

# Scientists try to interpret horse speak

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U.S. researchers are listening to horse vocalizations in an attempt to interpret how stress is communicated when the animals whinny.

The researchers theorize if the celebrated racehorse Barbaro could talk, doctors would be better able to understand the stress he is undergoing and relieve his pain.

That's the idea behind the Equine Vocalization Project, an acoustical analysis of horse vocalizations by two former Navy acousticians.

"This is a modest introductory research effort to determine if there are any specific vocal expressions connected to stress," explained David Browning, an adjunct University of Rhode Island professor and co-author of the study. "It's an area of acoustics that has been neglected by the scientific community until now.

"The quest now is to determine if horses can utilize this varying frequency to produce specific vocal expressions," Browning said. "If so, you might be able to get a sense of their physical condition by their vocalizations."

The results of the first two years of scientific analysis by Browning and Peter Scheifele, a research associate at the University of Connecticut, were to be reported this week during a meeting of the Acoustical Society of America in Providence.

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