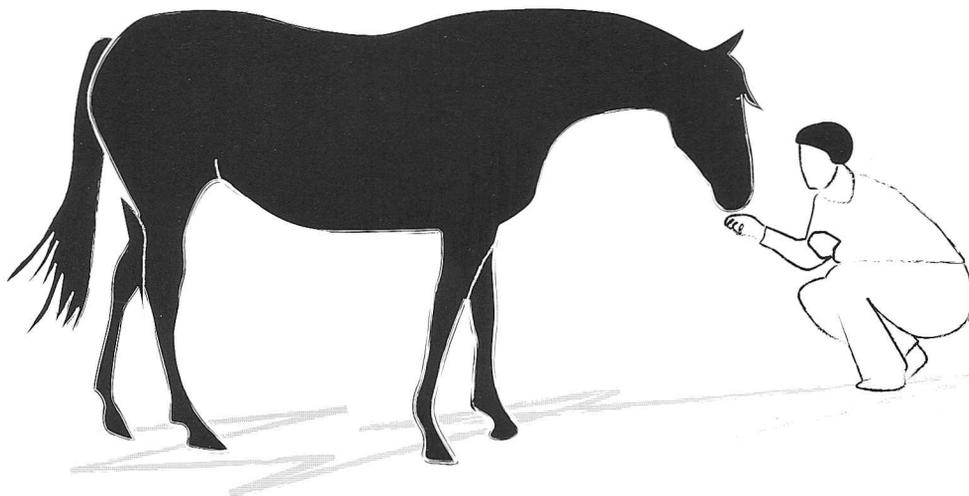**ARTICLE ONE**

EVALUATION OF NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION PATTERNS BETWEEN HORSES AND HUMANS BY VIDEO ANALYSIS

IN COOPERATION WITH THE UNIVERSITY OF VIENNA UNIV. DOZ. DR. THOMAS STEPHENSON;
E.MOTION — CENTER FOR EQUOTHERAPY MAG.ᴬ ROSWITHA ZINK

EVALUATION OF NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION PATTERNS BETWEEN HORSES AND HUMANS BY VIDEO ANALYSIS

SUMMARY

Equotherapy is a therapeutic method using specially trained horses. It is based on the skill of the horses to read body language and expression of clients and show it to a therapist similar to biofeedback. One of the principle foundations is rooted in new knowledge gained from neuromedicine[1] and deep psychology, which can be applied to a non-verbal dialog between horses and clients. Equotherapy is used to help people cope with psychological and emotional problems, which could be caused by illness, disabilities or traumatic experiences. E.motion, the Center of Equotherapie, works in close cooperation with the Social Medical Center Otto Wagner Hospital Vienna and with Paediatric Units of other Viennese Hospitals.

The goal of this study-group is to contribute to the scientific research and establish and professionalize the use of horses within therapeutic methods. This is with the cooperation of the University of Vienna, the Veterinary University and e.motion.

With the study "Nonverbale Kommunikation – ist ein interspezifischer Dialog zwischen Mensch und Pferd quantifizierbar?"[2] Kate Shein already made a first step to investigate nonverbal communication between human and horse. It was possible to improve her methods and so the investigation of this new field could be continued.

The Equotherapy study-group will do a random survey with children and teenagers who receive Equotherapy treatment. The group will analyze video and find non-verbal communication patterns. Within the disciplinary overlaps of medicine, psychology and pedagogy, a quantitative analysis will be completed by qualitative observational aspects.

The study-group will start with the following main themes:

- Diagnosis with horses: use open interaction with a horse to diagnostically and therapeutically assess the emotional and psychological structures of a client.

- Analogy of non-verbal interactive processes: mother-infant interaction and horse-client interaction in Equotheraphy in special consideration of affectivity.

- Open interaction with a horse as a "scene": how does open body language interaction with the horse display itself? Video study from praxis as if it were "scenes".

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[1] Especially the research about "Spiegelneuronen" (Bauer 2006) and the overlap between neuro biology and psychoanalysis (Leuzinger Bohleber 2003) and the "Erfahrungslernen über das Gedächtnis der Zelle" (Hüther 2006).

[2] OENB-supported study 48/2004/1018

[3] This happens in different steps. After birth horses learn to live in a complex social system. Non-verbal communication between horses draws a lot of attention to fine signals of tension and relaxation. During the special training to become a therapy horse, the horse has to learn to distinguish between the non-verbal communication of a horse and the analogies connected to human communication.