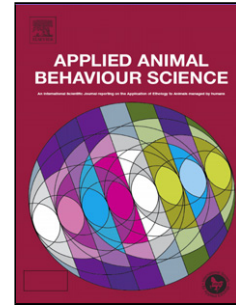


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Consistency of emotional reactivity assessment results obtained in different behavioural tests

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Highlights

- Emotional reactivity is not a single indicator of the horse's temperament but rather a trait consisting of many variables.
- Reactivity is modified by animal's motivation, fearfulness, or curiosity.
- When the emotional reactivity is used as a component of temperament, it is necessary to specify precisely which trait is assessed, e.g. horses' reactivity during handling, reactivity during human-horse interactions, reactivity to an auditory stimulus, reactivity to a visual stimulus, or reactivity at strong motivation or its absence
- It is a mistake to classify an animal unambiguously as an individual with low or high emotional reactivity, since this trait depends on the test employed.

Abstract

Emotional reactivity may be a very broad concept comprising many components of temperament traits. The aim of the study was to verify the consistency of assessment of the horse's reactivity level evaluated with different behavioural tests and to answer the question whether emotional reactivity is indeed such a broad concept that assessment thereof with only one specific test is not possible. The research material included 31 different-aged małopolski horses (3-17 years) from equestrian recreational centres. All horses were subjected to a series of behavioural tests divided into 3 groups: group I - handling tests, group II - human-horse interaction tests, and group III - novelty tests. The analysis of the horses' behaviour was based on assessment of the emotional arousal degree reflected by changes in the heart rate HR, scores (1-5), and measured time (s). Additionally, rank correlations between the tests were estimated. The research results suggest that emotional reactivity is a trait consisting of many variables rather than a single indicator of the horse's temperament. Reactivity should therefore be analysed at various levels, which classify the animal in different ways, as shown

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