



WILD DISCOVERIES

Vocal vs. Non-vocal communication in horses

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Our research project aimed to determine the ratio of which horses used vocal versus non-vocal communication. In order to collect data, each group member individually collected data at the University of Florida Horse Teaching Unit. For each period of data collection, one horse in a group of two or more was selected for a 30 minute observation. Total instances of vocal and non-vocal communication were collected on a team ethogram. For the ethogram, vocal communication included: neighs, squeals, whinnies; whereas for non-vocal communication was divided into aggression, affiliative, submissive and sexual communications. Data indicated that horses used non-vocal communication (66%) more often, compared to vocal communication (34%; $P < 0.05$). For non-vocal communication, submissive behavior (38%) was the greatest behavior observed followed by aggression (34%), affiliative (23%), and sexual (5%). For vocal communication, nickering (84%) was the most recorded behavior, followed by neighing (16%). As a whole, we observed horses used non-vocal communication almost as twice as often as vocal communication.