

Researchers develop early horse osteoarthritis detection tool

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Researchers introduced a straightforward questionnaire to help horse owners identify and monitor signs of osteoarthritis pain in their equine companions. This initiative aims to facilitate earlier and more effective treatment, ultimately enhancing the quality of life for horses.

Created by Dr. Janny de Grauw, Senior Lecturer at The Royal Veterinary College in the United Kingdom, Bryony Lancaster, Program Director, MSc Equine Science of the University of Edinburgh, and Dr. Diane Howard, the questionnaire is modeled after the Brief Pain Inventory used to evaluate pain severity and its impact on functioning.

"Horses are another long-lived athletic species, and there is some thought that arthritis studies in horses may also apply to people, so having a similar instrument could help with that research," Howard said. "The questionnaire can also serve as an objective tool for veterinarians to assess and monitor the adequacy of [treatment](#) plans and so determine if changes in a protocol need to be made."

A preliminary trial of the questionnaire, which involved 25 owners/caretakers of [horses](#) diagnosed with arthritis, revealed that 88% of participants found the questionnaire beneficial, while 84% appreciated its simplicity and ease of use.

One significant insight from the study highlighted by Howard is that many horse owners blame themselves for their horse's arthritis or believe it to be a natural occurrence beyond treatment.

"In general, it's not the owner or trainer's fault, and once they realize that, they could be more willing to think, 'Maybe my horse is hurting a bit, and maybe it's [arthritis](#),'" Howard said. "There are currently no ways of curing it, but there are certainly ways of controlling the [pain](#) and slowing the progress of the disease."

The research is [published](#) in the journal *Animals*.

More information: Diane L. Howard et al, Development and Preliminary Validation of an Equine Brief Pain Inventory for Owner Assessment of Chronic Pain Due to Osteoarthritis in Horses, *Animals* (2024). [DOI: 10.3390/ani14020181](https://doi.org/10.3390/ani14020181)

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