



WILD DISCOVERIES

Dominant and submissive behavior during regular feedings in yearling and mature horses

K. Buckman, L. Garcia, C. Prophater, A. Butler, A. Sciametta

University of Florida

Our study was conducted to determine whether yearling horses or mature adult horses exhibit more dominant/submissive behaviors. This data can be used to help improve the understanding the formation of social hierarchy among horses as well as help educate horse owners on horse behavior during feedings in order to prevent injury or complications. Both yearling and mature horses were observed a total of 16 days and 28 ethogram sheets were collected over this time period on 14 yearling horses and 14 adult horses. A total of 315 submissive/dominant behaviors were observed in the yearlings, compared to 307 for the adult horses. Of these, the yearlings exhibited greater ($P < 0.001$) dominant behaviors. Of the total 315 behaviors for yearlings, 72% were dominant, while only 28% were submissive. There were no differences in dominant compared to submissive behaviors in our adult horses (55% and 45%, respectively). These data appear to indicate that yearling horses exhibit more dominant behaviors compared to adult horses.