



## **Icelandic Horse Connection**

### **Lateral Movement of Foals**

**Foals can have very lateral movement for a while after their birth.**

**This type of lateral movement is not limited to gaited horses as non-gaited foals have been seen to exhibit this also.**

**Here are some of the reasons why foals go pacey, even those who have no easy gaits in their background:**

**[ ] Long legs, short body -- most creatures with this conformation do some variety of stepping pace because that is the only way they can keep from hitting themselves on a front leg with a hind (Camel, giraffe, some types of dogs, cats, etc.).**

**[ ] Long hind legs which put the hocks way behind the butt, preventing, obviously, much lowering of the hindquarters or rounding in the body.**

**[ ] Short upright neck, with no withers. Foals are always proportioned this way, and the lack of withers pretty much precludes stretching the cervical ligaments over them. These last two things mean that he is by nature stuck in a somewhat hollow frame for now and the foreseeable future. This is part of it, but since the foal will stay in this relative shape for a while, it is not all of it.**

**So, on to the "softer" systems that may be causing this:**

**[ ] Foals have relatively weak abdominals -- a little pot bellied.**

**[ ] A foal has an immature neurological system, that has yet to settle into specific pathways and so doesn't play as much as a role in what he does as the terrain he is negotiating.**

**[ ] And above all, he has the flexibility of extreme youth -- he can tie himself in knots, as can just about all babies .. so he has a lot of looseness in his back muscles that he won't have as he matures. This is the first "baby" thing that he will grow out of, even when his proportions stay what they are.**

**A Standardbred breeder of trotters adds that her foals do the same, and after about a month they go to trotting.**

**Lee Ziegler, noted gaited horse expert, clinician, judge, and author of Gaits Without Gimmicks, who wrote the above, also adds her feeling that since Standardbreds also come in "pacing" models, that some may feel the gene is hidden in these foals, but it is doubtful since the phenomenon also occurs in Thoroughbred, Warmblood, and other breed foals.**





**This is probably not quite as lateral.**



**And a little canter.**

