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International survey of equine water treadmills - why, when and how?

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- 1 International survey of equine water treadmills why, when and how?
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9 Conflict of interest

10 None to declare.

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12 Abstract

13 Water treadmills (WT) are becoming increasingly popular as rehabilitation and training tools. 14 Concerns have been raised amongst equine professionals about injury development/exacerbation 15 following WT use, and little knowledge of optimal WT use is available. The aim of this study was to 16 determine how WTs are being used, using an international survey based approach, with a view to 17 informing future research. Venues were identified through internet searches and WT manufacturers. A 18 questionnaire inquired about venue set-up, caseload overview and protocol overview. A case-specific 19 questionnaire generated information about individual sessions. One hundred and twenty venue 20 questionnaires were distributed and 41 responses (34%) were obtained; nine of these venues 21 contributed 608 case-specific questionnaires. WT's were found mostly at educational and 22 rehabilitation centres, with four on private yards. Horse fitness, previous experience, age, weight and 23 veterinary condition influenced individual protocols. All centres habituated their cases for 2-3 24 sessions, for an average of 16min in hock or fetlock depth water. Significant differences between 25 training and rehabilitation sessions were identified (deeper water, slower walk speed and longer 26 duration for training compared to rehabilitation; P≤0.023 for all three variables). WT's were most

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