Methods:

Site Map: (outdated) Elsa Gunnison Appleton Riding Hall

A picture containing text, old

Description automatically generated

Roundpens

Girls

Front right

Boys 2

Boys 3

Hunt field

White rings

Medicals

Back left

Back right

Middle

Front left

Horses were observed for 30-minute intervals in their natural turnout environments and groups. The intervals in which they were observed were randomized as much as possible, as well as the locations they were in. My personal class schedule and the weather dictated which days and times worked to observe in, and I attempted to rotate through the fields the same way the entire time I took observations. I started in the white rings and moved in a clockwise direction around the fields (white rings, round-pens, medicals, hunt field, boys 3, boys 2,etc). The horses take turns going out, at the discretion of the barn manager, and that is not a set schedule so the ones being observed changed each week. It is important to note that the turnout location of a medical has no grass for them to graze on, only hay put there by humans, so those observations are outliers in that regard. During observation time it was noted how many minutes were spent both grazing (a positive behavior) and pacing (a negative behavior), while acknowledging that they could be doing neither of those things. In addition to that, the number of times they whinnied, dilated their nostrils, or had a rigid body posture were noted as negative signs in turnout. For horses both alone and with friends in turnout it was noted how many positive or negative social interactions they had with each other. Positive interactions were things like nuzzling or grooming and negative were running, chasing, or causing one another distress. Horses in solitary turnout could still be bothered or settled down by neighboring horses so they could have positive or negative interactions, as well. Finally, it was noted how often the horses were swishing their tails with the following scale:

Frequent – almost constant – score 4 negative

Often – regularly – score 2 negative

Infrequent – some but not overly obvious – score 2 positive

Rare – hardly ever – score 4 positive

Note: The scale used for finding these numbers was arbitrary, and chosen for the fact that it made sense given the importance of tail swishing compared to the overall turnout scores for each horse. The total number of tail swishes per horse, per observation session, were not possible to be observed so this scale was chosen instead.

Upon the completion of data collection overall turnout scores were calculated. This was done by adding; the minutes grazing, tail swishing score (if positive) , positive friend interactions, and minutes laying down together to be a positive score. Negative scores were; the sum of minutes pacing, tail swishing score (if negative), occurrences of body tension, whinnying, nostril dilation, and negative friend interactions (Foster). Choosing to add these numbers together was a subjective decision because every observation was 30 minutes long and all of the things that indicated a pleasant time for the horse were considered positive, all of the unpleasant things were considered negative (Paddock Anxiety). The positive and negative scores were then added together to give an overall turnout score.

For any horses that appeared 3 or more times in the data set, their observations were kept and are included in the final data set. Those horses were each then observed for approximately 10 minutes in the barn to quickly assess their personality types. In those 10 minutes they were exposed to new stimuli in the form of a human, another horse, and a foreign object to see how they reacted. Based on those reactions they were classified as either social, aloof, challenging, or fearful. For each type there was both a passive or aggressive form, depending on how fast or intense the reactions to the stimuli were (Barteau).

Sources:

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Foster, R. (2019, October 1). *Recognizing pain in stoic horses*. The Horse. Retrieved December 9, 2021, from <https://thehorse.com/113343/recognizing-pain-in-stoic-horses/>.

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