

May 2025

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**Connect
Communicate
Collaborate**

JOIN US WITH YOUR QUESTIONS, COMMENTS, AND IDEAS

HETI LIVE MONTHLY MEETING

MONTHLY ONLINE MEETINGS OPEN TO ALL MEMBERS

[HTTPS://HETIFEDERATION.ORG/HETI-ONLINE/](https://hetifederation.org/heti-online/)



TIME 

VARIABLE
ACCOMODATING
TO ALL TIME ZONES

DATE 

2ND WEEK OF
A MONTH





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HUMANS AND HORSES RELATIONSHIPS. IS THERE A BOND?

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Should we Apply:

A **Attachment Theory** (Bachi. 2013; McLean, 2021;
Törmälehto and Korkiamäki, 2020)

B **Emotional Transfer Hypothesis** (Merkies
and Franzin, 2021)



The way we relate to our horses is a new ground on studies and practice

As Concerns are shifting from simply

removing neg interactions

To

promote pos interactions.

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Enhanced understanding of **human–horse interactions** optimize both species welfare.

5 Domains Model of Animal's welfare

4th Behavioral interactions (Mellor et al., 2020).

Defines THE IMPORTANCE OF A **HEALTHY INTERACTION** BETWEEN THE HORSE, ITS ENVIRONMENT AND THE BEINGS SURROUND THEM.

The Concepts

1 INTERACTION

individuals show **reciprocal behaviors** to each other
(both positive or negative)

2 RELATIONSHIP

the manifestation of a series of interactions over
time

3 BOND

reciprocity and persistence



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3 Do horses establish a bond with humans?



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A

Attachment Theory

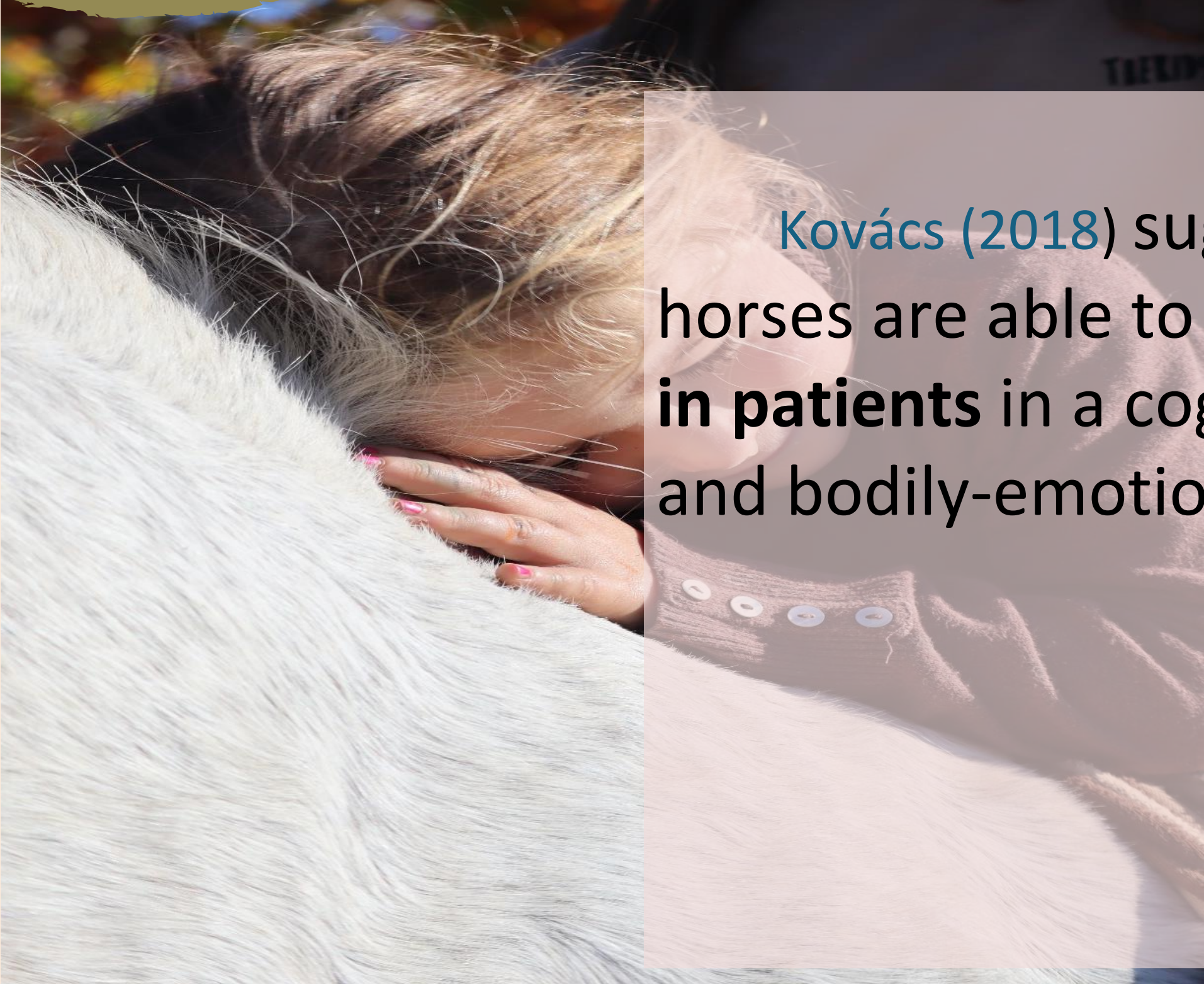
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**Applies to human- horse
Bonds?**

Humans Side

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A photograph of a young girl with blonde hair, wearing a brown sweater, resting her head against the white, shaggy neck of a horse. Her eyes are closed, and she has a peaceful expression. The background is slightly blurred, showing some autumn foliage.

Kovács (2018) suggests that horses are able to elicit attachment **in patients** in a cognitive-emotional and bodily-emotional level.



What about the Horses?

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Horses Side.

Proximity seeking
Horses are social animals.

Merkies et al., 2024 survey
Horse owners responded that
“Horses protect their person from physical harm”
“They miss their person”
And *“remember them after a long time apart”*.

Anthropomorphism was evidente

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Evolved over millions of years as **prey** animals

Very attuned about their surrounding world

Highly sensitive to others presence





Empathetic, some suggest that like a "mirror"

(Törmälehto and Korkiamäki, 2020).



B

Emotional Transfer Hypothesis

Are Horses mirrors?

What Research has shown is:

Horses can hear humans' heartbeat
and synchronize their heartbeats
(Wienhold et al. 2024)

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B

Emotional Transfer Hypothesis

Horses recognize

Changes in **facial** expressions (Wathan, 2015),

Changes in **olfactory** smells (Lanata et al., 2018).

Changes in attitudes, **body language**, etc (Pereira-Figueiredo et al., 2024)

Do horses recognize and
empathize anger, fear, or
happiness in humans??

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What do you Think??