar's equestrian program) at Alfadans Equestrian Arts.

HOW DID YOU PREPARE FOR THE EXAM?

About a month and a half before the exam, I made the decision to take it. Most of the studying was just kind of last-minute checking that I knew what I needed to know. I brushed up on much of the theory while driving to the exam over the course of two days. Definitely many thanks go to Caeli, who helped me study on the drive. A lot of the tests required riding a pattern; I worked on memorizing these by riding different horses

at home through the pattern and thinking about how I could do the best test on each one. We also had to give an in-depth presentation on some type of theory. When I was in middle school, I did two years of science fair presentations about white line disease, so I decided to make my life more simple by doing my presentation on that topic. That worked out really well, because I knew a lot about it already and even had some good media for the presentation ready to go.

HOW DID THE EXAM ITSELF GO FOR YOU?

I am really happy with how the exams went. I felt confident with the horsemanship exams, as long as I had memorized all the parts I was supposed to show. When teaching, I quickly fell into just focusing on the rider and horse and how I could help them in the moment. The exams I struggled with the most were the theory exams and any exam that involved a verbal presentation.

I didn't pass the oral exam the first time around. I'm a very shy and quiet person, so it's hard for me to come out of my shell. I'm much more the type of person to just work quietly in the background to get things done. So standing up in front of people and speaking confidently definitely took me out of my comfort zone—combined with having already completed 12 exams. I was very happy to have the opportunity to retake the oral exam so soon. With a fresh state of mind, I had a much easier time and was able to pass.

WHAT IS YOUR TRAINING PHILOSOPHY?

When I get a horse in training, I like to consult with the owner about what their goals are, as well as anything that keeps them from feeling totally happy with their relationship with their horse. Anything can be a clue to what the root cause of an issue is, and any problem with basic manners, groundwork, or riding can bleed over into other areas. A horse that doesn't wait to be mounted is likely to anticipate the other aids and not listen and wait for their rider. A horse that lifts its back and walks off hurriedly could have back pain.

My goal at the end is always that I want a good well-rounded horse, both on the ground and under saddle. A well-trained horse should be a good citizen who is willing and eager to try anything the rider points them at, whether it is jumping, trail riding, dressage, and more! One discipline I have really enjoyed adding to my training is working equitation. It has been a real challenge to take a gaited horse into a canter-driven sport, but it's been great to work in a discipline that rewards the well-rounded horses I strive to train—horses that will wait calmly while you lift a jug into the air, and then moments later will jump boldly and willingly.

Alex and Snædís in Iceland.

I also think that this mental training really dovetails with physical training. I try to train the horse with the idea of keeping the horse healthy and moving in a positive manner. One of my proudest accomplishments is my old competition horse, Ægir, who still sails confidently around with kids at their first competitions at the strong age of 29! That kind of longevity really makes me feel good as a trainer.

WHAT IS YOUR TEACHING PHILOSOPHY?

The core of what I teach is basic horsemanship. The basics are what everything else is built on. Without a sturdy foundation, everything on top will end up being shaky. I find that even in my more advanced students, nailing down the basics always cycles back up into bigger and better things in their more advanced work.

I also think that having fun is super important. Sometimes we forget, in all the work of getting our technique down and our abilities to the best level, that we ride because it is fun! I try to integrate games, challenges, and riding outside in groups into all my lessons.

Teaching dressage exercises are important to me as well. Dressage gets a bad rap, because it can be associated with stuffy perfectionism. I love showing people how dressage can have a practical use, both for your horse's physiological well-being but also on your trail rides. Yielding the front and hind ends makes it easy to open and close gates, for example, and having a balanced and supple bend makes it easy to navigate trails at any speed!

WHAT ARE YOUR HOPES FOR ICELANDIC HORSES IN THE US?

I hope that the breed continues to grow in this country, as more people see how versatile Icelandic horses are. One important way to do this is to increase the number of certified trainers in America. Trainers become a hub of growth for the breed, as they grow a base of students who then seek out more activities with their horses, which further spreads the word about the breed, and so on. Certified trainers become a source of knowledge for these communities and help to foster the welfare of the horses around them. I hope to be a part of this effort.

I also think it is really important to go to non-Icelandic shows, both to broaden our horizons as trainers, as well as to show how amazing our horses can be at almost everything. Going to the working equitation shows has been really fun, as everyone remembers the Icelandics—to the point that when we don't come, people always mention how much they missed seeing us on the course!

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Alex and Sokkadís competing in working equitation.

RIDING THE PYRAMID 5

by Guðmar Pétursson • Illustrations by Margot Apple

Editor's Note: Here we continue our series with Guðmar Pétursson on how to use the training pyramid taught in the equestrian program at Iceland's Hólar University. Steps 1 and 2 are covered in Issue Four 2022 of the *Quarterly*, and Steps 3 and 4 in Issue One 2023. The articles are edited and condensed by Nancy Marie Brown from videos originally created for Guðmar's online educational community The videos are now available on Guðmar's Patreon page at https://www.patreon.com/gudmarpetursson.

Keep in mind, Guðmar points out, that while it's important to go through the training pyramid step by step, "You want to understand the step, not be a perfectionist. Think of the size of the step in the drawing as being equal to the amount of time you should spend on it."

The purpose of the pyramid "is all about gaining control over the horse's body and mind. Not because you take control, but through communication and trust the horse gives you that control." Your end goal is "the feeling of being in harmony with the horse."

Here is Guðmar's lesson for Step 5 (Round) of the Hólar Training Pyramid:

STEP 5: ROUND

This step is where we really start thinking about how the horse is carrying herself—and about how she's carrying the rider. We want the horse to use her topline in a way that's healthy and that helps her get stronger. In that sense, we're doing the horse a favor by riding her, because she's getting more fit every time we ride.

"Round," in a way, is a limiting word. Often what we understand when we hear the word "round" is a rounded neck, but there's much more to it than that. We can have the horse "round" in the neck, but technically she's still in the wrong position.

Sometimes we see something called "false raising." That is when the horse is kind of cranked in with the reins, she's pulled into some kind of roundness. Her neck will look round, but her back is still not working the way it should. There's no flexibility in her topline, there's no strength in her back. We want her back to be up a little bit, in a strong, convex position, not hanging down or hollow.

Guðmar Pétursson and Friðsemd, who is in training to become a competition horse. Photo by Louisa Hackl.

The challenge here is how the horse is built. It brings us back to the old saying that horses are not born to be ridden. It's our responsibility to make this work, and therefore we have to understand as much as possible about how the horse is built.

THE SPINE

One of the things we have to understand is that the spine of the horse is built a little like an S shape. From the first vertebrae, at the poll, the spine drops down, and then it goes up again.

Here's how I like to remember it. Pretend your hand is the horse's head. Stretch your arm out in front of you, bend it a little at the elbow and at the wrist, and curve your hand into a C. Where your fingers are is the forehead of the horse. The horse's withers, in front of the saddle, are at your elbow. We want the withers of the horse to be up, so, without changing your hand or your wrist, stretch out your arm until your elbow goes up a little. That we're always trying to accomplish here.

What very often happens is that you get roundness at the poll with a too-aggressive rein. The horse stretches the ligaments in her poll and she learns to walk like that. But what happened? Try it with your own hand. Keep that C-curve in your hand and your wrist, and just pull back your hand. The withers—your elbow, in this demonstration—went down. In the horse, that also means the hind end came up. The horse's neck is kind of round, in this position, but you have a soft, weak back or, in some cases, a hollow back.

HOLDING HANDS

What we are trying to accomplish here in Step 5 is a horse that reaches for the rein and lifts up her back. This has a lot to do with our driving aids. We have to ride the horse forward into a receiving rein. We need to start from behind, add energy from behind, and drive the horse under herself so that her withers come up.

Before we can do this, the horse needs to be okay with the idea of rein contact. If she evades the rein contact, she will only use her neck to round. We will not get that connection from our driving aids through her back, through her withers, and into our receiving hand.

That tells us how important it is to know that the horse isn't afraid of rein contact before we go on to this step and try to round the horse. Of course, all the other steps in the pyramid are important too. The horse needs to be calm and focused, forward with a good rhythm, supple, and straight—all those things. But

I would say that it's super important that the horse is okay with rein contact.

We've worked on rein contact in the previous steps of the pyramid. But to have control over how the horse is carrying herself, you need to know how to get the horse to follow the rein. You need to know how to tell it to stretch out and accept a longer frame, and then come together again into a shorter, more rounded frame, and then again to follow the rein out into a longer frame again.

So the first thing to focus on in Step 5 of the pyramid is rein contact. I want to feel like I'm holding hands with the horse. I want to feel like I'm walking with somebody, and we're holding hands and walking in the same rhythm. I'm not pulling. I'm not pushing. I'm in rhythm with the horse. I want to feel like the horse is willing to hold my hand. There's no pressure, but there's no emptiness either.

FINDING CONTACT

This is sometimes easier said than done. What you often see, when people start to focus on rein contact, is that they start moving their hands. Then the rein contact is on and off—tight, loose, tight, loose. That is not good rein contact. It's just me trying to move my hands in rhythm with the horse, and I'm not successful.

Or you simply see somebody riding on a loose rein. A loose rein is totally okay, but not when you're trying to ride with contact. I want to be able to ride on a loose rein, for sure, but I also want to be able to maintain contact.

Then we see other problems, like when the rider tries to get into contact, and the horse just slows down or stops.

Or the horse starts to over-round her neck, to evade the contact. She starts to hide behind the bit, some people say, making too much of a response to a tiny touch on the reins.

But the most common mistake is that we focus on what's in front of us: the horse's mouth, the reins, and our hands. Because that's what we see.

Instead, I tell my students, just chill on all that a little bit. Focus on your seat. Sit straight and ride the horse forward. Ask the horse to put out energy from her hind end and push herself forward. Allow the energy or the movement in the walk to move you around in the saddle. You're not making the movement, you're trying to not restrict the movement. You're allowing the horse to rock your hips back and forth.

Then you just slow your hands down a little bit. Keep your wrists soft, keep your elbows soft, keep your shoulders soft, keep your fingers soft—but don't let them be loose or weak. Ride the horse into your receiving hand, your receiving rein contact. Your hands receive the energy from your driving aids: your leg, voice, or stick.

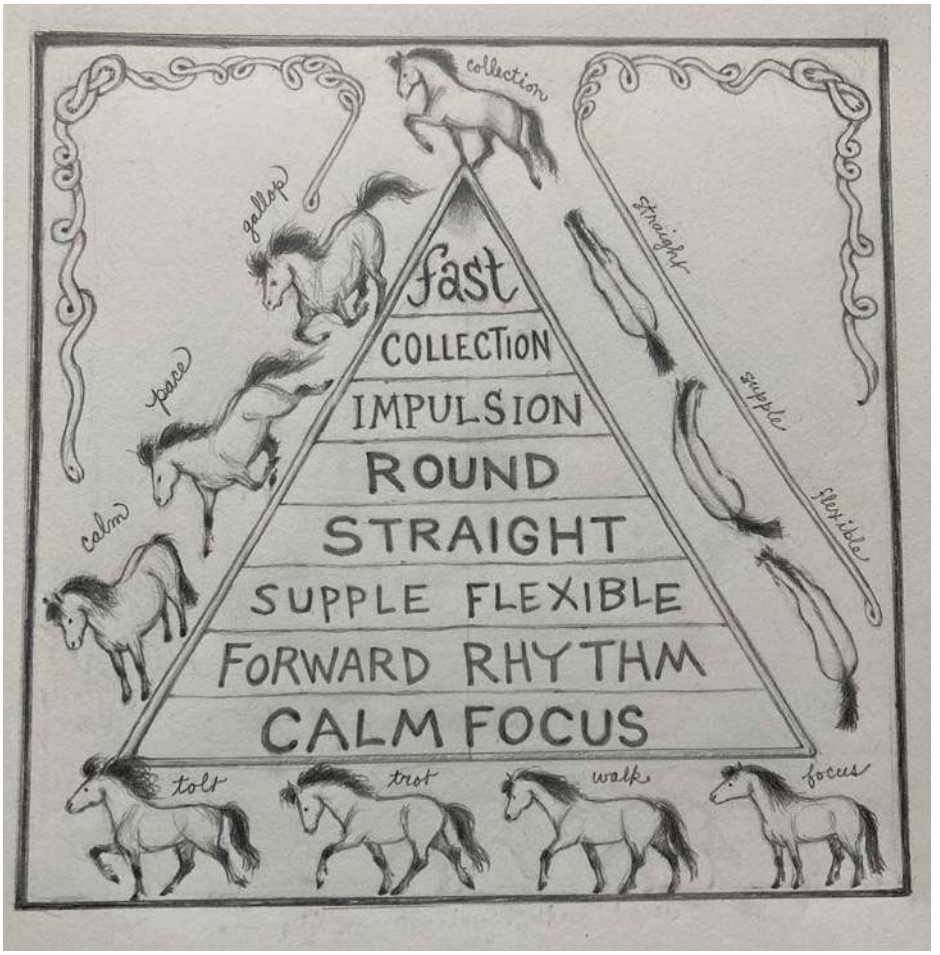
This is number one. If you don't feel or can't find that contact, you will not have any topline control. The horse will not have a steady frame or steady roundness.

IN RHYTHM

So I focus on the contact before I focus on the frame or position. If the horse is a little bit high or long or low or something, at this stage, I ignore it. I just try to establish this relationship through the rein, so that I can be with the horse until we get to a point where we're totally content together. The rein contact is so soft that it's something we can both live with, me and the horse, and I'm not asking the horse for anything. This is the beginning. We're just walking together. We're in the same rhythm. We're going for a walk and we're holding hands.

This part is very important, and I feel that it's often underestimated. We start thinking, "Oh, the nose has got to go down, the poll has got to go down, we've got to be round …" Well, if you cannot maintain a steady, soft, non-demanding contact, whatever you change you will not be able to maintain.

Now let's assume you've accomplished that soft contact. Very often what you'll find is that the horse is already more round. The horse chooses the roundness because she's happy with your contact, she's happy to hold your hand, she's going to find the most comfortable position to walk in rhythm with you, and that is typically a somewhat round position.



Many horse training and performance pyramids have been developed over the years, but this sequence of steps—used by Hólar University—was created specifically for Icelandic horses.

ROUNDING

Now is when I can start making adjustments by doing some exercises.

Say her position isn't bad, but I want a tiny bit more softness in the poll and the neck. So I ride in a smaller circle and increase the bend a little bit. When I bend the horse, I release the tension in the underneck, and typically I get a softer, rounder neck. Then I've just got to make sure she doesn't become over-round. When that happens, I drive her a little bit more, add a little more forward energy. Or, if it's needed, I will go straight again until she's not over-round, then back into the circle.

In a good, round position, she is soft on the reins, and the feeling in my hands will be even on both reins. I might decide to have a more steady outside rein and a playful inside rein, but that doesn't change the fact that the feeling when I work with the reins should be about the same on both sides. If she leans onto one hand, I slow her down a little bit until the feeling is even again.

I also play with the length of the walk. I can ask her to do a short walk, then lengthen into a long walk, then back to short walk again, keeping the soft contact.

I might add some lateral work in here, too, asking her to step sideways to release more tension. I'm loosening her up, getting her soft and supple. At the same time, I'm focusing on keeping an even rein contact and getting her to be round and to accept my hand.

STRETCHING

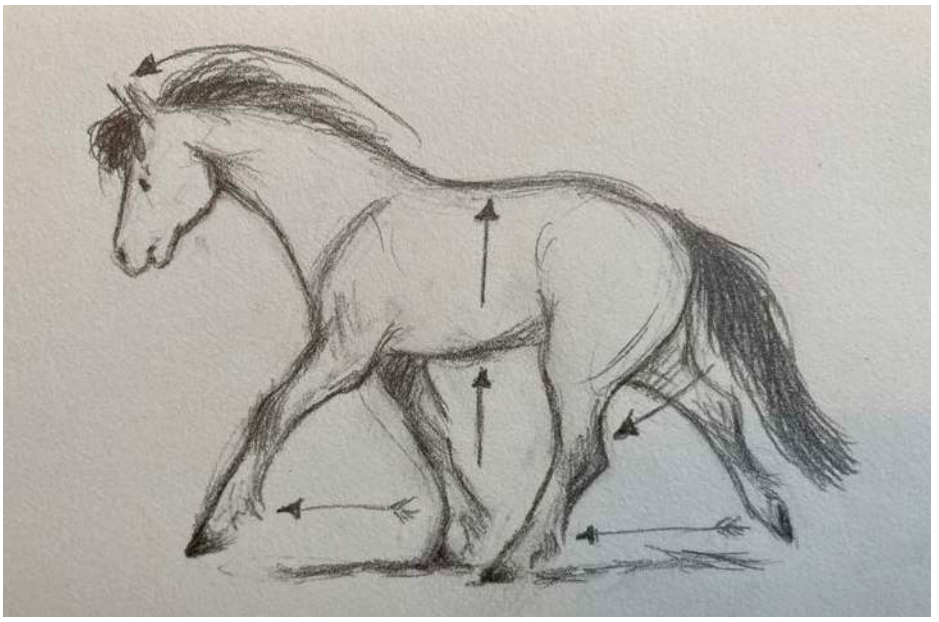
To have control over her topline, I also want to be able to send her head forward and to stretch her back. I'm not giving her a loose rein. I want her to keep the contact and to stretch her head forward and to gently chew the reins, as we say, out of my hands. I offer her a stretch, and when she starts to go down and forward, I let my hands go with her, so that she doesn't run into my hands, but I also don't lose contact.

I use smaller circles to accomplish this. I ride her forward, bend her, get a rather tight bend in the neck, keeping soft contact, and then offer her a stretch forward. Often after a tight bend, horses naturally like to stretch forward.

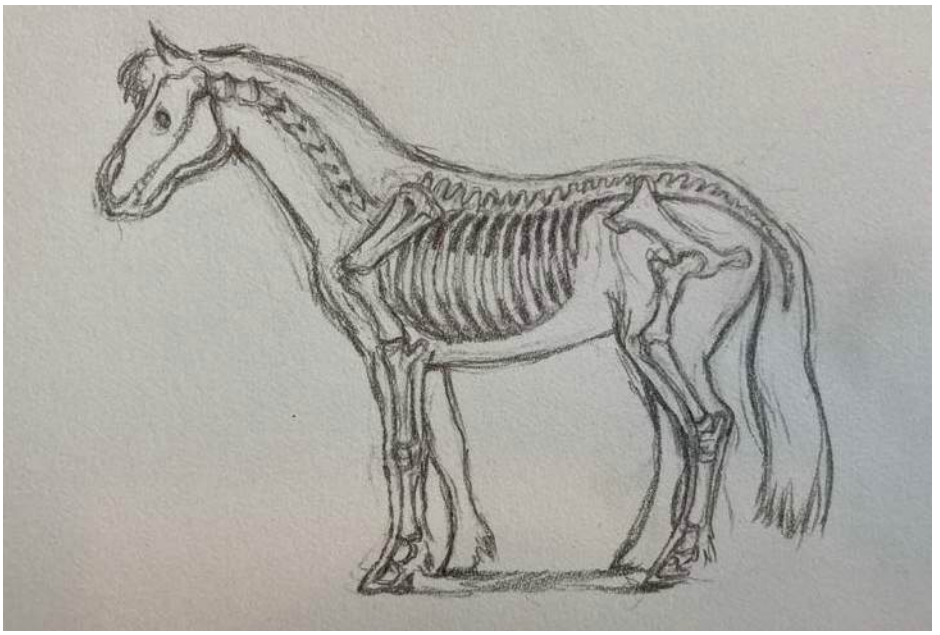
I can also do this exercise with a pressure-release cue. I put pressure on the reins and slow her down into a short walk, then offer her a way out and follow her, letting my hands go forward as she stretches her head down. Soon she realizes that this feels very nice and that it's much easier than doing a short walk. If she starts to lose focus, I do it again: Pressure on, put her between my aids, make her work a little bit more, and as soon as she thinks "down," I go with her.

Another thing that is good to do is to offer them this exercise after they've worked quite a bit. For example, after working on tölt, say, "Okay, do you want to stretch down and forward and walk for a bit?" And the horse is like, "Oh, yes, please, that would be great."

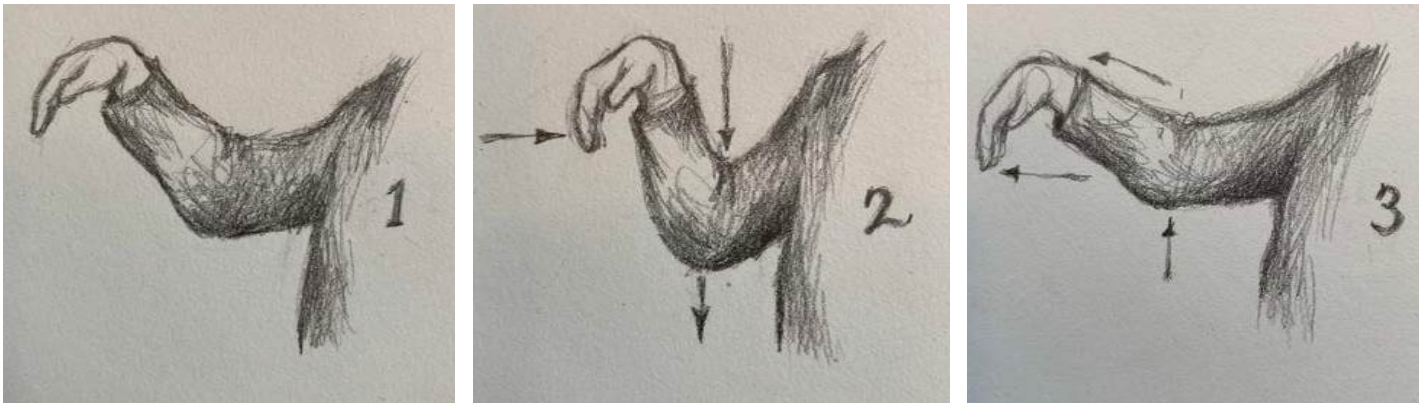
Slowly the horse realizes how good this feels. It's a really natural position for the horse. There's nothing more natural for a horse than stretching down and forward, as we know. If they could choose, horses would spend 23 hours a day eating



"Round" means more than a rounded neck. Rounding starts with energy from our driving aids and flows from back to front. The horse works off her hind end, stepping underneath herself and using her abdominal muscles to lift her back and withers.



The horse's spine is shaped a little like an S. From the poll, the spine drops down, then it goes up again. In response to a too-aggressive rein, the horse might round at the poll, but it will also raise its head and drop its withers—the opposite of what you want.



To visualize the horse's spine, pretend your hand is the horse's head. Drawing 1 (left) shows the horse at rest. Drawing 2 (middle) is what happens when you use the reins too aggressively. The head might look "round," but the withers—your elbow—went down. Drawing 3 shows proper rounding, when the horse lifts the withers and stretches into the rounded frame.

grass on the ground, so this is a very natural position for the horse. But they have to dare to follow your hand down there.

Usually it gets to a point where you have to start to limit this stretching exercise, because they will ask for it quite a bit. Then you have to say, "No, you can stretch later, but not now." They cannot decide that now it's time to stretch and then pull the reins out of your hands. They have to ask politely, and you can answer either yes or no.

TOPLINE CONTROL

Now you have topline control at the walk. The horse is willing to accept your rein contact, she's willing to hold your hand and walk in rhythm with you, and she is also willing to stretch forward and chew the reins out of your hands.

Let's move on to tölt. You can see, if you watch the video on my Patreon page, that if I just let this horse go and don't ask for anything, she sticks her nose out a little bit. Her withers do not necessarily go up that much when she changes from walk to tölt. Her tölt is great, she's a naturally super tölter, but she likes to drop her withers and to stick her nose out by nature.

So I want to do the same thing here in tölt that I did in walk. I take a little rein contact and focus on that contact, like I did at the walk, until we can tölt together, in contact, like we're holding hands.

In tölt, the contact is a little bit more uneven at first. I have a harder time feeling that soft, even contact, because my horse has bigger movements and a little more energy at the tölt. It takes a little time to get there.

Once the contact feels okay, I start to notice a little bit of stiffness on her right side. I make the circle a little smaller to soften up that side, and I focus on keeping an even contact on both reins. As soon as I get her softer on the right rein, she starts to round a little bit. So that stiffness on the right was clearly causing her to be stiff in the topline to begin with.

Knowing that, I keep working her right side through my right leg and, here we go, she got soft and what happened? I can feel how she just picked me up. The front part of her back came up, and I came up in the saddle. It's a great feeling when the horse picks you up and carries you properly.

So to sum up, in this step called "Round," to me we're really talking about topline control. We want the horse to accept rein contact, to be round with her forehead facing forward, for her to be stretching forward into the reins, for her to accept the lengthening of the rein when you want her to, and for her to be carrying herself correctly so that she's getting stronger and more fit every time we ride.

Rein contact is super important—roundness is not going to happen without it. Obviously the other four steps of the pyramid leading up to this one are also important. But the truth of the matter is, there's a lot of overlap among all the steps of the pyramid. It's very hard to see clear divisions. There's quite a bit of floating between, of going back and forth. The steps are still really good to kind of prioritize things. But what I really want you to take out of this lesson on Step 5 of the Hólar Training Pyramid is that roundness is not as simple as it may sound. Topline control is quite an advanced art.

RESOURCES

To learn more, check out the videos on topline control and rein contact on my Patreon page, as well as all eight videos in my series on the Hólar Training Pyramid. Go to https://www.patreon.com/gudmarpetursson to sign up, then search on "topline" or "pyramid."

Guðmar in the "recording studio" at Hestaland in West Iceland, where he creates the videos for his online educational community. Photo by Louisa Hackl.

BEAUTY IN MOTION

by Nicki Esdorn

"Conformation and Movement," the second USIHC educational webinar, was held via Zoom on February 18, 2023. William Flügge, a well-known FEIF International Breeding Judge from Denmark, was the presenter.

William lives on the island of Bornholm with his Icelandic horses and has been judging the breed since 1987. Based on his vast experience, he talked about how Icelandic horse breeding had developed in the past 35 years: How the judging criteria have changed, but also how they have stayed the same in some ways.

THE GOAL

Why do we assess breeding horses? What is the goal and what do we want? As Icelandic horses are bred in all 22 member countries of FEIF, there is a need for agreement on our breeding goals.

Today we agree that we want a very good riding horse that is also beautiful—rather than a very beautiful horse that we can also ride. The latest standard used in breeding assessments worldwide weighs the riding abilities at 65% and the conformation at "only" 35%. However, William pointed out, that 35% is very important for how well the horse will move under the rider.

According to the breeding goal, an Icelandic horse should be cooperative, reliable, easy to handle, and willing to adjust to what the rider wants. It should be naturally balanced "uphill," with good self-carriage. This means that when you are riding, you should feel like you are sitting facing a little bit uphill. This uphill conformation helps the horse carry the rider with its strong back and hind legs. The horse should have five good gaits that are clear-beated and well-separated at various speed levels, and a good range of speed. It must be able to speed up and slow down without losing beat or balance.

Ten years ago, William said, very high and very wide front leg movements got the highest marks at breeding shows. But those horses were not necessarily nice to ride. Today, the emphasis is on supple body movers with good self-carriage and clear beat. We want a horse that is easy to ride in well-balanced gaits. In short, the latest guidelines take into account our increased knowledge of the correlation between conformation and riding abilities and put more emphasis on the functionality of the horse's conformation.

THE SCORES

A breeding assessment provides a snapshot of the horse on that particular day. A score of 9.5 or 10 is outstanding—the best there is in the population. A score of 8.5 is very good, but 7.5 is only average, 6.5 is poor, and 5.5 is among the worst there is in the population.

Many variables can affect the scores. The horse's age, sex, and size, where it grew up, its feeding, training, and shoeing—all play a big role in determining a horse's scores that day. The rider who presents the horse is also very important. In Europe, there are now experienced breeding evaluation specialists who know just how to present a horse for the best scores. The time of year also makes a difference, with the statistically best results occurring in the middle of the season—and also the weather! Lastly, the surface and surroundings of the track, the stabling at the event, and maybe even more things, William said.

He then explained in detail how the different parts of the horse's body are scored: neck, shoulders, withers, back and croup, and legs. Some parts are weighted more, as they have more of an effect on the performance of the horse. The head, ears, and mane and tail are less important for movement, but still count for the beauty and charisma of the horse.

EXAMPLES

To illustrate the points he was making, William showed some comparative photographs. For example, comparing two horses, he asked, Which one would you rather ride?

One horse has a forward-sloping back, a steep shoulder angle, and a thick, low-set neck with more under neck. William predicted that this horse would feel "downhill"

Which horse would you rather ride? The conformation of the horse on the left makes it feel as if you were riding downhill all the time, while on the horse on the right, you are always going uphill.

These pairs of images show the correlation of conformation and movement very well. Even an uneducated eye can pick out which horse of each pair is more fun to ride. A well-balanced horse makes the ride not only more comfortable, but also safer. The "uphill" horse can speed up and slow down without pitching the rider forward.

to ride and "on the forehand," with a stiff neck carriage and more choppy movement.

The second horse, by contrast, has a much straighter, strong back, a long shoulder, and a beautifully curved, supple neck. It would feel "uphill" to ride, supple and well balanced and better able to keep a soft connection to the rider's hands.

William then showed a selection of horses with similar scores, but very different conformation. Not all cases are clear-cut. Many horses have some good and some not-so-good traits. It is the art and experience of the breeding judge to evaluate everything and to judge fairly.

To conclude, William showed several videos of actual breeding evaluations. It was very enlightening to look at how all the beautiful horses moved and to imagine how they would feel to ride.

Overall, it was a very engaging presentation, not just for breeders, but for every rider who is interested in how their horse's conformation makes it move the way it does.

STALLION SUCCESS

by Heidi Benson

Whether your aim is to produce a foal to market and sell, or one to raise as your own future riding horse, the process of matching your mare with the right stallion is an essential first step in the breeding process. If you are having trouble finding a stallion, not sure where to start or what questions to ask, or just new to breeding in general, here are some resources and ideas which can assist you in making more informed and educated decisions.

How do you choose the right stallion for your mare? Will it be the black, Gígur frá Ketilsstöðum (US2014176181)? Photo by Heidi Benson.

LOOK AT YOUR MARE

You can begin by taking a critical look at your mare and understanding her strengths and weaknesses. Try to be objective. What do you like about her? What do you wish was better or different? Does she have enough positive attributes that you would want to see in a foal? How is her conformation? How is her movement and the quality of her gaits?

If you aren't sure you can trust your ability to objectively evaluate her, then it's best to ask an experienced breeder or professional who can give you their unbiased critique and expert opinion. They may also be willing to give you advice on a stallion who may be a good match for her. If your mare has been evaluated at a breeding show, her scores for both conformation and ridden abilities can give you valuable insight into what she has the potential to pass along to her offspring.

Do your research. Study your mare's pedigree. Does she have siblings that are evaluated or have a performance record? Are her parents or grandparents evaluated?

Pay close attention to the mothers and grandmothers and compare them with the dam lines of the stallion's pedigree. Many breeders feel strongly that the mare contributes 70 to 75% of what is passed to the foal. Try to develop an understanding of what has worked by familiarizing yourself with your mare's pedigree and then comparing it with the stallion's.

Or will you choose the chestnut, Geysir frá Kvistum (US2012105376)? Photo by Heidi Benson.

HAVE A BREEDING GOAL

Knowing what you are breeding for, and what your ideal outcome is in producing a foal from your mare, will help you to narrow down your choices for stallions and give you a better chance of achieving that outcome.

For example, if you plan on selling the offspring as a foal or young horse, it is a good idea to choose a stallion from excellent bloodlines, one who is popular and has a good performance record, as well as some offspring on the ground. If you are planning on raising and training the foal either for yourself or to sell as a finished horse, you can take more of a risk in using a younger stallion, who maybe is not as proven but still has characteristics that you like.

Either way, try to pick a stallion that you would want to handle and ride yourself.

Make a list of what attributes are most important to you in a horse, divide them by character traits, conformation,

and athletic ability, and then compare them to your stallion choices. No matter how popular the stallion, or how impressive his breeding or competition scores are, if there are certain characteristics, traits, or behaviors that put you off, or that you would not want to reproduce, then it's best to listen to your gut and move on.

Once you have done your research and have some good options for potential stallions to use, be prepared to reach out to the stallion owners and ask plenty of questions. Get as much information as you can from them before making a decision. Don't be shy! Most breeders love to "talk shop," and will happily answer your questions about their stallions and their breeding.

If possible, ask to visit the farm and see the stallion for yourself in his everyday routine. If the stallion is trained, ask to see how he moves both at liberty and under saddle. Some owners will even let you try the stallion for yourself.

Ask the owner what they like about their stallion, and what his flaws are. What do they hope he will contribute to the breed, what are his foals like, and what kind of mares does he work best with? Is his fertility strong? What is the percentage of positive pregnancies in the mares he covers? What are the options for breeding services? If the stallion is not located within a reasonable driving distance from you is shipped semen available? Is there a live foal guarantee?

Try and speak with others who know the stallion or have offspring from him. Is there a market for his offspring? What are they selling for? Does he have mature offspring? How have they developed and have any of them been shown in breeding or competition? What do they excel in?

LEARN ONLINE

In addition to the suggestions above, online resources and databases can be extremely valuable tools that can not only help you search for potential stallions, but also develop your knowledge, ideas, and breeding goals.

For owners and breeders in the United States, the USIHC offers a stallion advertisement page on its website (www.icelandics.org). Here you can find some stallions available for breeding in the United States. Farm owners who pay for their farm to be listed on the USIHC Farm List online and in the *Quarterly* receive a stallion listing option on the website free of charge. Stallion owners who do not have a listed farm but would like to advertise their stallion(s) for breeding, are allowed to advertise on the USIHC website for a fee. Stallion listings are only available online at this time. For payment and instructions on how to submit your stallion advertisement on the website, contact: info@icelandics.org

WorldFengur, the international breeding database for Icelandic horses (www.worldfengur.com), is one of our most valuable resources for breeding the Icelandic horse. One of the primary perks of joining the USIHC is the included free subscription to WorldFengur. Once activated, you will have full access to the database.

Whether you are a breeder, hobbyist, competitor, or trainer, WorldFengur offers a wealth of information on registered Icelandic horses worldwide and has something for everyone.

For those who wish to explore the pedigrees, breeding judgments, videos of breeding horses, predictions based on the DNA analysis of stallions and mares, offspring, approved name database, genetic history and so much more, WorldFengur is a valuable resource. Whether you are new to the Icelandic horse and just curious about where your horse came from, or you are interested in more detailed information on the lineage, offspring, and accolades of breeding horses, WorldFengur is full of wonderful wormholes to explore.

Elsewhere on the Internet, try using a search engine like Google, entering words or hashtags such as Icelandic stallion, Icelandic stallion US, Icelandic breeding, Icelandic horse breeder, Icelandic stud, or the stallion's name. You can try a plethora of different combinations of words and that can lead to some interesting and sometimes helpful results.

Instagram and Facebook are also worth searching, since many breeders have realized the benefits of global outreach through social media and have either established farm pages or stallion pages. You can use both platforms in the same way as Google, by searching the sites using keywords or even better, the stallion's name.

YouTube is also an excellent free resource for finding videos of the stallion you are interested in, and sometimes even the parents and offspring of that stallion.

Good luck in your current and future breeding endeavors and remember, the goal is the foal! The foals that you create are an important part of the future of the Icelandic horse in the US. The more you educate yourself and learn to be objective and conscientious in your breeding choices, the better chance you have of an ideal outcome—one that not only benefits you, and the foal that you create, but the Icelandic breed as a whole.

Or is the pinto, Strokkur frá Syðri-Gegnishólum (US2007105266), a better match for your mare? Hint: There's much more to think about than the color. Photo by Heidi Benson.

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

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

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

Farm: ..... Owners: .....

Address: .....

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City: ..... State: ..... Zip Code: .....

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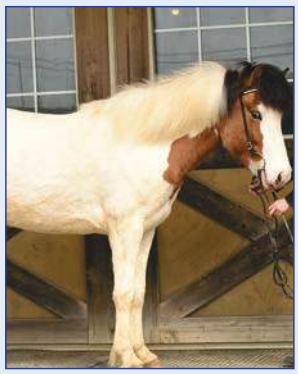
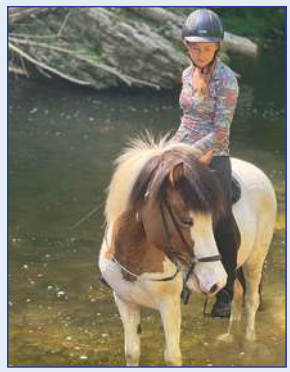

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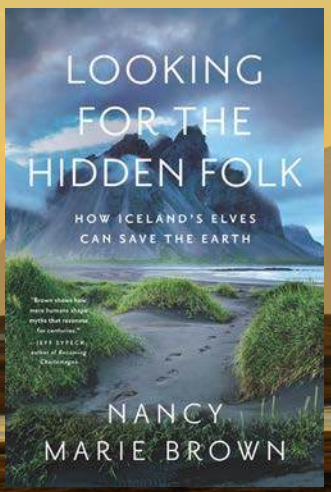

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