10th International Equitation Science Conference

Equine Stress, Learning and Training

ISES – Denmark 2014 August 7-9

http://www.equitationscience.com/press-releases

Is elastic fantastic? The impact of elastic inserts on rein tension

Elastic has been used over the years to achieve 'give' and flexibility in equestrian equipment such as girths and reins. The reins provide a physical means for the delivery of signals/aids from the human to the horse. Rein design with the inclusion of elastic inserts are designed to "diffuse tension, to avoid pressure on the horse's mouth and to avoid sustained tension on the reins". However researchers found that this design can have a substantial impact on the tensions applied particularly when making transitions during equitation.

The study ***"Is elastic fantastic? The impact of elastic inserts on rein tension"*** was conducted by Hayley Randle, PhD, Academic Lead: Quality and Research at Duchy College and Hon. President of the International Society for Equitation Science and Alison Abbey Equitation Science programme manager from Duchy College, UK. Randle and Abbey set out to determine the effect of elastic inserts in reins on first, the tension applied for normal riding and a walk to halt transition, and second, the ability to release the tension in the reins.

Thirty female riders rode horses with either standard rubber or rubber reins with elastic inserts. Rein tensions were measured using a Centaur Rein Tension Gauge™ for left and right hands, with both rein types when taking up a normal riding contact and executing a walk to halt transition.

The results of the study demonstrated significantly different tensions were applied by riders with the two types of rein. Lower tensions were exerted on reins with the elastic insert than with the rigid reins in the normal riding contact condition, whilst higher tensions were evident with elastic insert reins than with rigid reins in the walk to halt transition. The time taken for rein tension to return to zero following complete release by the rider was significantly greater, and less consistent, with the elastic insert reins than with the rigid reins.

Since sustainable and ethical equitation relies upon the effective delivery and receipt of clear signals and timely pressure-release; rein tension and pressure-release should be used carefully and consistently in training. This study suggests that although elastic inserts in reins may result in less tension in general riding, they may alter riders' behaviour in terms of the tension applied when executing a particular equitation task. Furthermore, elastic inserts in reins may have a deleterious effect on a rider's ability to apply negative reinforcement accurately and therefore clarity during training.

The impaired ability to simultaneously release pressure may have a negative impact on equine learning and training, and consequently equid stress and welfare. Further research is needed into the incorporation of materials such as elastics.

- END -

The International Society for Equitation Science conference offers an outstanding international platform for scientists and professional practitioners to present and discuss

research related to the field of equitation science. For more information about the conference, venue and programme: www.ISES2014.com

The International Society for Equitation Science (ISES) is a not-for-profit organisation that aims to facilitate research into the training of horses to enhance horse welfare and improve the horse-rider relationship.

For more information regarding the International Society for Equitation Science contact:

ISES President: presidents@equitationscience.com

ISES Media Officer: media@equitationscience.com

Website: http://www.equitationscience.com

Twitter: Equitation Science @equitationscien - https://twitter.com/equitationscien

Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/EquitationScience