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ACCEPTED MANUSCRIPT

Review

Electromyography in the horse: a useful technology?

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Keywords: electromyography; equine; indwelling EMG; surface EMG; equine muscle

Summary:

Equine performance research to date has focussed on cardiorespiratory and biomechanical

assessment of the horse neglecting the role of muscles. This review considers

electromyography (EMG) in the horse, with a specific focus on the role of surface

electromyography (sEMG) as a tool to analyse muscle activity in the sports-horse. Three

themes have been evaluated in the horse using EMG: muscle recruitment, muscle activity

during exercise, and fatigue. Results support kinematic research and add to the knowledge

base on how the horse moves. . sEMG is a relatively non-invasive technology requiring

clipping which can be used effectively in the ridden horse. Understanding equine locomotion

and how muscles responds during different exercises could inform and evaluate training

practices used in the sports horse. However, issues exist for example individual variation,

accuracy of sensor placement and preventing noise within the EMG signal. Therefore key

concepts in research design, data acquisition and processing are explored to inform future

studies and to enable reasoned judgements on the validity and reliability of sEMG as a tool

to investigate muscle recruitment and activity, and subsequently assess performance in the

horse. The high level of inter-subject variance observed in between subjects' designs

combined with differences seen between individuals may preclude reliable comparison of

muscle performance between groups of horses. Therefore within subject designs are

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