



## **10<sup>th</sup> International Equitation Science Conference**

### **Equine Stress, Learning and Training**

### **ISES – Denmark 2014 August 7-9**

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

#### **Consensus on research in equitation science**

The primary purpose of research is to test theories through the discipline of sustained sound inquiry and build authoritative scientific knowledge. Consistent methodology and robust objective measures underpin sustained sound scientific evaluation.

The emerging discipline of Equitation Science incorporates multi-disciplinary methodologies, including approaches taken from anatomy and physiology, ethology, physics and psychology. The aim of Equitation Science is the scientific measurement, evaluation and interpretation of human-horse interactions that provide evidence that can improve the training, performance and welfare of the ridden horse. Inevitably, for a new discipline, various methodological issues have to be resolved. These include research design and methodology, reliable collection and standardised recording of behavioural and physiological data, and the use, limitations and requirements of technological equipment. The standardisation of scientific evaluation will enable research results to be pooled, allowing comparisons between studies. This, in turn, means that findings can be applied across horses in various contexts and increases the quality and the impact of research involving horses, riders and the horse-human interface.

To advance these aims, researchers Uta König von Borstel, Marc Pierard, Kathalijne Visser, Carol Hall, Lesley Hawson, Charlotte Nevison, Francis Burton, Andrew McLean, Alison Averis and Paul McGreevy have committed to developing robust objective measures and establishing standards for research techniques and evaluative inquiry that fulfil the criteria for sound scientific evaluation of equestrian activities.

Presenting at the ISES Denmark 2014 conference, Professor Paul McGreevy provided an overview of the process he has guided since the ISES held its inaugural Consensus Workshop in 2012. The project assembled a pool of research experts who have identified the key points that future researchers should consider and summarised the preferred techniques for a range of studies involving horses.

The collaborators, located worldwide and hailing from seven universities and two independent organisations, have compiled a report “*Protocols for research in equitation science*” that aims to provide an evaluation of current scientific research methodology; and to set out initial guidelines on features of experimental design, consistent methodology, and reporting of future research in Equitation Science. They believe that the report’s recommendations provide a fundamental step in establishing equitation science research and that the potential impact of future research will be enriched and refined.

Speaking on behalf of the team, McGreevy said “It is pleasing to see the report being so warmly embraced by the research community because this is precisely the sort of cooperative work that the ISES was established to foster. We are greatly encouraged by suggestions that this review be published as an open access article in a peer-reviewed journal; an option that will deliver this material to as wide an audience as possible.”

McGreevy noted that “this is a *living* document and it is anticipated that these guidelines will be updated regularly with the emergence of new technology and software, including equipment for individual riders and coaches”.

Proposing standards in experimental design and research methodologies for studies involving horses and riders permits an enduring approach that will inform, facilitate and enhance future research in equitation science.

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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](http://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.

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