

## Play Behavior in Equines

### Abstract

Behavior is the response of an animal to a stimulus (Tuncer et al., 2016) that may be external or internal. The study of behavior encompasses all the movements and sensations by which animals mediate their relationship with their external environments. The behavior associated with a certain specific function is termed as behavior pattern. Ethology is defined as the systematic and scientific study of the behavior of animal under natural condition (Jenson, 2002), while veterinary ethology is concerned with good health of domestic animals in their usual environment which helps in diagnosis, prevention of disease and treatment of behavioral problems (Odendaal, 1994). Horses have consequently acquired an acute sense of their surroundings and a flight response to impending danger. They are extremely gregarious creatures and usually dwell in herds with clear hierarchies. Horses may express themselves verbally, physically, and even through scent marking. They have been beneficial in a number of activities throughout history, from transportation and agriculture to sport and recreation, due to their intelligence and trainability. The use of horses in therapy has gained popularity recently, especially with those who have cognitive, emotional, or physical problems. It has been demonstrated that equine-assisted therapy helps people feel less stressed and anxious while also increasing balance, coordination, and physical power. Horses are often employed in animal-assisted therapy to give people in hospitals, nursing homes, and other contexts consolation and support. Horses have, and continue to, play a vital role in the history of humanity in a variety of contexts. They are excellent companions and partners for people due to their distinct behavioural traits, intellect, and trainability. Different behavioural patterns are dependent on the species and breed. Numerous classifications have been offered thus far by various scientists. (McGreevy, 2012) and (Jenson, 2002) categorise equestrian behaviours as follows:

Primary, Eliminative, Investigative, Social Facilitation (Allelo-mimetic), Primary, Ingestive (eating), and Vigilant

Providing care (Epimeletic) and seeking care (Et-Epimeletic)

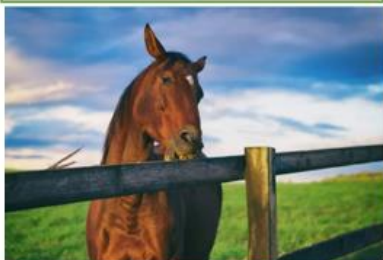
- Contractual
- Sexual
- Agonistic (Aggressive)

Young horses' play behaviour is crucial to their development because it enables them to practise the social and physical abilities necessary for their survival and success. There are many different kinds of play behaviour, including locomotor play, social play, object play, and self-play. While social play comprises fun interactions between horses, such as nipping and chasing, locomotor play involves movements like galloping, bucking, and spinning. Self-play comprises rhythmic and repetitive movements like pawing or biting at one's own limbs, while object play involves using environmental objects for play.

For the purpose of comprehending the needs and preferences of the horse and maintaining their welfare, behavioural observations are essential. Horses are flexible creatures who exhibit a variety of behavioural patterns based on their surroundings and social interactions. Horses housed in stables or separated from other horses, for instance, might not have as many opportunities to play.

As they get older, male horses have been seen to play more than female horses, and horses that have access to bigger social groups and locations also tend to play more. Young horses' play behaviour is crucial for their growth but it can also be a sign of their general pleasure and wellbeing.

### NIBBLE



With jaws closed the upper lip is moved upward and downward against an object.

### SNIFF/LICK



The tongue is extended through the teeth and border of the mouth, making contact with an object.

### SWING HEAD



Following pick up, the object may be moved in a side-to-side, up-and-down.

### CARRY OR DRAG



Following pick up, the object is carried or drag as the animal moves.

### PAW



one foreleg is lifted off the ground slightly, extended quickly in a forward direction followed by a backward.

### CIRCLE



The animal moves in a circle, around an object. This behavior can be performed at any gait and may be repeated.

## References

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