



“Does he not understand?”: Horse behaviour during dressage training and responses from coaches and riders



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Introduction

- Dressage horses are at risk of developing physical health issues and displaying behaviours indicating distress
- Human-horse communication is intrinsic to these animal welfare concerns
- There is limited research investigating interactions between coaches, riders and horses during dressage training

Objectives

- 1 Describe ridden horse behaviour during dressage training
- 2 Explore how coaches and riders understand and respond to horse behaviour during dressage training

Methodology

- 15 video recordings of dressage lessons, including:

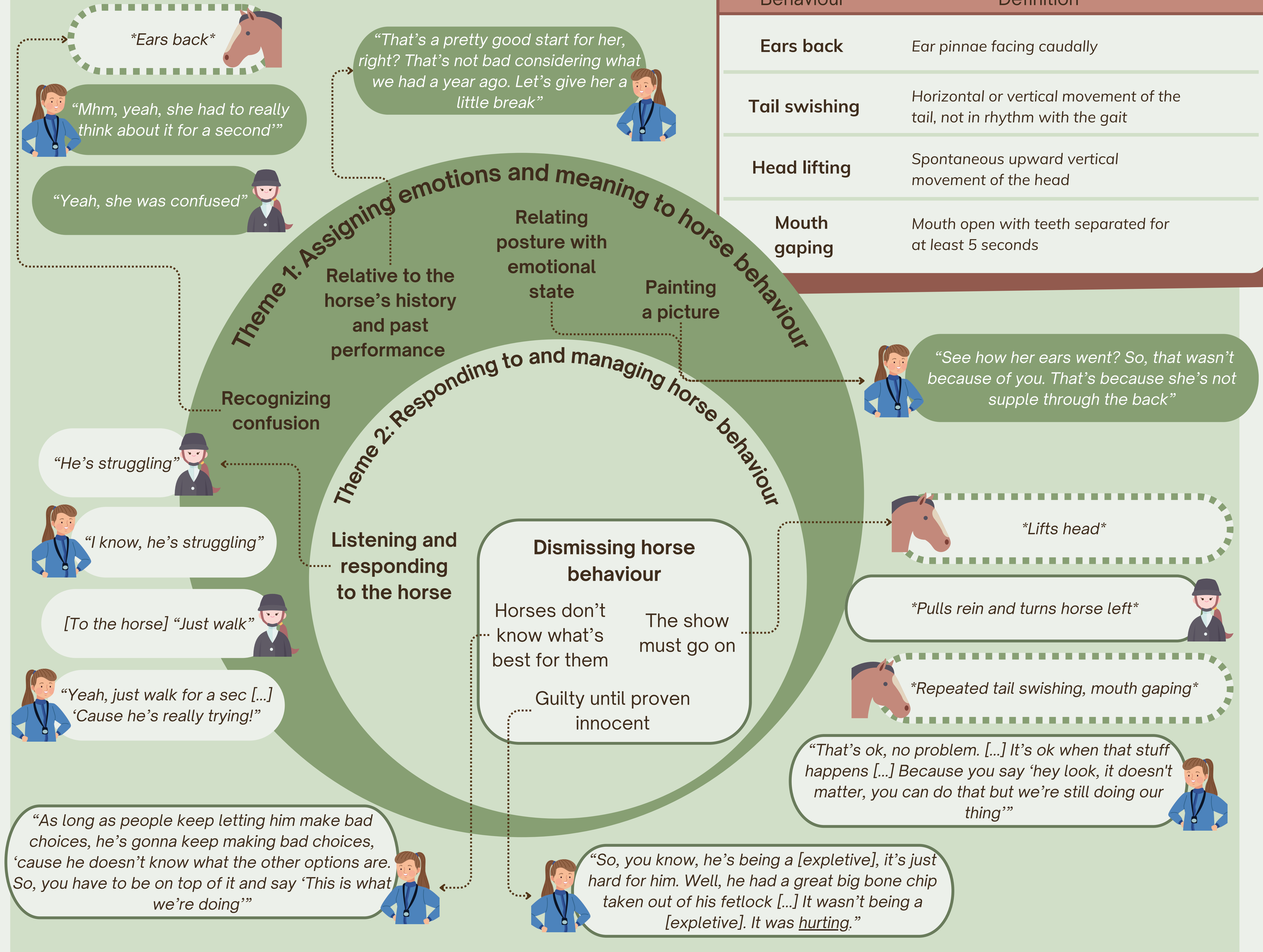
- 4 Equestrian Canada-certified coaches
- 11 riders
- 12 horses

- List of behaviours was developed from recordings, using published horse ethograms¹
- Videos were transcribed and analyzed using a combination of interaction and thematic analysis

References

1. Dyson et al., 2018; Hamilton et al., 2022

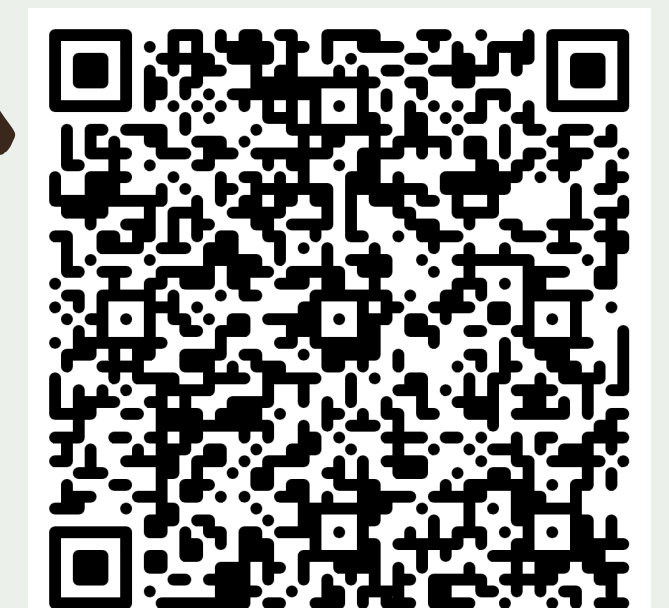
Results



Conclusions

- Participants' interpretations and reactions to horse behaviour were dependent on context
- Dismissal of behaviour and need for compliance from the horse raises concerns about the possible learned helplessness in these horses
- Tools should be provided to give coaches and riders a more objective understanding of horse behaviour, supporting them to influence horse behaviour in an ethical way

*Scan me for a detailed list of behaviours observed!



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