Spring is in the air

A little later than usual but here’s our Spring edition!

The grass has kept on growing over the winter so almost every week the horses could enjoy some fresh new grass. They are now starting to lose their winter coat and we are enjoying hair everywhere..... I guess many birds in our area will have a nice and soft nest!

The breeding season will start soon and in a couple of weeks I will send around a special newsletter with more information of our two handsome boys, Thótti and Dökkvi.

If you already have some questions on breeding with our stallions, please feel free to contact us!

Happy reading,

Jennie

September 2014

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All things natural

All things natural seems to be the magic word. Natural horsemanship, natural horsemanship equipment, from bareback pad to bit-less bridle. Recently I read an article of someone who mentioned she was happy riding her horse ‘un-naturally’ as there is actually nothing natural about riding a horse! And she is so right...

By nature the horse was and is not build to carry something. A horse carries 60% of his weight on the front legs, 40% of its weight on the hind legs. Add on the extra weight of the rider and he will carry even more weight on his front legs, which can make it quite uncomfortable for the horse.

At one stage, men started to use the horse, to domesticate it as it seemed to be a very useful animal and just like other domesticated animals, relatively easy to train.

Now the horse had to learn to carry extra weight, from either pack or men or by pulling something. These days most of us would like to make life as comfortable as possible for our horses. We look into more natural aspects re training, based on using the knowledge we have of their natural behaviour. Looking at how the horse is built and carries itself, we have a task here to help the horse to carry the extra weight of the rider to prevent over burdening of his front legs. This can be achieved by letting them carry 50% of his (and the rider’s) weight on his hind legs and 50% on the front. Now the circle is round; that is called engaging the hind quarters as he has to put his hind legs further under his body to be able to carry more weight there. At least now you know why we are always talking about this, it is all for the benefit of your horse!

And what about the natural equipment? Like tree-less saddles, bit less bridles and more less—things. I think personally with all equipment you use, you have to know when and how to use it.

Tree-less saddles or saddle pads are OK as long as you keep in mind they do not divide the weight of a rider over the back of the horse. I am sure they can be comfortable for horse and riders but they have their shortcomings. Recent research (see later this newsletter) also showed treeless saddles are not the best solution for a horse and especially not for Icelandic horses due to their size and being usually ridden by adult riders.

Saddles with a tree have the advantage of dividing the weight of the rider over the back of the horse. The stirrup bars are attached to the saddle tree so this is divided over the back of the horse as well.

However, no matter what you put on your horses back, saddles will never be a horse’s best friends as you are putting a static object (the saddle) on a dynamic surface (the horse). Therefore it is very important you use a specialised saddle fitter to fit you and your horse with a good saddle. BUT, no matter how well the saddle fits, the saddle will cause a problem if the horse’s training is poor, the riders hands are harsh or the equitation is poor!

For a bridle it is a little different as you are not sitting on it but it has to fit of course and not cause any pressure as there are numerous nerves on the horses head. There is plenty of choice in bit-less bridles with a bit,. Most important is that it has to fit properly suit the horse and his rider.

Natural or not, we all want to enjoy our horses and agree it has to be based on a fearless relation with the horses natural behaviour in mind and an as close to natural manangement. Only with a relaxed, healthy and happy horse you are able to get the most out of your relationship! Let’s all enjoy our horses ‘un-naturally’!

Dökkvi agrees and clearly enjoys himself!
Basics of riding: turns and circles

In the last Newsletter I wrote about the importance of a good seat and position of the rider, aids, half halts and transitions.

It is very important to have these basics right before you go any further. The horse must also react appropriately to these aids, understand the aids. And always remember with anything you do, the seat and leg aids come before the hands!

In order to straighten your horse, they must be supple and able to flex /bend equally on both sides. By using both sides of their bodies in a proper way you will prevent injuries on a longer term.

Below the basic aids for riding turns and circles.

**Turns**

With any change of direction, speed etc, you always let your horse know something is coming and perform half-halts; riding more actively with seat and legs, communicate with hands, in order to re-balance your horse, create more engagement of the hind legs. The horse will pay extra attention.

If you would like to turn to the left,

- You look into the direction you are going, to the left. In this way your body turns towards the left and you will take your horse in between your seat/legs and hands towards the left. Your shoulders level with the horse’s shoulders (and your hands level with your shoulders)
- Your legs move the opposite way, just like scissors: inside (left) leg is at the girth, ‘tapping’ your horse into the outside rein, while your outside leg (right leg) lies behind the girth and is the guarding leg. This leg prevents the horse to sway out with his hind quarters and bend nicely through the corner.

**Circles**

The aids for riding a circle are precisely the same as for turns. Turns are in fact only a little part of a circle. For a circle on the right rein:

- Look where you are going, in this way you will take the horse with your body through the circle. Your shoulders (and hands) are in position with your horses shoulders, outside (left) shoulder a little ahead of your outside (left) hip.
- Inside (right) leg at girth, active driving aids towards outside (left) rein
- Outside (left) leg guarding just behind girth, prevent horse from swaying out his hind quarters

You can do turns and circles anywhere you like, in an arena, in a paddock (you can set out a circle with cones for a start), out and about, around trees, rocks, use you imagination and it will be fun for both of you!

Even a flex to the left or right on a straight track will make your horse more supple.

On the picture left a break with Biskup while training in Waiuku forest along the mighty Waikato river.

Our dogs Óðinn and Jake waiting for us to continue the ride.
Eiðfaxi (advertisement)

Eiðfaxi is THE international magazine for the Icelandic Horse owner. Whether you are a breeder, trainer, competition- or leisure rider, there are interesting articles catering for all. See also article on page 6!

Eiðfaxi will offer an interesting discount from the 11th subscriber onwards, please contact us for more information.

Saddle study

On the website www.thehorse.com they have various very interesting articles. They range from health issues, feeding to breeding.

One of the latest newsletters had an article about a recent study on saddles with Icelandic horses at the Veterinary Department of the University in Zurich, Switzerland. The study, “Saddle pressure distributions of three saddles used for Icelandic horses and their effects on ground reaction forces, limb movements and rider positions at walk and tölt,” was published in “The Veterinary Journal”. Below of the text:

“The team choose to study Icelandic horses because their shoulder movement—often thought to be impeded by saddles—is considered an important criterion in their special gaits, including the four-beat tölt. Icelandic horse riders often think that the right saddle can free up the shoulder and give better movement, but our research shows that the kind of saddle doesn’t affect that at all.

There were no differences in leg movements and forces among the different saddles used, she said.

Geser-von Peinen said her study results suggest that riders should select saddles based on fit and pressure distribution, rather than on how they believe that saddle might affect horses’ movements, regardless of the riding discipline or horse breed.

“It doesn’t make a difference if it’s an Icelandic horse or not,” she said. “The saddle has to fit. From the horse’s standpoint it’s the same story, whether it’s a normal English saddle, or a Western saddle, or any kind of saddle.”

Riders should be particularly careful about the pressure caused by treeless saddles, even in horses with seemingly rounder backs. “The problem with the treeless saddle is that it doesn’t distribute the weight of an average-sized adult rider because of the absence of a tree,” she said. “Even in Icelandic horses, treeless saddles are not the best choice.”

A Karlslund K2 saddle with interchangeable gullet

A Stubben Adventure with Biomax seat
Benni’s Harmony

At Skógarrönd we sell the Benni’s Harmony range of high quality saddles and bridles specially designed for the Icelandic Horse. Occasionally we also will have some second hand good quality gear for sale. Please contact us for more information.

For Sale

Stubben Comfort II saddle
18” size 31
in excellent condition
$2,850

Muska fra Vindholar
Purebed Icelandic mare
DOB 25/02/2003
Sire: Dux
Dam: Grauna
Proven broodmare
Under saddle

Muska is currently turned out until the end of August. She will then be brought back into work. She was in work for 2 1/2 months before being turned out and was going very kindly. She has had a saddle professionally fitted and has been treated by an equine therapist, with only minor everyday issues needing to be treated. Great for farrier, worming, floating, etc.
She foaled on 30th Nov 2013 with no issues at all.
She is available with or without her saddle and bridle.
Available for an approved home only.

Please contact for saddle and Muska:
Christine Calder
Phone 06 85 666 50
email: graciesmother@hotmail.com

Lífland

The web shop of Lífland in Iceland has a good selection of gear and gifts related to Icelandic horses. Check out their website www.lifland.is with an interesting range of products.
**Did you know that.....**

- Horses are physically unable to flex left or right when bent behind the vertical. Their head is then more or less locked. They can bend/flex easier when their head is on the vertical.
  (Source: Nikki Louri, Equine Physiotherapist, August 2014)

- You can build up your horse’s core strength by riding transitions from trot (tölt) to canter
  (Source: Nikki Louri, Equine physiotherapist , August 2014)

- Cold blooded horse breeds are more likely to opt to go without a cover than Warmbloods a research in Norway showed.
  (Source: http://horsetalk.co.nz/2014/08/21/horse-rugged/#axzz3B1LBu3qC)

- Roughage (grass, hay, haylage) should be the horse’s main feeding source. Grain is often not necessary. Horses in the wild have no access to these concentrated forms of carbohydrates. However “When we domesticated the horse, we asked him to expend energy over and above what he would normally do in the course of his wild day; grains help provide the fuel he needs to perform for us. In addition, we bred horses to be larger, stronger, faster, more elegant—and, often, less hardy and more dependent on high-energy concentrates to maintain a healthy body weight. Nonetheless, grain always should be considered an optional add-on to the diet. It should be fed as necessary only to supplement the nutrition provided by the horse’s forage and in accordance with his condition, his metabolism, and the amount of work expected of him.”
  (Source: www.thehorse.com, article by Karen Briggs, Equine nutritionist, May 2014)

- A scratch on the withers is more effective then a pat The research found that " Wither scratching could potentially increase horse/human bonding and act as a more effective reward" They found that ‘patting was less effective than wither scratching, with the latter resulting in responses similar to those found in positive horse-horse interaction. ” riders and handlers should be encouraged to scratch rather than pat their horses as a reward”.

- Everyone has a preferred learning style through which they learn most effectively. The 3 basic preferences or styles are visual (60%), auditory (30%) and kinesthetic (10%). In short visual learner tends to learn best by seeing, auditory learner by talking about what to do when they learn and kinesthetic learners prefer to touch and manipulate things. For coaches/teachers it is important to incorporate all learning styles in their lessons to be able to cater for all students.
  (Source: "Using Learning Style Preferences to Teach More Effective Riding Lessons" by Karen L. Waite, M.S. Equine Extension Youth Specialist, Michigan State University)

- By rolling in the dirt, the horses will get themselves an extra insulation layer, protecting them even more against the elements.
  (Source, article Eric van Breda, Medical Physiologist, published on www.horses.nl 2010)

- Shedding in healthy horses is controlled by hormonal changes that are tied to day length. Some hormones will stimulate hair growth, while others will delay it. The starting date of (Spring) shedding varies form horse to horse and also from year to year.
  (Source: various articles from www.thehorse.com)
At Skógarrönd Ltd we have a passion for Icelandic horses. We are breeding and selling quality horses on a small scale, promoting the breed Down Under, selling tack, training DVDs and books related to Icelandic horses. We are also available for coaching you and your Icelandic horse via video or on location. We find it very important information on keeping and training Icelandic horses is easily available for everyone Down Under.

If you have any questions regarding the Icelandic horse or would like to visit us, don’t hesitate to contact us. We are looking forward to hearing from you!

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At Skógarrönd we care for our horses!

Skógarrönd Ltd

At Skógarrönd we sell the range of quality gear from Karlslund for Icelandic horses and their riders. Complete bridles, saddles, girths, whips, T-shirts, jodhpurs (see picture, also available in cool max material, ideal for the summer Months!) and more. Please contact us for more information.

Efridís and Dvalinn having a chat
Coaching

At Skógarrönd we love to share our passion about Icelandic horses and find it important to educate people about the management and training. I am a certified Introductory coach via Equestrian Sports New Zealand, have done NZPCA courses for D-C+ level and coach at local Pony clubs since a couple of years. Click [here](#) for my listing on the Equestrian Sports New Zealand (ESNZ) website.

**Christchurch**

*On 8—9 November 2014* I will be in Christchurch for a clinic organised through Icelandic Horses New Zealand, IceHNZ. The clinic is hosted by Inga Currey of “Christchurch Icelandic Horse Treks”. It is intended to be a clinic for IceHNZ members only.

The clinic will focus on the basics of riding, importance of a good and balanced seat of the rider and building the foundation for the tölt. Saturday morning an individual session and in the afternoon riding in groups of two.

I will get in touch with each individual rider to discuss a more tailor made approach.

On Sunday there is a fun based one day event (ODE) with obstacle course, and the inaugural first competition for Icelandic horses in New Zealand: the TiH (Tölt in Harmony). The latter can be ridden in trot as well.

The costs will be $50pp for Saturday and $25 for Sunday plus catering. If you do not have your own horse, Inga has some horses available @ $25 per day.

Please contact me or Sofia Hansrod (secretary@icehnz.org.nz) if you are interested. There is limited space so be in quick!