Companion Animals NZ Conference 2024
A Changing World for Companion Animals

Abstract submission format and guidance

Submission to: conference@companionanimals.nz

Due no later than: **12:00am NSZT 30th November 2023**

FORMAT SPECIFICATION

Language	English
Title	Bold, capitals, centered
List of authors	Initials followed by surname
Affiliations	Affiliations and addresses for all authors, match superscripts after names to affiliations
Abstract body	No sub-headings. Written in continuous prose. 400 words maximum. Should be written in lay-persons language and link to the abstract title and the conference theme
Statistics (if used)	Should be presented fully (i.e. test statistic, d.f. and P values; e.g. $P < 0.05$). Please note that in order to be considered significant P must be < 0.05.
References	NO references to be used
Font	Please use Calibri 11 point.

Example of an Abstract layout with a word count of 400 words

ACCURACY OF HORSE WORKLOAD PERCEPTION BY OWNERS WHEN COMPARED TO PUBLISHED WORKLOAD PARAMETERS

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Obesity is becoming increasingly problematic in the modern equid. As with humans over-consumption of a highly calorific diet and an increasingly sedentary lifestyle is reflected in increasing numbers of over-weight animals. Horses rely on their owners for provision of the food and often, the exercise they receive. In order to accurately provide a suitable ration, the weight of the horse, plus the workload they are in must be considered to ensure suitability of the diet and therefore minimise the occurrence of obesity. The majority of research into equid obesity has focused on diet alone, with few studies looking at both owner-perceived and actual levels of workload. The aim of this study, therefore, was to compare the level of work a horse was in, as stated by NRC (2007), with the perceived level of work that the owner attributed to the animal. A face-to-face survey was carried out with owners of 1207 horses over the period of 2 years. Owners were asked to state the level of workload their horse was in, the levels being thus: maintenance, light, medium, hard and very hard work. Each owner was then asked how many times per week they rode/worked their horse; the length of time each bout of work lasted, and the type of exercise the work formed. Using this information, the researchers then assigned each horse to one of the previously mentioned five workload categories, based on the description of each category stated in NRC (2007). The owner-perceived score was significantly higher than the actual score data (Mann-Whitney $U=446317.5$, $d.f.=1206$, $P<0.001$). A small number of owners had stated that their horses were in very hard work, the type of work used to describe a TB in full race training, when in fact they were deemed to be in light work. Nearly three quarters of horses were categorized by their owners as being in either medium (n=407) or hard (n=314) work, whereas the largest percentage of these animals were placed into the light work category (n=535) by the authors. Given the importance of accurate workload perception for suitable dietary maintenance, it is little wonder that obesity in on the rise if these results are indicative of the wider population. Horse owners in the UK significantly over-estimate the amount of work that horses are in, which likely leads to over-feeding and an increase in obesity in the domestic horse population.

Lay person message: Accurate workload estimation is essential for the correct calculation of dietary needs. If workload is over-estimated, then too many calories may be provided which could lead to obesity. Owners of 1207 horses were asked to rate their horses workload and were measured against published guidelines. It was found that owners significantly over-estimated workload which it was concluded could lead to welfare-limiting health complications.

Keywords: nutrition; workload; diet; owner perceptions; obesity; welfare

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