

## **HETI Live Meeting Format Discussion**

The meeting began discussing the format and purpose of HETI live meetings, emphasizing the importance of creating a safe space for open discussion by not recording sessions. The group reflected on the success of previous meetings and the positive feedback received. Rita invited participants to introduce themselves.

## **Equine Welfare in Therapeutic Services**

The meeting introduced participants from various backgrounds involved in equine-assisted services, including therapists, researchers, and welfare advocates from 8 different countries. The discussion highlighted the importance of equine welfare within these services, with a focus on the Five Domains model, particularly the 4C domain addressing human-horse interactions. The meeting also touched on historical perspectives of animal welfare, emphasizing the long-standing respect for animals across cultures and time periods.

## **Evolution of Animal Welfare Models**

Rita discussed the historical evolution of animal welfare, from the Age of Enlightenment to modern times, highlighting key milestones such as the establishment of the RSPCA and the recognition of animal sentience. She explained the shift from the five freedoms to the five domains model of animal welfare, which considers nutrition, environment, health, behavior, and mental well-being. The discussion concluded with an emphasis on Domain 4C interactions with humans, focusing on principles of equine welfare, handler competency, and the importance of creating positive equine experiences.

## **Equine Welfare Education Initiatives**

The meeting focused on equine welfare and education initiatives. Vera shared reflections from Executive Committee discussions about implementing video recording for therapy sessions and developing self-reflection questions for practitioners. Pebbles presented educational resources including a Horse Welfare Magazine created by University of Guelph students and discussed a collaborative project with World Horse Welfare developing a checklist for implementing the five domains of equine welfare.

<https://www.horsesandhumans.org/equine-well-being>

<https://www.horsesandhumans.org/education-1>

The group discussed challenges around cultural differences in horse care practices and the importance of messaging that respects different perspectives while promoting equine welfare awareness.

## **Equine Welfare and Client Trust**

The group discussed equine welfare and client interactions in equine-assisted services. Debbie shared Horses Helping People's induction session "Making Friends and Staying Safe," which teaches clients about horses' perspectives and boundaries. The discussion highlighted the importance of respectful language towards horses and how practitioners' attitudes and interactions with horses can influence clients' trust and safety. Participants agreed that

promoting empathy and mutual regard between humans and horses is crucial for both animal welfare and client therapy outcomes.

### **Equine Therapy Participation Challenges**

The group discussed practical challenges of conducting equine-assisted sessions when horses are unwilling to participate. Anita shared her approach of involving clients in calming the horse and explained how horses respond to human energy states. The discussion highlighted the importance of maintaining good horse welfare overall, with Rita emphasizing that horses should be in positive states before sessions. Julia noted safety considerations, while Nona expressed concerns about balancing client expectations with horse well-being in a riding school setting. The conversation concluded with a discussion about potential weight and balance restrictions for riders to reduce stress on horses.

### **Equestrian Training and Animal Welfare**

The group discussed the importance of considering a horse's weight, rider balance, and suitable tack in equestrian activities. They explored the challenges of building connections between horses and riders in riding schools, particularly when horses interact with multiple people daily. The conversation also touched on the use of language when describing interactions with horses, with suggestions to use terms like "include" or "incorporate" instead of "use" to avoid objectifying animals. Maria shared her experience running a non-profit therapeutic riding center in Greece, highlighting the success of combining therapeutic and normal riding lessons. The discussion concluded with Erika emphasizing the need for different expectations and rules for horses in various programs, such as equine-assisted learning sessions, while acknowledging the financial challenges of caring for horses.

### **Horse Sports and Ownership Updates**

The group discussed the relationship between humans and horses, with Pebbles sharing her perspective on how horse ownership is often misunderstood and Maria reflecting on a meaningful experience caring for a horse. Vera Lantelme-Faisan announced new rules for para-vaulting, limiting riders to 15% of the horse's weight and 90 kilos maximum, which will affect programs that previously allowed two riders. The conversation ended with Rita and HETI announcing upcoming events, including a discussion on sports within EAS and a webinar, with the next HETI Live meeting focusing on sports in March featuring Pebbles and Vera discussing the Prague conference.