



Equitation Science: ‘The Road Ahead’

New study sheds light on the differences in rider position of experienced and novice riders

Research presented at the recent International Society for Equitation Science found that novice riders are more likely to maintain a rigid body position than experienced riders. Researchers from UWE Hartpury, UK measured the shoulder, arm and rein angles of 10 novice and 10 experienced riders mounted on a horse simulator. The riders were instructed to maintain their usual position and rein contact while they “rode” through a series of gaits and gait transitions including walk, trot and canter. Anatomical markers were placed on the shoulder, elbow and knuckles of the riders and on the centre of the rein and the bit of the horse simulator. Video footage was then analysed to determine the rein contact and shoulder angles of the riders.

Once the gaits were established, novice and experienced riders maintained their position, however during and after gait transitions major differences between novice and experienced riders became apparent.

“We found that novice riders maintained their positions during all gaits and transitions except for trot to canter, where they made substantial adjustments to their arm and shoulder angles during and immediately after the transition” said Ms Emma Scott, BSc (Hons) in Equine Management from UWE Hartpury. “In contrast, the more experienced riders adjusted their arm or shoulder angles during canter and gait transitions such as walk to trot”.

It appears that the more experienced riders adapt their position to the movement of the horse, whereas the less experienced riders maintain a more rigid position.

“The rigid position adopted by novice riders is likely to increase the amount of pressure horses may experience on their mouths, especially if novice riders use the reins for balance during gait changes” said Ms Scott.

Rider position is critical for maintaining balance and delivering cues effectively.

“The experienced riders were able to adapt to the changes in the horse, which is likely to assist them to ride a variety of horses or deal with sudden events when mounted”, noted Ms Scott.

“More research is needed” concluded Ms Scott. “We need to determine if the rigid position the novice riders adopted on the simulator translates to riding a live horse; and what the effects this rigidity might have on the rider’s ability to balance or control their horse”.

- ENDS -

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. www.equitationsscience.com

For more information contact:

ISES President

Dr Andrew McLean

presidents@equitationsscience.com