



Úrvalshestar Icelandic Horses

Curriculum in Equine Studies

The Úrvalshestar Equine Studies program is designed for working students and includes a curriculum which is divided into levels. The teaching at each level consists of lectures, demonstrations and practical training, as well as number of other activities, including learning basic horse care and teaching lower level students. Learning outcomes are assessed with a test once the student is ready and are dependent on whether the skills and competencies (stated in the objectives for each level) have been achieved.

Students get 2 lectures, and 2 private lessons per week in addition to various practical projects that they work on individually or under supervision. Students are tested on their ability and competency levels as soon as they have mastered the objectives stated at each level.

Úrvalshestar currently offer the first three levels, and the preparation of the next 4 stages is in progress.

After completing the first three levels of the program, students should be competent in basic horse care, horse training and riding at the walk, trot, tölt and canter.

1. Level

Main objectives

The student is able:

- to train a young horse to be ridden at a walk in a confined area
- to ride the walk and trot on a schooled horse
- to correctly free lunge a horse
- to participate in tasks required for daily horse care

Description: The student learns to use a hindquarter rope (or “buttrop”) to establish leadership with a young, unschooled horse and learns to teach it to lead. He/she learns to teach a young horse to crossover with its front and hind legs, both from the ground and from the saddle. The student learns to teach a young horse to accept the saddle and he/she learns to mount. The student is taught how to teach a young horse the basic skills needed to be ridden in a



confined area. The student learns how to prepare a young horse for shoeing. The student learns to use the round pen to school the horse in walk and trot and to increase the horse's strength and stamina. The student learns to ride at the walk, post the trot and switch diagonals on a schooled horse. The student learns to evaluate the bodyweight and physical condition of a healthy horse. The student participates in daily horse care.

Practical skills

- Handle a young horses in a stall
- Halter a young horse
- Bridle a young horse
- Saddle a young horse
- Mount and dismount
- Use a "buttrope"
- Groundwork: using the "good place"
- Riding: using the "good place"
- Riding in the aisle
- Crossing over: front and hind
- Handling legs and hooves
- Using the round pen: walk, trot and controlling direction and speed
- Herding horses
- Ride walk on schooled horse: vertical, balanced seat and loose rein
- Ride trot on schooled horse: posting and loose rein
- Evaluate condition and weight
- Characteristics of a healthy horse
- Participate in feeding and daily horse care

Lecture content

- Map of the mind and 4 reasons for "refusal"
- Arousal theory and "emotional bank account"
- Sensory system
- Negative and positive reinforcement
- Counter conditioning, errorless learning and the four stages of skill acquisition
- "Free lunge" in round pen
- Herding and rounding up horses
- Evaluating weight and condition
- Feed management
- The healthy horse
- Working in hand



Use of aids, seat, walk and trot: "relaxed, free, forward movement" (3)
How are interpersonal skills relevant to horse training?

2. Level

Main objectives

The student:

- is able to ride a young horse at the trot and canter in a confined area
- is able to utilize the round pen to school the horse in different gaits and to establish leadership
- has extensive knowledge of horse care and daily maintenance

Description: The student learns to ride a circle at the canter. The student learns to ride a young horse at the trot and canter in a confined area. The student learns to use the round pen to school the young horse in basic gait work and to maintain leadership. The student learns the general physiology of the equine digestive system. The student learns about the most common equine diseases. He/she participates in daily horse care. The student learns to assess hoof condition and shoeing.

Practical skills

Young horse ridden at the walk, trot and canter in an arena
Riding canter and riding circles at the walk on a schooled horse
Round pen used to school the horse in different gaits and to establish leadership
Evaluating shoeing condition
Equine diseases and physiology of digestive system
Independence and initiative in daily horse care

Lecture content

Riding in arena: walk, trot and canter
Canter: seat and control
Gaits and variations
"Join up" and canter in a round pen
Common equine diseases



Physiology and digestion
Feed programs and management
Shoeing (hoof growth, correctness and placement of shoes)
Riding at the walk, fore- and hindquarter yielding

3. Level

Main objectives

The student:

- is able to ride a young horse in open spaces
- is able ride tölt and can execute basic dressage exercises on a schooled horse
- is able to lunge a horse using a single line and has practice in teaching shoulder-in from the ground
- can remove shoes and trim hooves
- is adept at herding horses while on horseback
- can calculate nutritional requirements and is able to develop a feeding plan depending on an individual horse's needs

Description: The student learns to ride a young horse in open spaces. He/she learns to ride tölt on a schooled horse and perform basic dressage exercises aimed towards increasing suppleness in the horse. The student learns to lunge a horse on a single line. The student learns to herd and round-up horses. The student learns to teach a horse shoulder-in from the ground. The student learns how to calculate the nutritional requirements for horse and how to develop a feeding plan based on those needs. The student learns how to remove shoes and trim hooves.

Practical skills

Single rein

Riding young horses in open spaces; walk, trot and canter

Riding tölt on schooled horses

Dressage exercise to increase suppleness on a schooled horse



Lunging on a single line
Herding horses while on horseback
Groundwork: shoulder-in
Calculating nutritional requirements and develop feeding plans
Pull shoes and trim hooves

Lecture content

Single rein
Riding in open spaces
Riding the tölt
Exercises geared towards increasing suppleness:
turn around the forehand and front leg button
Lunging on a single line: walk and trot
Ground work: shoulder in
Calculating feed requirements, types of feed
Teaching lower level students, basic principles of teaching