



12th International Equitation Science Conference 2016

Understanding horses to improve training, performance and welfare

Most people agree that improving training methods will help to advance horse performance and welfare. With this in mind, the [2016 International Society for Equitation Science](#) conference hosted at the prestigious Cadre Noire in Saumur, France, did not disappoint. The results of many studies of horses being used in an increasing range of disciplines all over the world were presented to an eager audience. Throughout the three days, participants were keen to learn and discuss how to put the latest knowledge into practice.

In order to maintain and improve the welfare of horses and ponies we must first understand their actual needs. Although the importance of the horse's ethology (natural behaviour) and cognition (ability to think and acquire knowledge) has been acknowledged by some, these critical factors have now been emphasised in the recent review and expansion of the ISES First Principles of Horse Training. Studies have found that people working with horses possess varying degrees of understanding of how horses learn and why horses behave the way they do under different circumstances. Fear, for example, has been demonstrated to modify learning in a wide range of species

and, in particular, in horses. As in previous ISES conferences, the relationship between fear-related behaviour exhibited by the horse, and health and safety was emphasized by a number of presenters. Once again, the use of inconsistent training practices and 'preventative' equipment (such as nosebands) were highlighted as possible causes of fear and, consequently, training difficulties and impaired welfare of horses.

In daily life, the term 'stressed' is often used to describe a state of being. Within the horse world, like many others, 'stress' has become a liberally applied label used to describe horse behaviour in terms of what is seen by the human and how the horse (may) feel. At the ISES 2016 conference a number of measures to reduce the occurrence of 'stress' in horses were proposed, relating to the management of the horse's social and physical environment (including opportunity for contact), the use or mis-use of equipment and the impact of unrealistic human expectations.

The best research findings in the world are of limited use if they are not understood, adopted and used widely across the industry. Much of today's equestrian practice stems from strong military and service-based traditional roots much of which has only recently been testable using the kinds of measuring equipment that are readily available today. One message that was abundantly clear throughout the ISES 2016 conference was the need for a concerted effort by practitioners and academics alike to work together more effectively to improve the welfare of the horse.

The [ISES 2017 Down Under conference](#) theme **Equitation Science in Practice: Collaboration, Communication & Change** will focus on the need for human behaviour change around horse behaviour and welfare. The 13th Annual ISES conference will take

place at Charles Sturt University in Wagga Wagga, Australia on 22nd to 25th November 2017.

The International Society for Equitation Science conferences offer 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 ISES 2017 conference: <https://isesequitationconferences.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 information regarding this media release, images and author/s of this presentation contact: ISES Media Officer, Alexandria Bailey: media@equitationscience.com

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

International Society for Equitation Science

Email: media@equitationscience.com

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

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

Website: <http://www.equitationscience.com>

Subscribe: To receive ISES media updates: <http://www.equitationscience.com/media>



**International Society
for Equitation Science**

