HETI Live

Quick recap

The meeting began as an informal discussion about schedules and promotions before transitioning into a live webinar focused on human-horse interactions, featuring participants from various backgrounds in equine-assisted therapies. The main presentation explored the nature of human-horse relationships, attachment theory, and the potential for horses to recognize and respond to human emotions. The group discussed research findings, shared personal experiences, and planned future events, emphasizing the complex dynamics of horse-human bonds and the need for further scientific investigation in this field.

Summary

**Equine-Assisted Therapy Collaboration Webinar**

The meeting was a live webinar focused on human-horse interactions, hosted by Inês, who introduced herself as a Portuguese neuroscientist researching human-horse interactions. Participants from various backgrounds, including physiotherapists, occupational therapists, and equine-assisted coaches, shared their experiences and interests in therapeutic riding and equine-assisted therapies. Vera, the president of HETI, and Elizabeth, a physiotherapist and instructor, discussed their work in hippotherapy and para dressage. The group explored the bond between horses and humans, with several participants, including Rita, a PhD student, and Selcuk, a sports scientist, contributing insights from their research and practice. The webinar aimed to foster collaboration and learning in the field of equine-assisted services.

**Human-Horse Bonding and Attachments**

Inês presented on the topic of human-horse relationships, discussing the importance of positive interactions and the development of bonds between humans and horses. She explained the concepts of interaction, relationship, and bond, emphasizing that a bond involves complex social engagement and emotional empathy. Inês also explored the application of attachment theory to human-horse relationships, referencing studies by psychologist Harry Harlow on the importance of comfort and contact in forming attachments.

**Horse-Human Attachment Research Discussion**

Inês presented research on the attachment between humans and horses, discussing how horses exhibit proximity-seeking behavior and can synchronize their heartbeats with humans. She questioned whether horses can recognize and respond to human emotions, leading to a discussion about the nature of horse-human bonds. Rita emphasized that the bond depends on factors like management and past experiences, while Zoom-Benutzer highlighted the importance of mutual understanding and communication. Vera shared her personal experience, confirming that bonding with a horse takes time and is a two-way relationship.

**Understanding Horse- Human Attachment**

The group discussed the concept of attachment and trust between humans and horses, with Vera sharing her experience of bonding with a rescue horse that took two years to trust her. Xenia agreed that attachment can be observed in practice but noted the lack of scientific understanding of how horses perceive emotions and motivations. Carlos emphasized the need to better understand horses' perspectives as prey animals, while Inês mentioned plans for future research on neurobiology in this area.

**Horse-Human Attachment Behavior**

The group discussed the nature of attachment between humans and horses, with Inês and Rita agreeing that while horses form bonds with people, the concept of attachment might be oversimplified. They noted that horses respond to human presence similarly in stressful situations regardless of who the person is, and Inês mentioned plans for a biomarker study to further investigate this area. A participant shared an anecdote about a horse reversing roles with a disabled patient during hippotherapy, demonstrating the animal's ability to recognize and respond to changes in human behavior and authority.

**Horse-Human Emotional Connection Dynamics**

The group discussed the complex relationship between humans and horses, emphasizing the importance of understanding horse behavior and social dynamics. Inês and Carlos highlighted that horses can sense human emotions but do not necessarily experience them in the same way humans do, cautioning against anthropomorphism. Rita shared insights from her research, noting that the horse-human bond often leads to human wellbeing through connections formed during interactions with horses. The discussion also touched on the unique experiences of individuals in connecting with horses, with Inês sharing her personal experiences of connecting with horses without forming deep bonds due to her transient lifestyle.

**Event Planning and Webinar Updates**

The meeting focused on planning upcoming events, including a Heti Live webinar in September and a webinar featuring Christina Wilkinson next week. Vera mentioned that July and August would be dedicated to vacation, and the group discussed the topic for the upcoming Heti Life event, which is still to be determined. The participants expressed gratitude for the opportunity to connect and agreed to continue the conversation in future meetings.

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