The Icelandic Horse in the Age of Sovereignty

The mail train of Hans Hannesson, postman. Photo: Magnús Ólafsson.

THE ICELANDIC HORSE

The Icelandic horse came to the country with the settlers. They arrived from many places, but mostly from the western coast of Norway and many stopping over in the British Isles. The latest research indicates a genetic relationship between the Icelandic horse, and the Shetland pony, as well as the Mongolian horse. The kinship to the Norwegian horse breeds is, however, less than could have been expected. In view of the geographical position of the British Isles and the frequent raids these Vikings made there, the kinship to the Shetland pony is easy to explain. The reason for the kinship to the Mongolian horse can be found in the Viking travels of Nordic men to the East. By the time of the settlement, they were presumably in possession of a horse breed which had its origins to a considerable extent in Russia.

This is the horse breed the settlers brought with them to Iceland, in addition to fine horses they stole in their raids mentioned above. In view of the limited space in the ships of the settlers, it is apparent that they only brought the horses they believed would be of most use to them and undoubtedly only the best they had or could lay their hands on.

This population then became the foundation of the Icelandic horse which has remained pure bred in the country, i.e. free of any genetic blending of other horse breeds. Despite tales of the importation of horses during the Saga Period, it is apparent that it had no genetic impact. In later ages, there has been no importation of horses.

The ancients bred horses, but there is no mention of any improvement of other livestock. The chieftains of the Saga Period prided themselves on possessing a fine group of horses and no other livestock is mentioned as often in the old literature than the horses. As time went by and economical constrictions began to affect the nation, the breeding activity died a natural death and natural selection became pretty much predominant.

During all the centuries of Icelandic settlement, horses have held a unique position among the livestock species of the nation and none of the domestic animals was closer to man than the horse. Iceland would indeed have been uninhabitable without the horse and, thus, it was certainly its most useful servant. It was of use for travel across trackless country as a riding- and workhorse, in addition to being a beast of burden and draught horse for as long as the nation has existed. The companionship between the horse and the nation has therefore been continuous and Icelandic civilisation and horsemanship are closely integrated.

THE NUMBER OF HORSES

The number of horses increased rapidly during the first centuries of Icelandic settlement due to their essentiality for the nation. Soon however, people started saying that there were unnecessarily many horses and that they even reduced the productive potential of the land. At the impulsion of Skúli Magnússon, who was then the District Magistrate of Skagafjörður, an agreement was made on horse keeping within the district in the year 1739. It involved the demand to drive horses to highland pastures during the summer time in order to prevent the overgrazing of domestic pastures.

The first accurate numbers are from the year 1703 at which time the number of horses amounted to 26.910. An enormous number of animals died during the Famine of the Mists and in the year 1784, there were only 8.683 horses in the country. The year before, there had been almost 36 thousand horses and the year after, the number had already increased to almost 13 thousand. This was an example of extremely hard natural selection, but at the same time an elite selection, because there are examples of people going to extremes to keep the most valuable and best animals alive. The result was the making of an elite population, similar to the one brought to the country by the settlers.

The number of horses then increased rather quickly and amounted to 30 thousand for a long period of time. Their number first exceeded forty thousand in the middle of the nineteenth century. Then there was a rapid decrease during the hard times that followed when a large number of horses died. They started increasing again and at the turn of the century (1900) the number of horses was 41.654 and in 1918, the year of sovereignty there was a total of 53.218 horses in the country.

EXPORTATION

There are stories about the exportation of horses throughout the centuries, but there were no actual export activities until the middle of the nineteenth century. The exportation soon became voluminous and was of considerable economic importance, much as the selling of sheep, and in some years, the exportation of horses exceeded the number of horses foaled. In the year 1900, upwards of 3.000 horses left the country and in 1918, the number was upwards of 1.000. By that time, World War I had had its impact, but already the year after, the exportation exceeded 3.000 horses again. There are sources of multifarious ways in which these horses were used. Some were riding horses, others pulled carriages, or took part in races. Most of them, however, became work horses and many of them in British coal mines.

HORSE BREEDING

The first writings on horse breeding in Iceland were published in the year 1788 in the publication of the Association of Art and Education (Lærdómslistafélag) by Prefect Ólafur Stephensen. They served as an encouragement in the nation to improve the horses through selection, but they were also an attempt to form breeding goals. In these writings, Ólafur Stephensen describes how horses should be built to be considered excellent. High Superior Judge, Magnús Stephensen, who was well acquainted with horse breeding in the neighbouring countries, then recaptured the thread with his writings of encouragement published in the Monastery Post (Klausturpósturinn) in 1825. There he said that „it is most opportune to execute the horse breeding with a fine selection of stud-horses and -mares for breeding, particularly of the good riding horses, and try to fend off the nag breed …“

The first agreement on horse breeding was made by the District Committee of Skagafjörður District in the year 1879. The first exhibition of stallions where horses played an important part, was then held at Reynistaður in Skagafjörður on May 29th in the year 1880. There were various motions, such as the establishment of the so-called breeding farms, elsewhere in the northern part of the country during the next decades, but there was no organised progression of exhibitions.

The first law on horse breeding was passed by Alþingi (the Icelandic Parliament) in the year 1891. An Appendix to the law was made in 1901. Amendments were made in 1917 and thus the law was valid until Iceland became a sovereign and independent country in 1918.

The Agricultural Society of Iceland was established in the year 1899 and in 1902 it hired the first livestock breeding advisor whose responsibilities included horse breeding. This marked the beginning of continuous guidance services within the field.

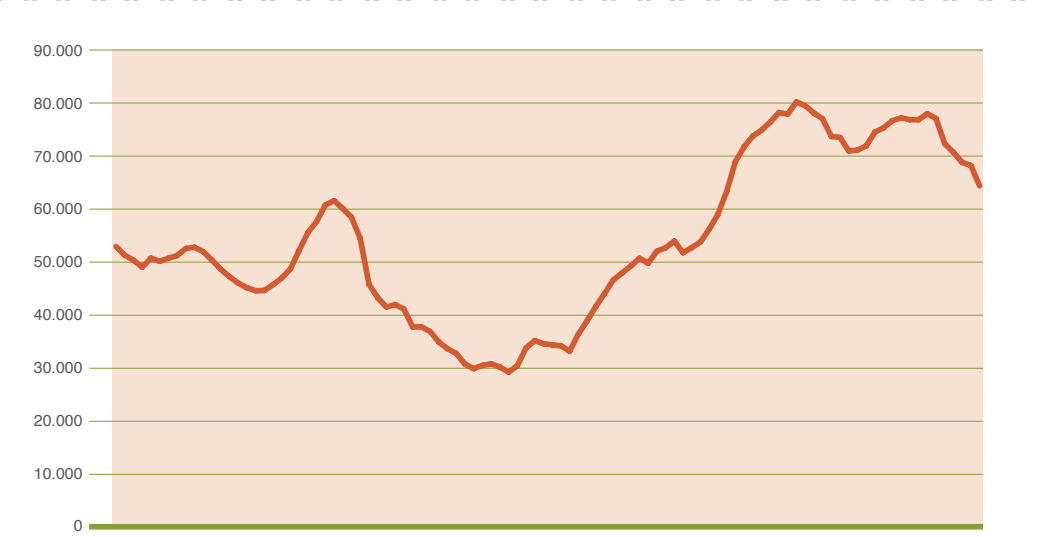
The first horse breeding society association, The Horse Breeding Association of Austur-Landeyjar, was established in the year 1904 and then others followed. By the year of sovereignty, in 1918, there were many horse breeding societies in operation.

The first horse exhibition under the auspice of the Agricultural Society was the regional exhibition which was held in Þjórsártún, on July 14th in the year 1906. This exhibition marks the beginning of a continuous progression of exhibitions in the country.

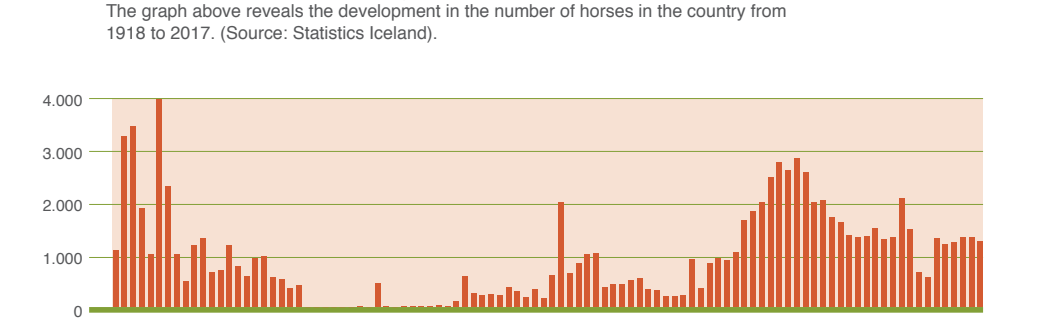
When organised breeding activities began at the turn of the century (1900), horses of burden increasingly became draught horses and then they were used to pull wagons and sledges. Soon after, technology arrived with various types of horse work machinery. People started talking about the need to breed the horses separately; on the one hand, horses for riding, herding and travel, and on the other, horses of burden, draught horses were often called. This policy did, however, not last long, only for about two decades, on the one hand shortly after the turn of the century and, on the other, for a few years after 1940. At the same time, the old adage was proven, that life moves very fast, because only a few years after the end of World War II, the domestic tractor and agricultural jeep replaced the work horses.

EXHIBITIONS AND COMPETITIONS

Horse competitions have a long history in Iceland, as the ancient fighting horses bear witness to. Various tales exist about men competing on horses. It is believed that the first real attempt made to draw attention to the Icelandic riding horse, its speed and competitiveness, was made at Oddeyri in Akureyri in the year 1874, when the nation celebrated 1000 years of the country's settlement. The so-called Melakappreiðar Races in Reykjavík were also held most years from 1897 to 1909. There were no organised horse races held in the country when the year of sovereignty arrived in 1918. Sport riding was however quite popular and there are many examples of the great emphasis people placed on possessing fine riding horses and competing on them.



Number of horses in the country 1918 to 2017
The graph above reveals the development in the number of horses in the country from 1918 to 2017. (Source: Statistics Iceland).



The number of horses exported from the country 1918 to 2017
The bar graph above reveals the development in the number of horses exported from the country in 1918 to 2017. (Source: Statistics Iceland).

Horses at work in the pouring of tar concrete in Pósthússtræti in Reykjavík. Photo: Magnús Ólafsson.

Horses used at mowing in Brynjudalur, Kjós. Photo: Páll Jónsson.

Genetic Contribution 4,60%

Genetic Contribution
The history of organised breeding of the Icelandic horse is essentially not much longer than the age of sovereignty (1918-2018). A great deal of success has been obtained in this work, particularly in the last years and decades. It is very interesting to check the ancestry of the current Icelandic horse breed and find out from which breeding animals it descends.
For that purpose, the so called genetic contribution of each animal was calculated. It indicates what percentage of genes in the current population, on which the present breeding activity focuses, has its origin in each of these animals. The numerical quantity of the genetic contribution, thus, gives the clearest possible indication of the ancestry of the Icelandic horse population of today.

The Sleipnir Cup, the highest award given in Icelandic horse breeding. *Photo: Bændablaðið (Farmers Journal).*

The best competition horses at the National Championship in 1950. Photo: Mbl/Ólafur K. Magnússon.

Theodór Arnbjörnsson, ASI's horse breeding advisor, working as judge in the South of Iceland around 1930. Photo: Private collection of Theodór Arnbjörnsson, The Icelandic Horse History Centre.

The Breeding Horse Judging Committee at the National Championship in Eyjafjörður in 1954. From the left: Bogi Eggertsson, Símon Teitsson, Gunnar Bjarnason, ASI's horse breeding advisor. Jón Jónsson from Hof in Höfðaströnd and Jón Pálsson. Photo: Vigfús Sigurgeirsson.

Stjarni from Oddsstaðir, the winner of the thoroughbred competition at the 1954 and 1962 National Championships. The rider is the owner of the horse, Bogi Eggertsson. Photo: Vigfús Sigurgeirsson.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE JUDGING SCALE FROM 1950 UNTIL TODAY

Judging Scale for Breeding Horses, Weighting Proportion of Each Single Trait in % 1950 – 2018

Conformation	1950	1954	1958	1961	1979	1986	1990	2000	2010
Head and Body	7,0	8,75	14,0	20,0					
Head					5,0	5,0	5,0	3,0	3,0
Neck, Withers and Shoulders					7,5	7,5	10,0	10,0	10,0
Back and Croup					7,5	7,5	7,5	3,0	3,0
Proportions and Harmony	7,0	8,75	14,0	10,0	10,0	10,0	7,5	7,5	7,5
Legs	6,0	7,5	12,0	20,0					
Leg Quality					6,3	6,3	7,5	6,0	6,0
Leg Correctness					7,5	7,5	5,0	3,0	3,0
Hooves					6,3	6,3	7,5	6,0	6,0
Mane and Tail Gracefulness[1]								1,5[1]	1,5
Total	20,0	25,0	40,0	50,0	50,0	50,0	50,0	40,0	40,0

[1] Mane and tail gracefulness was judged on a numerical scale as of the year 1997. It was originally evaluated as a single trait but not as part of the total evaluation of the horses.

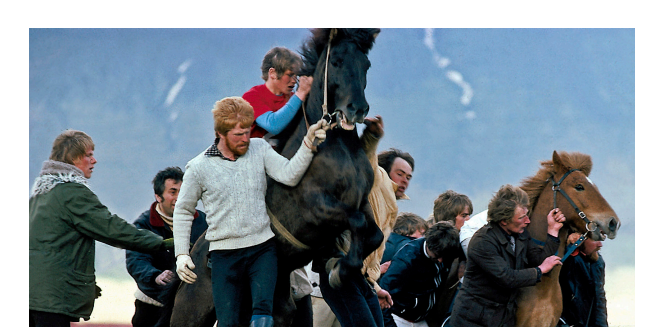
Judging Scale for Breeding Horses, Weighting Proportion of Each Single Trait in % 1950 – 2018

Riding Abilities	1950	1954	1958	1961	1979	1986	1990	2000	2010
Tölt	8,0	12,5	10,0	8,3	8,3	14,3	14,3	15,0	15,0
Trot	6,0	7,5	6,0	6,7	6,7	5,7	5,7	7,5	7,5
Pace	12,0	12,5	10,0	8,3	8,3	7,1	7,1	9,0	10,0
Canter/Gallop	8,0	10,0	8,0	5,0	5,0	4,3	4,3	4,5	4,5
Willingness	14,0	17,5	14,0	10,0	10,0	8,6	8,6		
Spirit	8,0	10,0	8,0	6,7	6,7	5,7	4,3		
Willingness and Spirit								12,5	9,0
General Riding Impression				5,0	5,0	4,3	5,7	10,0	10,0
Walk	4,0	5,0	4,0					1,5	4,0
Speed	20,0								
Total	80,0	75,0	60,0	50,0	50,0	50,0	50,0	60,0	60,0

Reynir Aðalsteinsson at the first European Championship in Aegidienberg in Germany, in the year 1970 on Stjarni from Svignaskarð, which was a breakthrough horse for its high and long movements and speed in tölt, and did indeed receive the nickname, Super-Stjarni. Photo: Friðþjófur Þorkelsson.

Hlynur from Akureyri, the winner in the B-Category of competition horses at the National Championship in 1978. Rider: Eyjólfur Ísólfsson. They also won the tölt competions of the National Championship with the highest grade that had been given. Photo: Kristján Einarsson.

Jóhann Skúlason on Hvinur from Holtsmúli 1. World Champions in tölt at Brunnadern in Switzerland in 2009. Photo: Jens Einarsson.



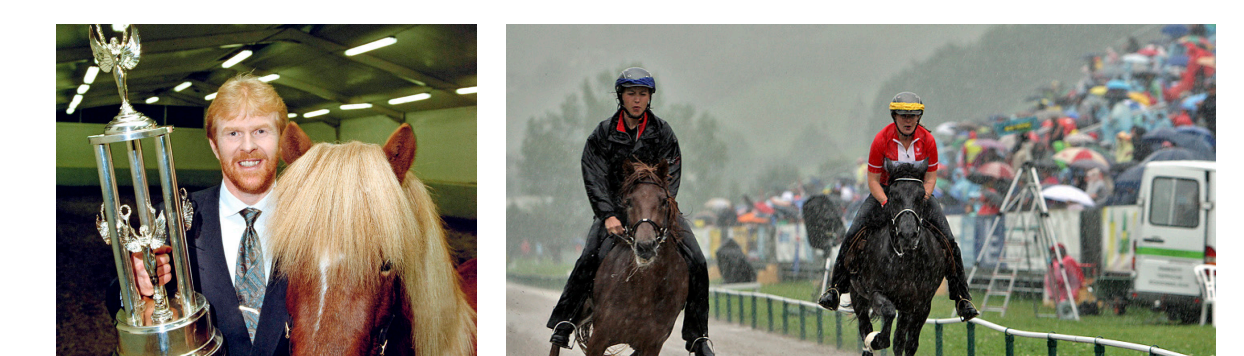
At the starting post: Photo from the prime time of the gallop races. Well-known horsemen can be seen here, either sitting or holding gallop horses at the starting point. Starting boxes were not taken into use at races in Iceland until in the eighties. Photo: Sigurgeir Sigurjónsson.

A very exciting pace race heat at Vindheimamelar in the year 1980. From the left: Villingur from Möðruvellir and Trausti Þór Guðmundsson, Skjóni from Móeiðarhvoll and Albert Jónsson, Frami from Kirkjubær and Erling Ó. Sigurðsson. Both Skjóni and Villingur were for a time National and World Champions in 250-meter pace race. Skjóni in 1979-1985 with the time of 21.6 seconds and Villingur in 1985-1986 with the time of 21.5 seconds. Photo: Eiríkur Jónsson.

Hrímnir from Hrafnagil, winner in the B-Category at the National Championship at Vindheimamelar in 1982. Rider: Björn Sveinsson. Photo: Jón Trausti Steingrímsson.

The Breeding Horse Judging Committee at the National Championship at Vindheimamelar in 1990. From the left: Kristinn Hugason, ASI's horse breeding advisor, Þorkell Bjarnason, ASI's horse breeding advisor, and Víkingur Gunnarsson, County Advisor of the Agricultural Society of Skagfirðingar. Photo: Eiríkur Jónsson.

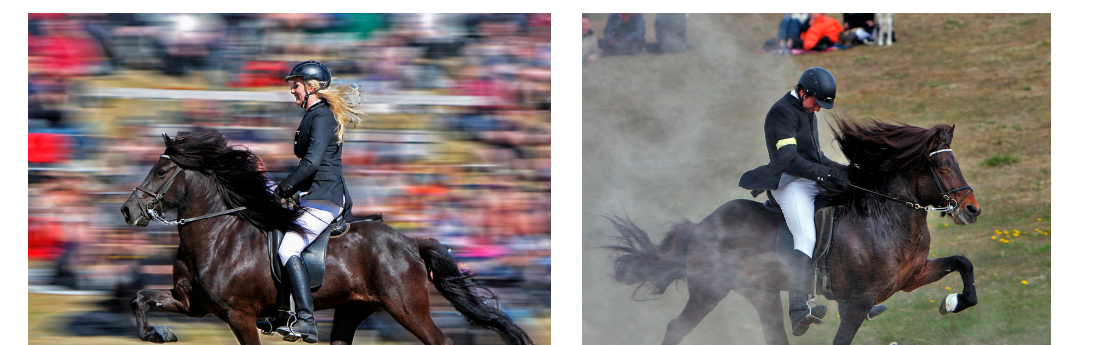
Galsi from Sauðárkrókur, winner in the A-Category at the National Championship at Melgerðismelar in 1998, and the number one stallion in the category of 4 years old at the National Championship at Gaddastaðaflatir in 1994. Rider: Baldvin Ari Guðlaugsson. Photo: Jens Einarsson.



Sigurbjörn Bárðarson received the honorary title, Sportsman of the Year in 1993, which is the highest award given in the Icelandic world of sports. Sigurbjörn is the only horse sportsman who has received this honour. With him on the photo is the tölt horse, Oddur from Blönduós. They won the tölt competition at the National Championship the following year (1994). Photo: Brynjar Gauti Sveinsson.

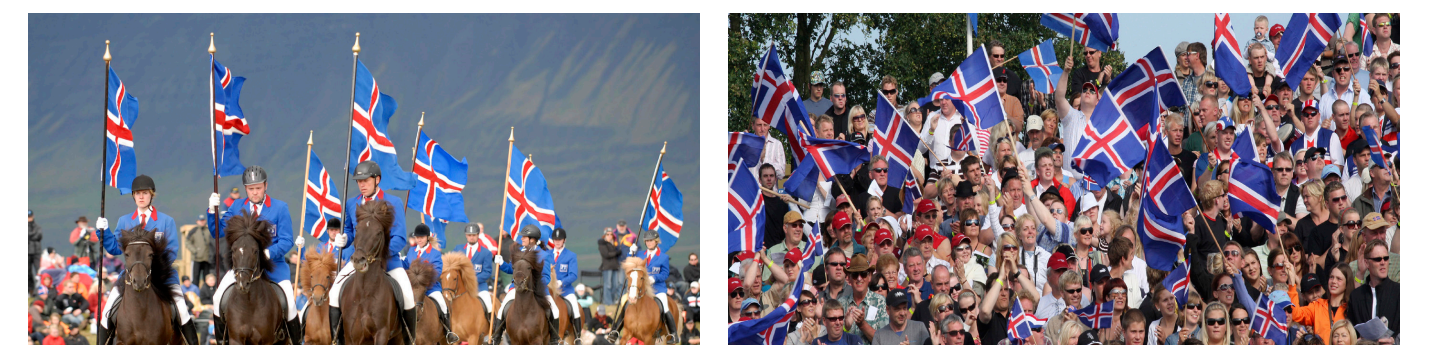
Extremely exciting competition in pouring rain. Photo from the World Games in Brunnadern in Switzerland in 2009. To the right is Tania H. Olsen on Sólon from Strö. They became World Champions in 100 m pace at the World Games with the time of 7.44 seconds. Photo: Jens Einarsson.

Kolka from Hákot at the top in the category of 5-year-old mares at the National Championship at Vindheimamelar in 2011. Rider: Hrefna María Ómarsdóttir. Photo: Jens Einarsson.



"Riding horses with dusty noses/ grunt and cough and snort." (From the poem, *"Að nýju"* ("Again") by Sigurður Jónsson from Brún) Taktur from Tjarnarland and Viðar Ingólfsson competing in a heavy storm. Photo: Jens Einarsson.

Gathering and sheep round-up. Photo of sheep herding from Fjárdalur in the autumn of 2010. Photo: Jens Einarsson.



Riders of the Horse Trainers' Association carrying the flag at the National Championship at Vindheimamelar in 2006. Photo: Eiríkur Jónsson.

The Icelandic flag at the World Championship of the Icelandic Horse in Holland in 2007. Photo: Sigurgeir Sigurjónsson.

1916

Genetic Contribution 4,60%
Sörli from Svaðastöðum IS1916158550

1924

Genetic Contribution 3,67%
Léttir from Svaðastöðum IS1924158550

1933

Genetic Contribution 1,66%
Blakkur from Hofsstöðum IS1933158228

1937

Sveinn Guðmundsson
VíS

Genetic Contribution 4,32%
Ragnars-Brúnka from Sauðárkróki IS1937257001

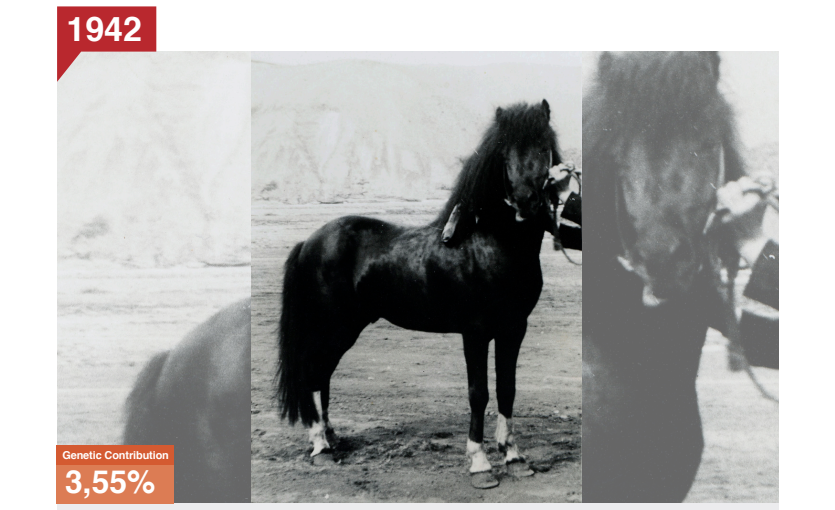
Ari Guðmundsson
ÓIS

Genetic Contribution 3,04%
Skuggi from Bjarnanesi IS1937177180

1941

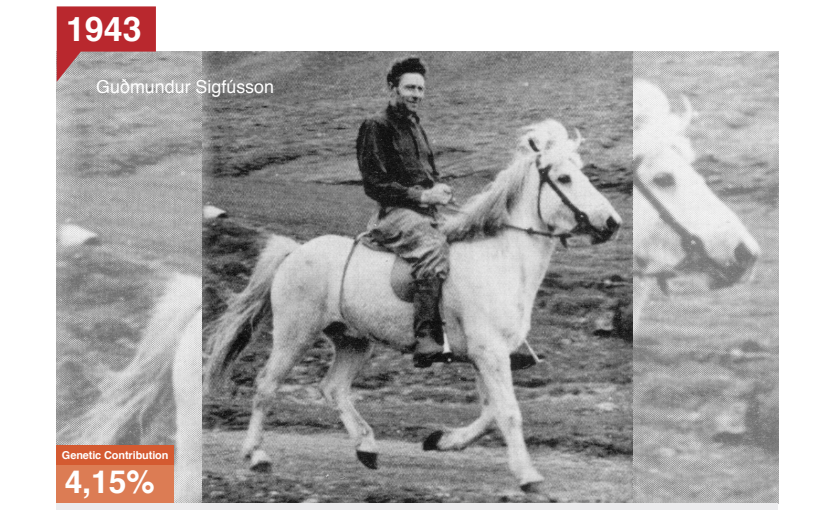
Genetic Contribution 3,66%
Nökkvi from Hólmi IS1941177415

1942



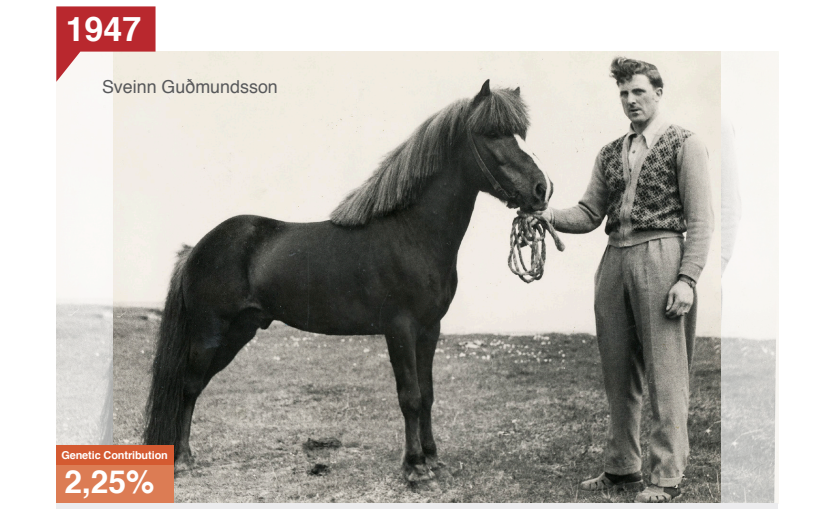
Genetic Contribution 3,55%
Sokki from Syðra-Vallholti IS1942157598

1943



Genetic Contribution 4,15%
Fengur from Eiríksstöðum IS1943156690

1947



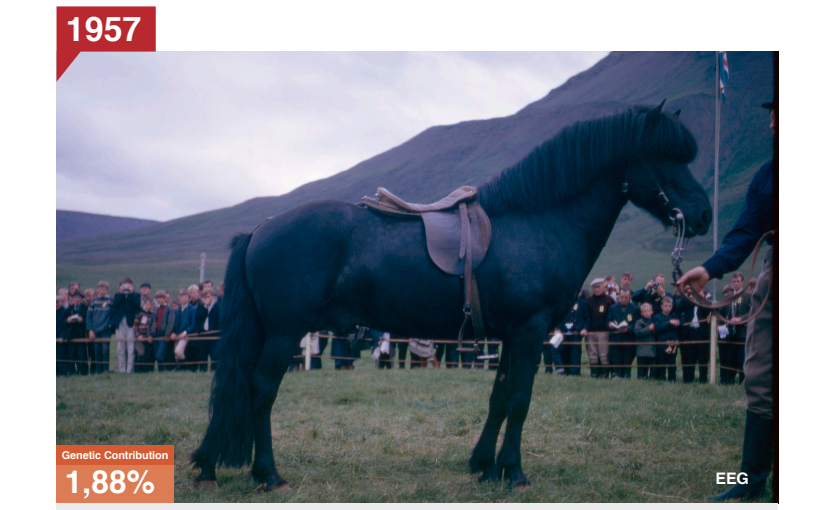
Genetic Contribution 2,25%
Goði from Sauðárkróki IS1947157008

1952

Sveinn Guðmundsson (left) and Guðmundur Sveinsson
FrÞ

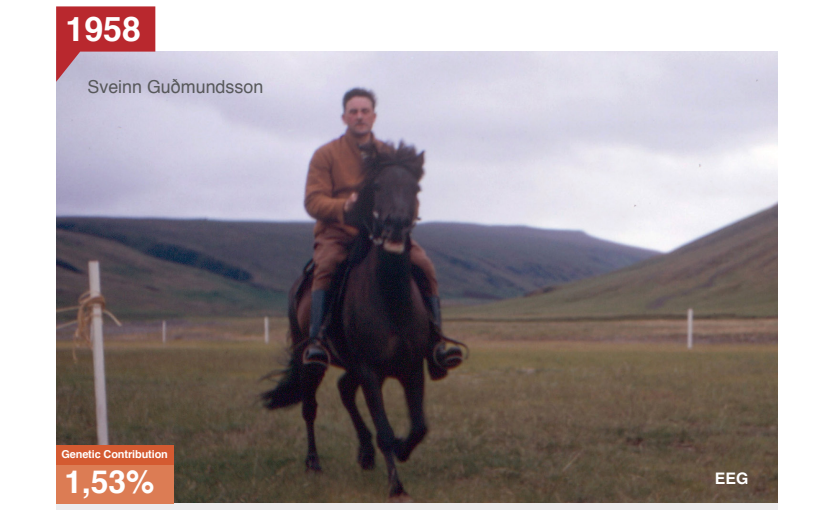
Genetic Contribution 7,08%
Síða from Sauðárkróki IS1952257001

1957



Genetic Contribution 1,88%
Hörður from Kolkuósi IS1957158589

1958



Genetic Contribution 1,53%
Fluga from Sauðárkróki IS1958257001

1961

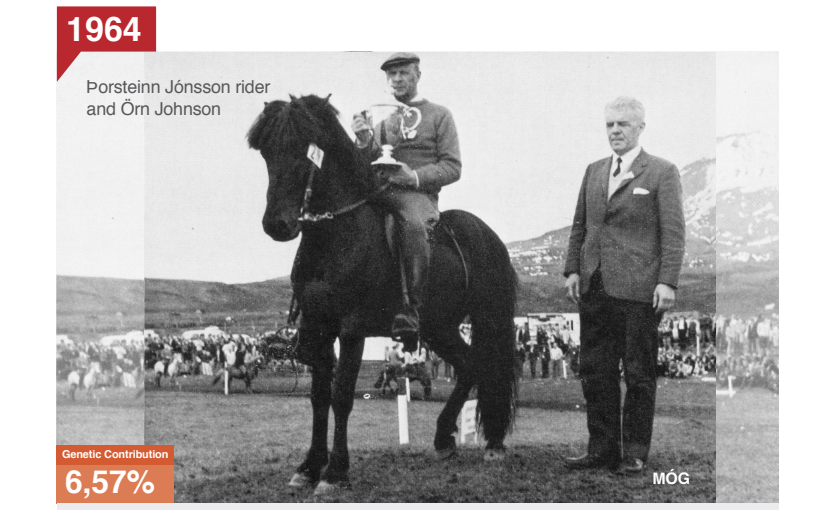
Halldór Jónsson

Genetic Contribution 1,44%
Rauður from Kolkuósi IS1961158588

1962

Genetic Contribution 2,62%
Hylur from Kirkjubæ IS1962186101

1964


Þorsteinn Jónsson rider and Örn Johnson
MÓG

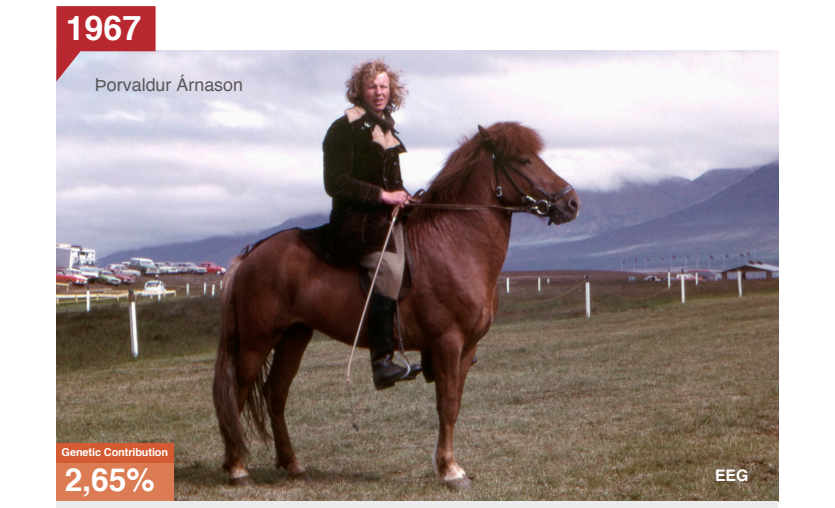
Genetic Contribution 6,57%
Sörli from Sauðárkróki IS1964157001

1966

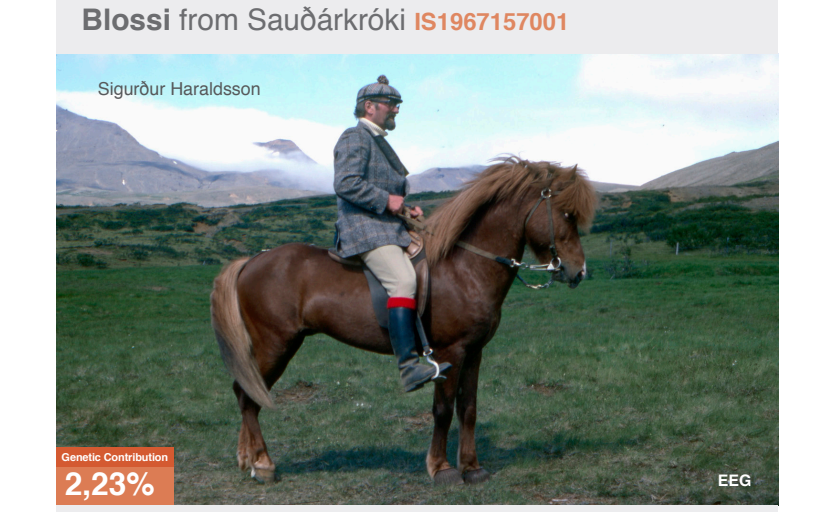
Sigurjón Gestsson
EEG

Genetic Contribution 3,08%
Hrafnkatla from Sauðárkróki IS1966257002

1967



Genetic Contribution 2,65%
Blossi from Sauðárkróki IS1967157001



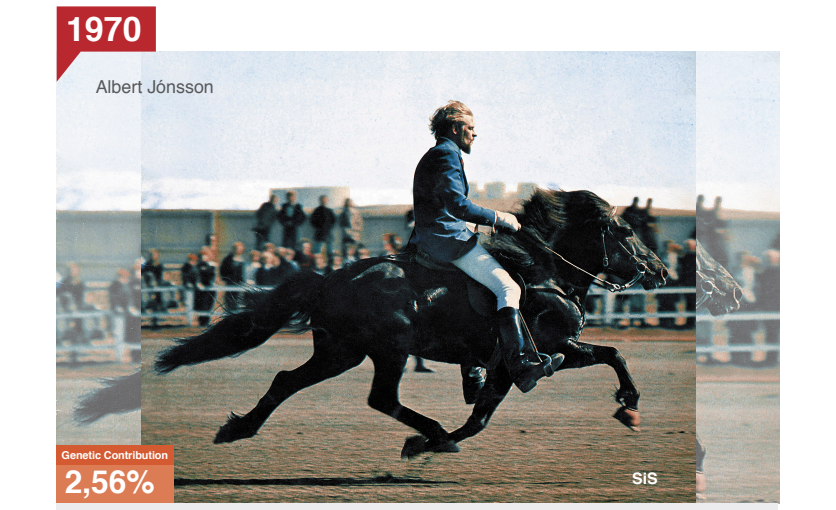
Genetic Contribution 2,23%
Þáttur from Kirkjubæ IS1967186102

1968

Friðrik Stefánsson
EEG

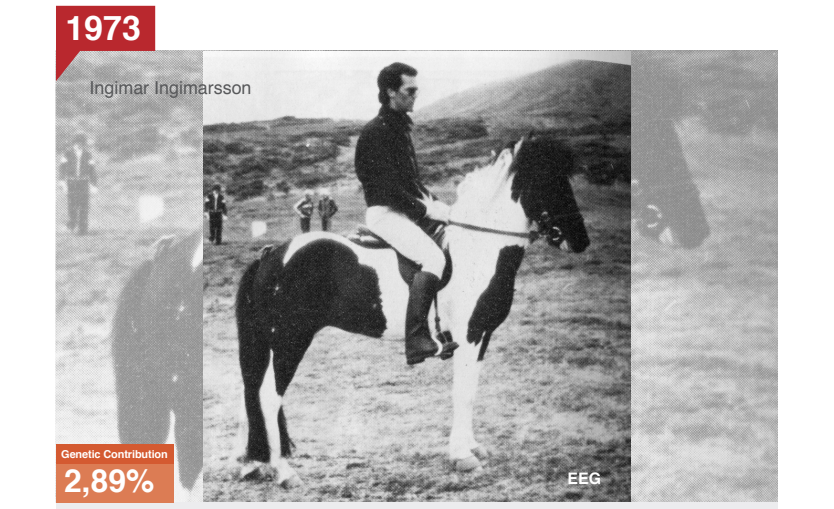
Genetic Contribution 11,99%
Hrafn from Holtsmúla IS1968157460

1970



Genetic Contribution 2,56%
Náttfari from Ytra-Dalsgerði IS1970165740

1973



Genetic Contribution 2,89%
Hervör from Sauðárkróki IS1973257008

Gísli Höskuldsson
EEG

Genetic Contribution 2,49%
Gáski from Hofsstöðum IS1973135980

Ragnar Hinriksson
EIJ

Genetic Contribution 2,16%
Gustur from Sauðárkróki IS1973157005

1974

Örn Karlsson
JTS

Genetic Contribution 4,62%
Ófeigur from Flugumýri IS1974158602

1976

Albert Jónsson
VaK

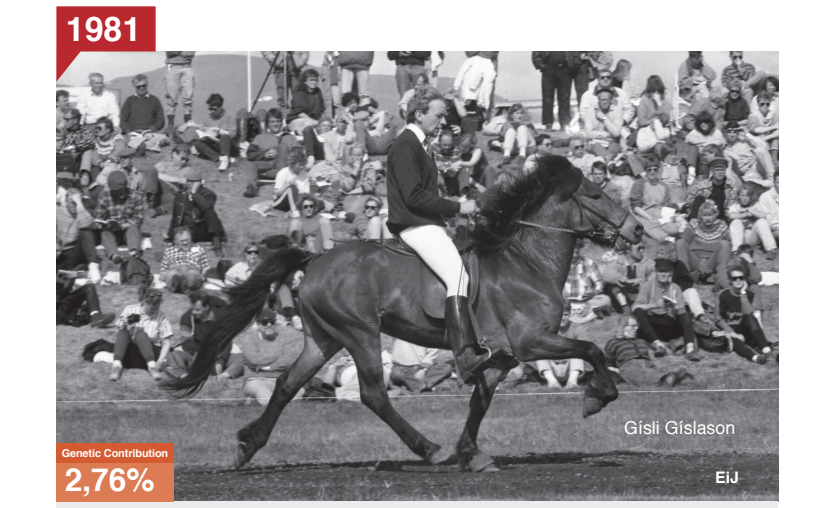
Genetic Contribution 5,20%
Hervar from Sauðárkróki IS1976157003

1979

Erling Ó. Sigurðsson
EIJ

Genetic Contribution 3,69%
Adam from Meðalfelli IS1979125040

1981



Genetic Contribution 2,76%
Kolfinnur from Kjarnholtum IS1981187020

Einar Øder Magnússon
EIJ

Genetic Contribution 1,57%
Kjarval from Sauðárkróki IS1981157025

1982

Eiríkur Guðmundsson
EIJ

Genetic Contribution 5,41%
Otur from Sauðárkróki IS1982151001

1986

Rúna Einarsdóttir
EIJ

Genetic Contribution 8,42%
Orri from Þúfu IS1986186055

1988

Ragnar Ingólfsson
EIJ

Genetic Contribution 1,50%
Gustur from Hóli IS1988165895

1918
Emphasis on the establishment and operation of horse breeding associations in the rural districts of the country. This activity flourished until the year 1930.

1921
The Agricultural Society of Iceland (ASI) put up a household and agricultural appliance exhibition in Reykjavík where horse tools were prominent.

1922
The first equestrian club established, Fákur Horsemen's Association in Reykjavík.

1923
Formal Studbook records of ASI began. Stud horses and mares, which reached a specific prize level, or a specific score at each time, were registered in the breeding records and allocated running serial numbers.

1925
An agreement was made at an agricultural convention that the country be divided into three exhibition areas, where breeding shows would be held in each one, every third year. It was also agreed that exhibitions should be held with stallions and their offspring, instead of only making individual judgements, as had been the case until that time. Furthermore, it was agreed to pay grants to horse breeding societies for the mares taken to the stallions of the societies, on the condition that they return reports.

1926
Amendments on law regarding horse breeding approved by Alþingi. According to them, the ban on free-range stallions was tightened which was originally legalised in the year 1901.

1928
Horse breeding became the primary occupation of the National Advisor of Horse Breeding at ASI. Until that time, it had been done alongside other work in the hands of animal breeding advisors.

The equestrian association, Glaður in Dalasýsla and Léttir in Akureyri were established.

1929
The equestrian association, Sleipnir in Árnessýsla was established.

1931
The first comprehensive law on livestock raising was approved (Law no. 32/1931).

The book *Horses* by Theodór Arnbjörnsson was published by ASI.

1933
The equestrian associations, Faxi in Borgarfjörður and Léttfeti in Sauðárkrókur were established.

1941
The Þingvellir Ride took place during the weekend of June 28-29, where a meeting was held and preparations of a fund made for the special breeding of riding horses, grand exhibitions at Þingvellir, and the establishment of a national association of horsemen.

1942
Horse training centre for work horses put up in Hvanneyri through the agency of the Agricultural Union of Borgarfjörður. The mechanisation taking place in the countryside, with the use of horse tools, was at its height at this time, but only a few years later the tractor and agricultural jeep took on the roles of the horses.

1946
Fine Horses of the Past, by Ásgeir Jónsson from Gottorp, the first volume was published by Norðri in Akureyri. The latter volume was published in 1948 and the book *Interactions of Man and Horse*, by the same author, was published in 1951. These are works of great importance which give a significant insight into the situation of good riding horses in Iceland and the development of riding.

1947
The Agricultural Society of Iceland put up a national exhibition on breeding horses at the Agricultural Exhibition in Reykjavík in 1947. The stallions were divided into two groups: workhorses and riding horses. The horse at the top in the category of riding horses received the Sleipnir trophy which was the first time it was awarded.

1948
New agricultural law approved (Law no. 19/1948) which included Provisions on the organisation of the breeding of riding horses in collaboration with ASI and the union of the equestrian clubs on a national exhibition held every fourth year.

1949
The Icelandic Horse Association (IHA) established. The founder members were: Faxi in Borgarnes, Fákur in Reykjavík, Dreyri in Akranes, Geysir in Rangárvallasýsla, Léttfeti in Sauðárkrókur, Léttir in Akureyri, Neisti in Blönduós, Sindri in Vestur-Skaftafellssýsla, Sleipnir in Selfoss, Smári in Árnessýsla, Stígandi in Skagafjörður, and Sörli in Hafnarfjörður. Shortly later, Glaður in Dalasýsla and Hörður in Kjósarsýsla joined the association.

The first horse breeding association, The Horse Breeding Association of the South, was established. Subsequently, one association after the other was established, each covering differently sized areas, right from counties to quarters.

1950
The first National Championship of IHA and ASI was held at Þingvellir, July 6-11. Five categories of horses were exhibited. 1. Category: Four-years old and older stallions, trained as well as riding horses, some exhibited with offspring, where the top horse received the Sleipnir cup, whereas others were only exhibited individually. 2. Category: Three-year old stallions, bridle tame. 3. Category: Tame riding mares. 4. Category: Tame, castrated gæðingar (gæðingar competition). 5. Category: horses and mares participating in racing.

1951
The emphasis on the breeding of riding horses was decided at an agricultural convention.

From the very start of consultant services there had been considerable debate on the breeding objectives in relation to the emphasis on work horse breeding, on the one hand, and breeding of riding horses, on the other. It was also debated whether this should be separated, or whether the breed should be raised as one population, and then count on sufficient supply of even-tempered and reliable work horses, although the main emphasis would be placed on breeding riding horses. The strategy and collaboration between ASI and IHA was approved with the following protocol: „The Agricultural Convention concludes that initially, the horse breeding should be formed with special consideration to the breeding of a strong, amiable and willing horse breed, as well as a superior riding horse breed. The Agricultural Convention trusts that the IHA be in liaison with the board of ASI and its advisor in horse breeding, on the horse breeding goals, in order to secure the best possible results." Approved with 18 unanimous votes.

IHA assigns a committee to compose a „draft directive on breeding riding-horses."

International Pony Breeders Federation (IPBF) established and the Icelandic horse became a member. A systematic promotion of the Icelandic horse maintained within the federation, although there was very little exportation of horses from Iceland at this time. There was a great deal of conflict within the federation which was disbanded in 1958.

The first indication of a riding school in Iceland put up at Hvanneyri Agricultural School, initiated by Gunnar Bjarnason.

1953
On a Horse – Textbook in Horsemanship, published by IHA, writers: Bogi Eggertsson and Gunnar Bjarnason.

1954
The second National Championship of IHA and ASI held at Þveráreyrar in Eyjafjörður, July 7-11. Same competition categories as at the Championship in 1950.

The ASI record keeping of foals, i.e. organised registration of foals, began and lasted until 1990. Important information on fertility and such issues were gathered with the foal record keeping.

1956
The first Quarterly Championship held by IHA. The Regional Championship of IHA for Kjalarnesþing, held at the Elliðaár Race-course, July 7-8. The previous year, the equestrian associations in the south of Iceland had held a regional championship on July 10th in Gaddastaðaflatir at Rangá.

1957
Amendment on current law on livestock breeding approved, as regards authorising the combination of the Quarterly Exhibitions of ASI and the Quarterly Championship of IHA.

1958
The third National Championship of IHA and ASI held at Skógarhólar in Þingvallasveit, July 17-20. Special categories of stallions with offspring established and mares showed for the first time with offspring.

In collaboration with locals, the establishment of owners' associations of Icelandic horses started in the various European countries.

1959
The first Quarterly Championship of IHA and ASI held at Sauðárkrókur, July 11 – 12.

The equestrian association, Léttir in Akureyri, founded a summer riding school which was in continuous operation for decades. At first, the school was only for the children of members, but became public after the Youth Council of Akureyri became a member.

1960
The equestrian association, Fákur, put up a riding school for children with the first educated riding teacher in the country, Rosmarie Þorleifsdóttir.

Our Horse, IHA's journal on horses and horsemanship, started publication under the editorship of journalist, Vignir Guðmundsson. The journal was published until the year 1998, when it merged with *Eiðfaxi,* after having rented out the operation for the last few years.

1962
The fourth National Championship of IHA and ASI held at Skógarhólar, July 13-15.

The State Horse-Breeding farm at Hólar in Hjaltadal was established with the objective of pure-breeding the so-called East-Water horses (Svaðastaðir population). A directive was adopted for the farm in 1971.

1964
The first 20x40 riding fence in Iceland put up at the riding school in Vestra-Geldingaholt.

Skuggafélagið, an association on stock breeding of horses from the gene pool of Skuggi 201 from Bjarnanes, established in Borgarfjörður.

1966
The fifth National Championship of IHA and ASI held at Hólar in Hjaltadalur, July 13-17.

1968
The first volume of *The Breeding Studbook and History of the Icelandic Horse in the 20th Century,* by Gunnar Bjarnason, published by Prentverk Odds Björnssonar in Akureyri. In addition to the breeding record of ASI, it includes the history of Gunnar Bjarnason's work. Volume VII, the last one, was published in 1991.

1969
The establishment of the International Federation of Icelandic Horses, FEIF (*Föderation Europaisher Islandpferde-Freunde*). There were six founding countries. ASI represented the Icelandic membership and paid the contribution to the operation. Currently, there are 21 member-countries with a total of 60 thousand members.

1970
The first European Championship held in Aegidienberg by Rhine. The following countries took part: Germany, Switzerland, Austria, The Netherlands, Denmark and Iceland, which are the same countries that founded FEIF. The championships have been held regularly since then. They are currently held in the years between the national championships and are referred to as World Championships, as the membership of FEIF is no longer limited to the European countries.

The sixth National Championship of IHA and ASI held at Skógarhólar, July 8-12. This was the first time there was a competition in separate *gæðingar* categories: A-Category of 5 - gaited *gæðingar* and B-Category of 4 - gaited *gæðingar*.

The Horse Trainers' Association (HTA) was established. It was the first association to adopt matching uniforms for its members. This aroused a general effort to keep the outfits of the horsemen tidier and matching (member uniforms were adopted in the next few years in the horsemen's associations).

The first horse rentals and horse travel agencies established.

1971
The Horse Breeding Association of Iceland, a co-operating forum of national horse breeding associations, established.

The Feldman father and son from Germany held a breakthrough riding course at Fákur in Reykjavík. Fákur put up a riding fence to mark the occasion.

The first championship in horse sports held at Hvítárbakkar in Borgarfjörður.

1972
The first HTA horse trainers' examination held.

1973
New law on livestock breeding approved (Law no. 31/1973). The law included various novelties regarding horse farming, such as a detailed organisation on the progression of exhibitions; i) annual exhibitions by the agricultural- and horse farming associations on young stallions and horses that have not received 1. prize (main grade 8.00 or higher), ii) regional exhibitions in each quarter every third or fourth year, iii) national exhibitions every third or fourth year, iv) the authority to combine ASI's quarterly and national exhibitions with IHA's regional and national championships still holds. On the basis of the first item, there was an increase in breeding fields, whereas other forms of shows remained unchanged. The reason for the provision on prohibiting reruns of first prize horses, was that grand fees were paid if that score would be obtained. The law also included a Provision which allowed for the operation of stock-breeding associations. In addition to the Skuggafélag, the associations, Fjallablesafélagið, Kleifahross, and Snældufélagið were temporarily in operation.

There was also a new Provision on a fund for the protection of the population of the Icelandic horse breed with the role of supporting and lending finance to the horse breeding associations, in order to buy top stallions that would otherwise be sold out of the country. The fund is still in operation, but it is very different and has the objective to finance research and development within the field. The law also included Provisions on a so-called exhibition committee of ASI and IHA which consisted of 5 members, appointed by two representatives of IHA, two operating district advisors, and the National Advisor of Horse Breeding (chairman).

The State Stallion Station established at Litla-Hraun and moved to Gunnarsholt in the year 1981. Rules were set for the station in 1985 and a new stable constructed in Gunnarsholt which was completed at the end of 1991.

The first formal course in the evaluation of *gæðingar* according to a new implementation of the competition (card evaluations). A course had been held once before (1966), according to the previous form of the competition.

1974
The seventh National Championship of IHA and ASI held at Vindheimamelar in Skagafjörður, July 10-14. Horse racing was now flourishing and the final runs were the last events of the championship, as had been the case at Hólar in 1966.

1975
The Interested Association of Horse Farmers established, the predecessor of the Horse Farmers' Association. The name was soon changed into the Horse Farmers' Association.

1976
The first horse sport division established at Fákur in Reykjavík. More horse associations came in their wake and founded sport divisions.

The first HTA riding instructor course, followed by an examination, held at Stóra-Hof. Examinees obtained certifications as B riding instructors of HTA.

1977
IHA Sports Council established.

Eiðfaxi, an equine monthly launched. Published by a group of interested horsemen. Sigurjón Valdimarsson was the first editor. The monthly is still published, currently in the possession of a public media company and the only equine publication on the market. Other papers which have been published, for longer or shorter periods of time, have either discontinued or merged with *Eiðfaxi.*

1978
The eighth National Championship of IHA and ASI held at Skógarhólar, July 12-16. At this championship, horse sports were on the agenda for the first time (tölt and pace test).

Reynir Aðalsteinsson, HTA's first horse training master, completed his licence.

1981
Hólar School re-established. An emphasis placed on horsemanship in the agricultural science studies. A new stable taken into use which has now become the oldest stable at Hólastaður.

1982
The ninth National Championship of IHA and ASI held at Vindheimamelar, July 7 - 11. This was the first time the breeding farms held an exhibition, youth competitions were taken up, and the number of competitive events increased, e.g. a competition in a 150 m pace was started. This championship was the last time a money prize was awarded for breeding achievements.

The Studbook of Icelandic Horses. Stallions no. 750-996, published by ASI. Editor, Þorkell Bjarnason.

Freeze branding of horses attempted with a U.S. code. This was the first organised attempt at marking horses for identification in a different way from the ear branding that had been customary ever since the settlement of Iceland.

1984
The sports division of Fákur joined the Reykjavík Sports Union.

1986
Horse Breeding, ASI's annual publication on horse farming, published for the first time and annually since then until the year 1999. For a time, it was published annually in three volumes with more than 400 pages. Kristinn Hugason was the editor, but Þorkell Bjarnason was the editor of the first volume, and Ágúst Sigurðsson of the last one (1999).

Breeding evaluation for Icelandic horses adopted by ASI and has been used ever since. It is calculated with the BLUP method *(Best Linear Unbiased Prediction)* which is the best linear unbiased estimator on the breeding value of the livestock, based on the information on measured traits. The BLUP method corrects for the impact of fixed environmental factors and, thus, assessments from the various years on variously old horses (age categories) and of different gender (stallions, mares, geldings) are made comparable (later also from different countries). The BLUP method has established itself worldwide as the best method of breeding values. The utilisation of the method for Icelandic horse farming is based on the research of Þorvaldur Árnason, PhD.

The first regulation on horse shoeing and footgear established.

The tenth National Championship of IHA and ASI held at Gaddastaðaflatir, July 2-6. The championship was moved forward as people were no longer expected to arrive on horseback. The youth competition was divided into two age groups: older and younger, the tölt competition had been entrenched and the horseracing was very powerful (six competition categories).

1987
The Sports Council of IHA obtained the position of a special association within the National Olympic and Sports Association of Iceland.

The Riding Hall in Reykjavík was constructed and was the first of its kind in the country. It was owned by a limited company in the possession of an equine and horse breeding association, as well as individuals.

A new number system adopted. Birth numbers replaced the old ASI breeding record numbers. The birth number consists of two letters for the whole country where the horse is born and 10 digits: The birthyear of the horse, a key for the gender (1 for a horse, 2 for a mare) and a number for the origin (two-digit regional number), in addition to a three-digit running serial number. Breeders can be assigned fixed numerical orders. Furthermore, computer registration of horses was started by ASI in a data protection system, which was the predecessor of Fengur, and a computerised calculation and publication of judgements at horse shows began.

1988
The first A riding instructors of HTA obtained their certificates. They were: Benedikt Þorbjörnsson, Eyjólfur Ísólfsson, Reynir Aðalsteinsson and Sigurbjörn Bárðarson.

1989
New law on livestock breeding approved (Law no. 84/1989).

A large-scale fundamental registration of the horse population was made and numbering according to the birth number system. Previously, only the horses that reached the so-called breeding record limit got a number. During the later decades the limits were 7,50 for mares and 7,75 for stallions, but only a part of the horses that were shown reached these limits.

A directive was issued on the identification of horses where the freeze branding of the birth number became an accepted method.

The State Horse Farm at Hólar in Hjaltadalur was issued a new directive which involved a transformed policy. The operation of the farm should be in accordance with the latest knowledge in breeding science and the pure breeding of „east of the water" horses abandoned. The State farm later merged into the operations of the school farm.

A riding hall, attached to the facilities building of the school stable, was constructed at Hólar and was the first of its kind in the North of Iceland.

A coordinating course was held at Hólar under the auspice of the school and ASI for breeding judges and breeding leaders of the FEIF countries. These courses were continued a few years later.

1990
A horse breeding committee started work according to the law on livestock breeding from 1989, according to which the farming associations, such as the Horse Farmer's Association, obtained membership of the livestock breeding committee of its type of farming. The committees were under the chairmanship of the national consultant of ASI, and according to the law, the National Advisor of Horse Breeding and county advisors should appoint the majority of the committee. The horse breeding committee replaced the exhibition committee of ASI and IHA.

Based on the new law on livestock breeding and directive to the law, comprehensive regulations were made on the assessments of breeding horses. Where the arrangements of exhibition progression was concerned, the following applied: I) national exhibitions of breeding horses every fourth year, II) quarterly exhibitions of breeding horses, one exhibition a year, except in national championship years, held alternately in the regions, III) regional exhibitions of breeding horses, one or more exhibitions a year in all the regions of the country where horse breeding takes place, iv) horse shows at stations and State farms in horse breeding, v) judgments of individual offspring, particularly regarding exportation, vi) judgements abroad of horses born in Iceland.

There was also a directive on a judging committee, consisting of three persons, on the rights of ASI's horse breeding advisor to be the only judge at exhibitions, according to item V) and VI), stating that only agricultural science graduates at a university level should be authorised to act as judges, and how the essential progression of the exhibitions should be, e.g. as regards the allowed foot gear etc. Fundamentally, these regulations are still valid today – although some development and changes have naturally occurred.

Radical changes made on the assessment of breeding horses. A judging scale was made where the traits were defined accurately and described in terms of scores. This was the first time such a judging scale was made here in Iceland and was essential with regard to the safety of judging procedures. Its special purpose was to increase the variance in the use of the scale. Both the heredity and variation of most of the traits increased considerably after the year 1990.

Breeding evaluation of ASI (BLUP) became the foundation of the offspring awards of stallions and thereby the Sleipnir Cup award. The same method was adopted concerning mares a few years later, but initially, the mean of the total scores of the mares' offspring formed the basis, but was corrected with regard to fixed environmental factors.

The eleventh National Championship of IHA and ASI held at Vindheimamelar, July 3 – 8. An international horse sports competition took place concurrently to the championship. Generous money prizes were offered in the horse racing sports.

The Horse Sports Union of Iceland was established and became a member of the National Olympic and Sports Association of Iceland in the place of the Sports Council of IHA.

1991
The data base system, Fengur, was taken into use by ASI. Thereby, horse farming was in the possession of the most perfect data base of all the branches of agriculture which was also in a PC environment, instead of a mainframe environment that was still most common at that time.

The first circular taming paddock in Iceland was built at Hólar.

A Parliamentary Resolution approved by Alþingi where the Minister for Transport was assigned to appoint a committee to "check the condition of riding paths and make riding path plans". Previously, horsemen had mostly ridden paths of the past, and general roads.

1992
Registration, calculations, and release of conclusions in horse breeding exhibitions centralised in the Fengur database in Bændahöllin (Farmer's Palace) with the utilisation of client technology (before the days of the Internet).

Kynbótadómar og sýningar/ Studhorse Judging and Studshows/ Zuchtpferdebeurteilung und Körungen published in three languages by ASI. Editor, Kristinn Hugason. The work released comprehensive regulations on the exhibition staging in horse farming and the judging scale of the traits. This was the first actual definition of the judging scale and thereby an accurate implementation of the breeding goal.

Extensive updates made of the programs used in ASI's calculations of breeding evaluations. Evaluated, and related traits increased from 10 to 14. Calculations also started on breeding evaluations for height of withers.

Formal collaboration of HTA and Hólar School on horsemanship instruction began.

1993
A horse farming council established, aside the horse breeding committee, to take care of those issues which did not appertain directly to the committee according to the law.

The courses *Of Free Will* started at Hvanneyri, led by Ingimar Sveinsson.

Sigurbjörn Bárðarson appointed Sportsman of the Year by the Sportscasters Union. This is the first and only time a horse sportsman achieves this honour.

At the Horsemen's Harvest festival, which was held for the first time that year, a new trophy, Alsvinnur, given by the Association of Horse Farmers, was awarded to the horse sportsman of the year, Sigurbjörn Bárðarson. Sveinn Guðmundsson was nominated the breeder of the year by ASI.

1994
A Joint Declaration of FEIF, ASI and the Minister of Agriculture signed, stating that Iceland is the country of origin of the Icelandic horse.

The twelfth National Championship of IHA and ASI held at Gaddastaðaflatir, June 28-July 3. A children's category established to replace the younger youth category. A so-called World Cup Championship in horse sports took place concurrent to the National Championship.

Private-Fengur, 1. Ed. released. This was a first attempt to enable both domestic and overseas subscribers to use the Fengur-System in their private computers, at a time when the Internet was still far away in the future.

Students graduating from Hólar obtained qualifications for membership of HTA.

Honorary award of ASI, Breeder of the Year, awarded for the first time. The winner was Magnús Einarsson, Kjarnholt I. The Honorary Award has been given annually ever since, according to a special scale system.

1995
The Farmers Association of Iceland established at the merger of the Agricultural Society of Iceland and the Federation of Farmers' Trade Unions.

The State Stallion Station discontinued. ASI took over the operations for one year, after which the facilities were rented out for the various activities, e.g. insemination operations. The place then went into the hands of The Soil Conservation Service of Iceland and was transformed from a stable into a salon.

Funds first allocated from the National Budget (road allocation) for laying riding paths.

1996
Hólar School and HTA's Riding Instructor and Training Courses established and the first riding instructors graduated in the spring. This was the beginning of the Equine Studies Division and, at the same time, all entrance examinations for HTA were transferred to Hólar

Organised insemination operations began at Gunnarsholt under the auspice of the Horse Breeders' Association in the South and the Veterinary Services in the South.

A horse farming council took over the operations of the horse breeding committee, under the leadership and majority membership of the Horse Farming Association.

1997
World- and Iceland-Fengur came into existence with 200 subscribers in 12 countries.

Horse Sports Union of Iceland merged with IHA which thereby became a member (special association) of the National Olympic and Sports Association of Iceland.

1998
Horses were infected by a contagious disease, a so-called fever disease, which greatly affected horsemanship, although there were only exceptional cases of horses dying from the disease.

New law approved on horse farming; Agricultural Law no. 70/1998. This law is still valid with later amendments.

The thirteenth National Championship of IHA and ASI held at Melgerðismelar in Eyjafjörður, July 8-12. This was the first time there was a competition in the young rider category. Furthermore, a decision was implemented by those concerned, that as of this time the national championships should be held every second year.

The municipalities allocate special funds for the first time for the laying of riding paths. The amount was initially low, but as years went by it increased, and is presently higher than the State's general, annual road allocation.

Microchip identification of horses began.

The Agricultural University at Hvanneyri and Hólar School made an agreement on riding education at university level.

The comprehensive merger of the horse breeding associations and the divisions of the Horse Farmers Association completed and the Horse Breeding Association discontinued.

2000
Official funds allocated to the Horse Centre of Iceland in Skagafjörður, as well as to a special nationwide effort in horsemanship. In progress until 2004.

The fourteenth National Championship of IHA and ASI in Reykjavík, July 4-9. This championship marked a turning point by taking place in a city. It was a fine championship, but there was an obvious regression where the participation in gallop racing was concerned.

A three-year specialised Equine Science Course offered for the first time at Hólar School with an emphasis on training and riding. The last two years of the course were at university level.

2001
World-Fengur (WF) came into existence. The previous year, an agreement had been made on the co-operative venture of ASI and FEIF on the development of an international data base for Icelandic horses. One of the main projects was to implement an international breeding evaluation which enabled the comparison of breeding horses born and/or shown in different countries.

The Icelandic Horse History Centre established at Hólar in Hjaltadalur.

2002
Comprehensive regulations on the execution of breeding assessments coordinated among Iceland and the FEIF countries. The regulations, among which the ones that applied specially to Iceland, obtained increased constitutional roots in the country with the setting of a Directive on The Origin and Breeding of the Icelandic Horse, No. 948/2002, with Amendments 465/2004 and 810/2005.

The fifteenth National Championship of IHA and ASI held at Vindheimamelar, July 2-7. This was the first time there was a competition in a 100 m flying pace. A new limited company, Landsmót ehf., in the 2/3 possession of IHA and 1/3 of ASI, went into operation. It was intended to transfer knowledge between national championship venues and secure the earnings of the championships.

2003
The profession of an agent for the Icelandic horse was established, on the initiative of the authorities, and was in operation until the end of the year 2006.

2004
A new statistical model (BLUP) was taken into use and the breeding evaluation of ASI was calculated with new programs. In the last years, the breeding evaluation for gracefulness of mane and tail, walk, and slow tölt has been added.

The sixteenth National Championship of IHA and ASI held at Gaddastaðaflatir, June 28 – July 4. Gallop sports were taken off the agenda and a system adopted where the number is decided beforehand of competition horses in tölt, pace racing, and the number of breeding farms allowed to participate in the championship.

The book, *The Icelandic Horse*, by Gísli B. Björnsson and Hjalti Jón Sveinsson, et al. published in English, German, and Icelandic. This is an illustrated survey on the various issues related to the Icelandic horse; its use and culture related to it in past and present. Publishers, Mál og menning and The Icelandic Horse History Centre.

2005
Annual National Budget allocations approved to developmental projects in horse farming, horsemanship, and marketing of the horse (Horse Farming Development Fund). Initially, this was a five-year project, but the various allocations have been issued most years since then. The amounts and arrangements of allocations have varied.

X-rays of the hocks of stallions (5 years-old) with regard to bone spavin, intended for breeding assessment, made obligatory.

An effort made in DNA-analysis of the horse population which later became a requirement for A-certification in the record keeping and the prerequisite for breeding judgements of horses.

2006
An effort initiated in constructing indoors equitation facilities (riding halls, riding barns and -pavilions) under the auspice of the State, with a special emphasis on the countryside, in accordance with a resolution from the year 2003. The municipalities, particularly the financially sound ones in the densely populated areas, supported this effort generously, not least because of the increased general request and understanding of the importance of indoors facilities for engaging in sports.

The seventeenth National Championship of IHA and ASI at Vindheimamelar, June 26-July 2.

Hólar School introduced the so-called Riding Level System for use in general, but systematic, equine instruction. The system, which was published in book form, consists of five stages where the upper ones require considerable ability. The system was adopted in the educational activities of the riding clubs and is evaluated for college credits. A few schools have since then established specialised equine courses for A-level/matriculation examination.

An international breeding evaluation adopted within the FEIF countries. Groundwork to this project started in 2003.

2007
The Hólar University College formally established and took over all the operations formally in the hands of the Agricultural School at Hólar.

2008
The Horseman (*Reiðmaðurinn*) was launched under the auspice of The Agricultural University of Iceland (AUI) and involves riding instructions for the general public.

The first index of IHA's map scope was created, see http://www.map.is/lh.

The eighteenth National Championship of IHA and ASI held at Gaddastaðaflatir, June 30-July 6.

2010
BSc Equine Studies offered at Hólar University College.

A serious disease, so-called cough disease, broke out in the country and led to a temporary export ban of horses and caused considerable disarray. The nineteenth National Championship of IHA and ASI was e.g. postponed for a year. No horses died, however, from the disease.

A confirmation was obtained that WF registration equalled the release of horse passports.

2011
The nineteenth National Championship of IHA and ASI held at Vindheimamelar, June 26-July 3.

A new Directive issued on the Origin and Breeding of the Icelandic Horse, No. 442/2011 (also published in English translation).

2012
The twentieth National Championship of IHA and ASI held in Víðidalur, June 25 – July 1. The championship was organised in terms of all the horses being stabled in the exhibition grounds. At the end of the championship there were panel discussions with the winners in all categories and a grand sales show on the main field.

Microchip identifications of horses become obligatory, according to a Directive on Livestock Branding, No. 916/2012.

2013
The Icelandic Agricultural Advisory Centre started operations. This is a private limited company with 100% possession of the Icelandic Farmer's Association which thereby took over the majority of ASI's operations as regards instructions in horse farming.

2014
An effort initiated, under the auspice of the equestrian associations and IHA, in the instalment of so-called guideposts which are standard and coordinated riding trail signs.

The twenty-first National Championship of IHA and ASI held at Hólar in Hjaltadalur, June 29-July 6. The participation in the breeding exhibition of the championship was enormous which could be explained partly by the lowered admission qualifications for 4 - gated horses.

2016
The project, *Horses of Iceland*, was launched, preparations having started in 2015. It involves strengthening the image of the Icelandic horse through strategic marketing and cohesive promotion activities. Interested parties, members and private parties, as well as the State Treasury, support this project. It is hosted at Promote Iceland.

The twenty-second National Championship of IHA and ASI held at Hólar in Hjaltadalur, June 27 – July 3. A new system was adopted for the admission of a fixed number of breeding horses in each category to the Championship. There was also an elite exhibition of breeding horses that had obtained the scores 9.5 or 10 at spring exhibitions for tölt, trot, gallop, pace, or general impression. Customary program finished on Saturday night and Sunday, the final day of the Championship, was dedicated to informative lectures and -shows.

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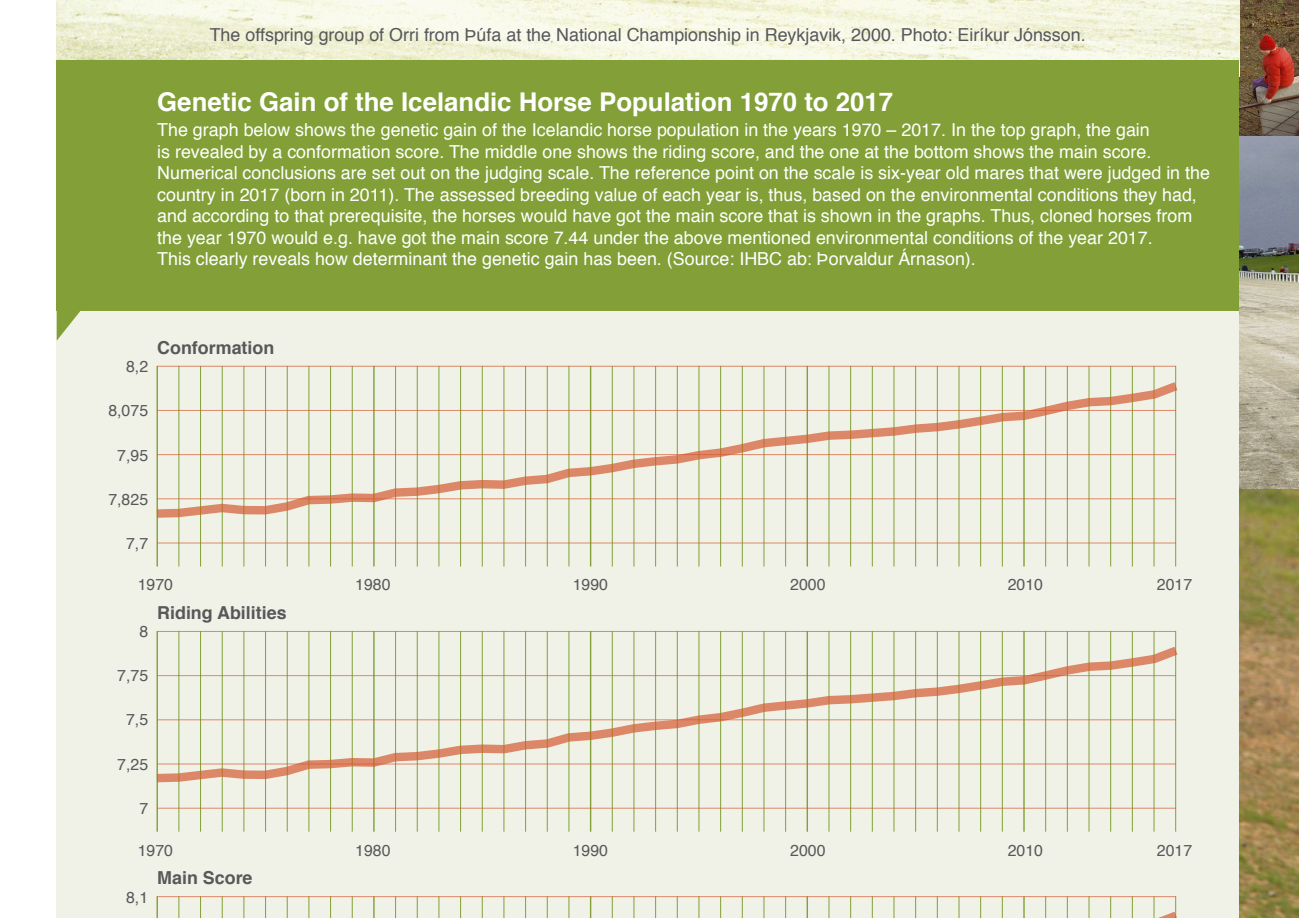
The offspring group of Orri from Þúfa at the National Championship in Reykjavík, 2000. Photo: Eiríkur Jónsson.

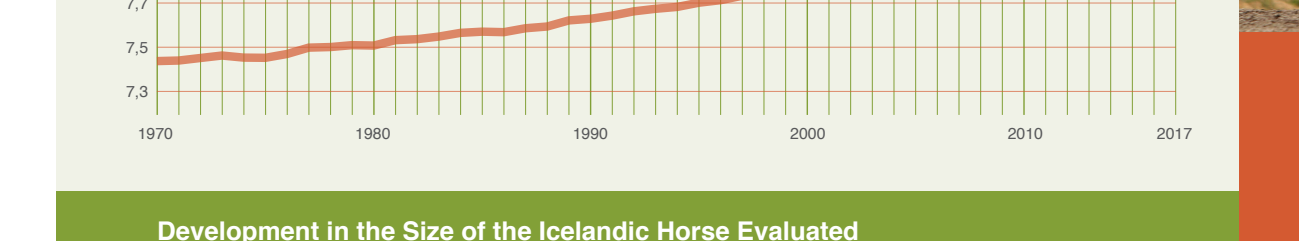
Genetic Gain of the Icelandic Horse Population 1970 to 2017

The graph below shows the genetic gain of the Icelandic horse population in the years 1970 – 2017. In the top graph, the gain is revealed by a conformation score. The middle one shows the riding score, and the one at the bottom shows the main score. Numerical conclusions are set out on the judging scale. The reference point on the scale is six-year old mares that were judged in the country in 2017 (born in 2011). The assessed breeding value of each year is, thus, based on the environmental conditions they had, and according to that prerequisite, the horses would have got the main score that is shown in the graphs. Thus, cloned horses from the year 1970 would e.g. have got the main score 7.44 under the above mentioned environmental conditions of the year 2017. This clearly reveals how determinant the genetic gain has been. (Source: IHBC ab: Þorvaldur Árnason).



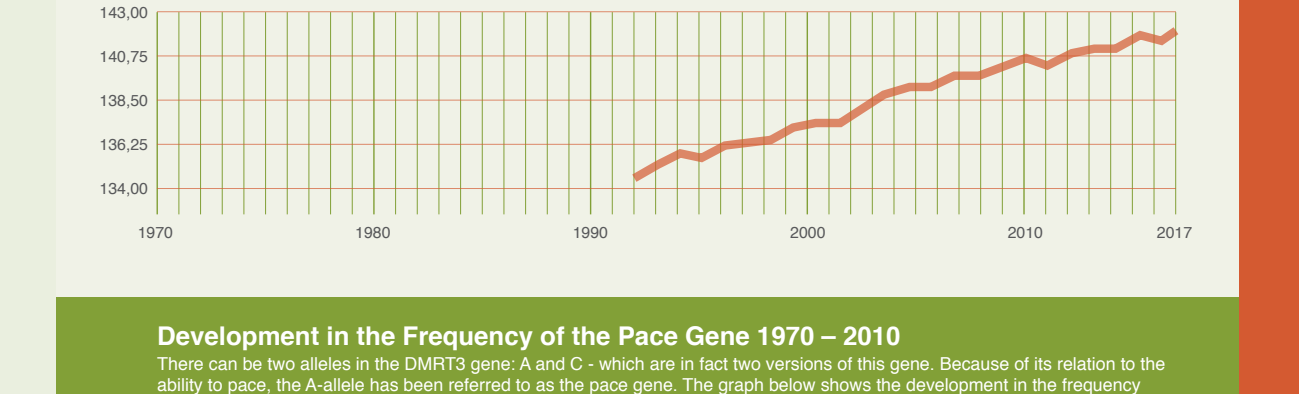
Development in the Size of the Icelandic Horse Evaluated in Height of Withers in the Years 1992 to 2017

The graph below reveals the development in the size of the Icelandic horse during the period between 1992-2017. Evaluation by rod measurement of the withers height of breeding horses judged in this period. (Source: WorldFengur).



Development in the Frequency of the Pace Gene 1970 – 2010

There can be two alleles in the DMRT3 gene: A and C - which are in fact two versions of this gene. Because of its relation to the ability to pace, the A-allele has been referred to as the pace gene. The graph below shows the development in the frequency of the A- and C-alleles from the year 1970 to 2010. It clearly reveals how the frequency of the A-allele has increased during this 40-year period, as its frequency has now exceeded 90%, whereas the frequency of the C-allele has decreased accordingly. If this development continues, there is danger that the C-allele will disappear from the gene within a relatively short period of time. Source: http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/jbg.12112/pdf



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Vision of the Future

It is certainly appropriate to spotlight the Icelandic horse when marking the national sovereignty of Iceland. It is one of the nation's treasures, not only for its unique traits, but also because it holds the story of the joint paths of the horse and the people of the country, right from the early days of Iceland's settlement. It reflects the success that the Icelandic nation has achieved, not least during the past 100 years. Icelandic horse breeding and horsemanship has made an interesting progress in the past years and decades. From the time that organised breeding of riding horses began, an extraordinary genetic gain has been obtained. There has also been great progress in taming, training, and the general treatment of the horse. These are the results of the work of visionary breeders and equestrians; a great deal of research and accumulation of knowledge about the horse, and a world-class breeding system with which it has been surrounded. With this work, an achievement has been made in the active protection of the horse population, where an old land breed has been given a new role and, thus, its future development secured.

Multiple joy and softness in temper and gait are words that are interwoven with the Icelandic horse. The gentle friend and soulmate, the tough, durable, and efficient travel horse, the unique excellence in conformation, as well as the multiple and amazing aptitude in gait, along with the exceptional temperament, and the uncompromising but cooperative willingness. These are all examples of the many-sided and valuable aspects of the Icelandic horse that we want to protect and improve for the future. The multiplex roles of the horse have created popularity for it, both in Iceland and worldwide. Whether people wish to enjoy it on short treks; travel on it in open space on trackless terrain; or take part in competitions where meticulous preparations and equestrian arts create results, the Icelandic horse has all this to offer. It is indeed this diversity about it which is the intention to reinforce for the future, so that the Icelandic horse can be the lifetime companion horse of people, wherever their interest and ambition may lead them. We, Icelanders, certainly have a national horse that is worth our pride, support, and more powerful presentation that would make it popular in the hearts and minds of an increasingly larger number of people all over the world.

Sögusetur íslenska hestsins
RML Ráðgjafarmiðstöð landbúnaðarins
Fullveldi Íslands 1918 · 2018
Mennta- og menningarmálaráðuneytið
Skagafjörður
Sóknaráætlun Norðurlands vestra