

Update on activities of the voluntary initiative on responsible ownership and care of equidae

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Progress to date

- Three sets of documents developed by the initiative and acknowledged by the EU Platform:
 - Horse Guide – *translated into Danish, French, German, Greek, Polish, Romanian, Spanish and Italian*
 - 7 Horse factsheets – *being translated into Danish, French, Italian, Polish, Portuguese and Spanish*
 - Donkey Guide – *translated into Dutch, French, German, Greek, Romanian, Spanish and Italian*
- ✓ Available online on EU Platform's website
- Promotion of the guides:
 - Working to get the Guides translated into more EU languages
 - Disseminating and promoting the documents around the EU Member States – including through sharing them with veterinarians (via Veterinary Associations) and equine owners

Retningslinjer for god dyrevelfærdspraksis for hold, pasning, uddannelse og brug af heste



Οδηγός ορθής πρακτικής για την καλή διαβίωση των ζώων για τη διατήρηση, φροντίδα, εκπαίδευση και χρήση γαϊδουριών και υβριδίων γαϊδουριών



Social interaction and comfort behaviour

Under natural conditions horses live close together in stable groups. Horses will generally become anxious and relatively incoherent when isolated from other horses. In domestic horses, lack of social contact both early and later in the causes stress and possibly development of abnormal behaviour, such as stereotypes and increased aggression.

Important facts to remember ...

- Horses communicate through vision, sound, smell, posture and touching.
- Touching can be both aggressive (licking and biting) and friendly (grooming).
- Young horses who are kept isolated have difficulty in engaging with other horses if introduced into a group at a later stage.
- Horses prefer full physical direct contact in paddocks, on pasture or in group housing.



Social space

- Horses have a social space, which defines the distance that they wish to keep from other horses.
- This distance is individual, and is dependent on age and on how well the horses know each other.
- During social grooming, for example, the distance is zero. Horses may also be seen standing close together when trying to keep insects away. Foals and young horses appear to have a very narrow or less developed social space and they may be seen lying close together.

When horses are group housed, it is important to take social space into account when deciding how much space they should be given.

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Taking the initiative forward

- Significant issues affecting equine welfare remain across the EU – in addition to ongoing work on promoting the guides
- Call put out for expressions of interest from EU Platform members to assess interest in developing the second chapter of the voluntary initiative
- Meeting held on 14 June – excellent engagement – agreed to update Terms of Reference and identify updated core objectives



Current members

10 Member States

- ❖ Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Greece, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal and Spain

3 Business and professional organisations

- ❖ Copa-Cogeca, Federation of Veterinarians of Europe (FVE) and the International Society for Applied Ethology (ISAE)

4 Civil society organisations

- ❖ Animal's Angels, Eurogroup for Animals, The Donkey Sanctuary and World Horse Welfare

1 Academia/independent expert

- ❖ University of Milano



Next steps

- Possible topics for the initiative:
 1. Working equids – could include equines in tourism, agriculture, production and entertainment
 2. Impact of current EU policies under discussion – such as Transport Regulation (EC) 1/2005, Slaughter Regulation (EC) 1099/2009, CAP and End the Cage Age campaign
 3. Update existing guidelines (e.g. transport, working equids and equine care and management)
- Next meeting planned for September – with a view of meeting (mainly virtually) up to 4 terms per year



Request for support

- Any further expressions of interest in joining the voluntary initiative
- Promotion of the guides
 - **Translation** of the Horse and Donkey Guides into Bulgarian, Croatian, Czech, Hungarian and Slovak
 - **Translation** of the Horse Factsheets into Bulgarian, Croatian, Czech, German, Greek, Hungarian, Romanian and Slovak
 - **Dissemination** of the guides and factsheets through national and regional channels
- Suggestions for future objectives of the voluntary initiative

