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# EVALUATION SYSTEM OF EQUINES TAKING PART IN EQUINE ASSISTED SERVICES (EvaSE)

INTELLECTUAL OUTPUT OF THE ERASMUS+ PROJECT 2020-1-CZ01-KA204-078277



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## 1 Definition of terms

- **Animal Assisted Services (AAS):** A goal-oriented and structured service that intentionally includes or incorporates animals in health, education and human services for the purpose of physical, mental and social gains in humans. It involves people with knowledge of the people and animals involved. Animal-assisted services incorporate human-animal teams in formal human services.
- **Equine Assisted Services (EAS):** An umbrella term utilised internationally in day-to-day communication of all services applying equine to benefit people with special needs.
- **Equine Assisted Therapy (EAT)<sup>1</sup>:** it can be conducted by different qualified health care professionals (for example physiotherapists, occupational therapists, psychologists, speech-and language therapists) including trained equines into the therapy program in order to benefit the participants. The therapy is focused on evidence-based, multimodal, and holistic practice. Further education in EAT must be completed before applying this form of therapy. It divides in fields:
  - **Equine Assisted Physiotherapy (EAPT)** is carried out by a specialised physiotherapist using equine conformation, movement, and activities to improve participant's motor function, participation and quality of life.
  - **Equine Assisted Occupational Therapy (EAOT)** is carried out by specialised occupational therapist using targeted meaningful mounted and unmounted activities and the equine environment to maximise participant's ability to engage in everyday life and enhance the quality of life.
  - **Equine Assisted Psychological Therapy (EAPsT)** is carried out by a mental health therapist (including educational, clinical, counselling, social psychology, psychiatry or psychotherapy) to achieve cognitive, emotional, social and/or behavioural goals, incorporating equines mounted and/or groundwork.
  - **Equine Assisted Speech and Language Therapy (EASLT)** is carried out by a qualified speech and language therapist using equine movement and/or the environment to promote functional outcomes in communication and speech.
  - **Equine Assisted Psychomotor Therapy (EAPmT)** is carried out by a qualified psychomotoricist using the equine movement and educational activities in order to develop psychomotor, cognitive, social and emotional skills.
- **Equine Assisted Learning (EAL):** The equine and its environment endorse the social-, cognitive-, motor-, and psychological domains through the goal-directed learning activities of a person(s) individually or in a group.
- **Assisted/Adaptive riding:** Assisted riding is an activity in which a riding instructor team teaches horsemanship skills to increase the quality of life and riding skills. These activities with the equine aim to contribute to the cognitive, physical, emotional and social well-being of a person with individual needs.
- **Practitioner:** in this document, we imply this term for equine trainers/instructors, therapists, equine leaders and therapy assistants in EAS.
- **Participant:** a client, a patient, or a student participating in any EAS field.
- **Quality of services:** the ability to provide effective and safe services in EAS.

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<sup>1</sup> Definitions of the term Equine Assisted Therapy and its subterms were applied from the consensus of the European Equine Assisted Therapy Network (2023).

- **Evaluation System:** The Evaluation System of Equines Taking Part in Equine Assisted Services (EvaSE).
- **Therapy Equine:** a specially selected, prepared, trained horse or pony.

## 2 Abbreviation list

- AAS - Animal Assisted Services
- EAS - Equine Assisted Service
- EAT - Equine Assisted Therapy
- EAPT – Equine Assisted Physiotherapy
- EAPsT – Equine Assisted Psychological Therapy
- EAPmT – Equine Assisted Psychomotor Therapy
- EAOT - Equine Assisted Occupational Therapy
- EASLT - Equine Assisted Speech and Language Therapy
- EAMH - Equine Assisted Mental Health
- EAL - Equine Assisted Learning
- EvaSE - Evaluation System of Equines Taking Part in Equine Assisted Services

### 3 Introduction

In Europe, there is no uniform (or generally identical) system of preparation and Evaluation of equines participating in Equine Assisted Services (EAS). The project thus responds to a current need for ensuring the safe training and welfare of equines included in EAS, including methods of evaluating their suitability. In the EU, there is a need for more specialists to carry out special training and preparation of equines for this purpose. Equines are currently being trained in various ways, which may lead to welfare problems and variety in the quality of the EAS. We aimed to share knowledge and experiences of partner organisations and develop a document that all partners have approved.

This methodological document presents the Evaluation System of Equines Taking Part in Equine Assisted Services (EvaSE). A comprehensive framework was developed as part of the ERASMUS+ 2020-1-CZ01-KA204-078277 project from 2020 to 2023. The project brought together a team of 24 specialists from six countries, united by the goal of advancing EAS specialists by prioritising best practices, safety, equine welfare and well-being.

**Standardisation:** There is a need for more standardised criteria and guidelines for selecting equines in EAS in the EU. Developing EvaSE through this Erasmus+ project will help to establish consistent standards across EAS programs and organisations, ensuring a reliable and uniform approach to equine selection and preparation.

**Safety and Welfare:** The well-being and safety of equines and participants are paramount in EAS. An evaluation system would enable assessing equines' physical and mental condition and suitability. The risk of accidents or undue stress on the equines can be minimised by ensuring that equines are appropriately selected, prepared and matched to the participant's needs.

**Optimal Program Outcomes:** EAS's effectiveness relies on the equines' suitability. An evaluation system can help to identify equines with the desired attributes, such as adequate temperament, suitable size, and appropriate preparation, which are crucial for facilitating positive interactions and achieving goals. Proper evaluation allows us to select the most suitable equines and enhance the programs' quality and efficacy, leading to better participant outcomes.

**Research and Knowledge Sharing:** This Erasmus+ project focuses on creating EvaSE for equines taking part in EAS, which can provide an opportunity for collaboration, research, and sharing knowledge among international experts, practitioners, and organisations. Our collective efforts, looking for best practices and insights, support continuous improvement in equine selection methodology.

**Long-Term Sustainability:** Developing EvaSE as part of an Erasmus+ project promotes outcome dissemination and long-term impact for EAS. The project outcome can provide training materials, guidelines, and resources to international organisations and professionals involved in EAS. This facilitates the implementation and impact of the evaluation system beyond the project duration, promoting sustainability and consistency in equine selection practices.

**Collaborative Approach:** The development of this evaluation system was a collaborative effort, drawing upon the expertise of professionals across various disciplines, including therapists, instructors and educators and equine behaviourists. By pooling our knowledge and experiences, the team aimed to create a standardised yet adaptable framework that could be implemented internationally.

**In summary, this Erasmus+ project created EvaSE for selecting equines to suggest standardised criteria, prioritise safety and welfare, enhance program outcomes, foster research and collaboration, and ensure long-term sustainability. This is a starting point for other organisations to use and continue developing.**

## 4 Introduction of partners

- Česká hiporehabilitační společnost, z.s. (Czech Republic) – project coordinator
- Nevşehir Hacı Bektaş Veli University (Türkiye)
- Neįgaliųjų jojimo asociacija (Lithuania)
- TheKidsFellows-Research Group in Anthrozoology (Portugal)
- Proyecto Caballo (Spain)
- Suomen Ratsastusterapeutit Ry (Finland)

**Česká hiporehabilitační společnost, z.s. – The Czech Equine Facilitated Therapy Association (CEFTA)** brings together people interested in EAT. Promote the best expertise, effect, and safety in EAT in the Czech Republic. Organise and conduct conferences, workshops, internships, and specialised courses. It's an organisation which provides expert consultations. Publish methodologies and industry standards for each EAT discipline. Promote and ensure equine welfare standards and assess the eligibility of EAS equine.

Contact information: <https://educationinhippotherapy.com/erasmus/project-2020-2023/>

**Nevşehir Hacı Bektaş Veli University - NEVÜ ATBİN** is an academic unit that conducts scientific research and practical studies in the field of Equestrianism and Horsemanship. It has a facility equipped with an open riding arena, a closed riding arena, and a stable with a capacity for 30 equines. Additionally, it has a laboratory where physical fitness parameters can be measured. ATBİN primarily serves individuals with special needs. In this regard, adaptive riding and equine-assisted learning activities are carried out within the centre. Additionally, the centre is involved in national and international projects in those domains. We collaborate with elderly care centres, special education and rehabilitation centres, and care centres affiliated with social services in Nevşehir province to ensure the continuity of our activities.

Contact information: <https://atbin.nevsehir.edu.tr/tr>

**Neįgaliųjų jojimo asociacija - Lithuanian Horse Riding Association of People with Disability (HRAPD)** is a public, limited liability, non-profit legal entity. HRAPD community joins together physiotherapists, speech therapists, occupational therapists, special educators, social workers, coaches and riding instructors by a common interest in EAS. One of HRAPD's main tasks is coordinating the activities of Lithuanian Riding Clubs and registered members who provide EAS for people with disabilities. The organisation collaborates internationally with organisations engaged in similar activities in foreign countries to transfer and use their experience and knowledge.

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**TheKidsFellows-Research Group in Anthrozoology (TKF)** is an international group of Academics and professionals set in Portugal, willing to learn what makes our relationships with animals succeed and how to make life on our planet better. We want to know how to improve human health. People with good relationships with their animals and nature are healthier and happier. In addition, animals can be an advantage in the lives of people with special needs or at social risk. We want to know how to improve animal health. By enhancing the knowledge about each specie's natural behaviours and promoting positive relationships between animals and humans, we promote well-being and quality of life. And finally, we are concerned about the health of our planet. Facilitating the protection and the relationships between people and the Natural world will increase respect and

responsibility for the earth. We closely interact with the Portuguese Society of Equines Assisted Services - SPSAE, the National Association in our Country.

Contact information: <https://www.thekidsfellows.com/> email: [thekidsfellows@gmail.com](mailto:thekidsfellows@gmail.com)

**Suomen Ratsastusterapeutit Ry - The Finnish Association of Equine Facilitated Therapies (SRT)** is a connecting link for its members and oversees general and common interests related to the field of EAS. It educates new therapists, develops the knowledge and skills of its members and improves general operating conditions in the field. The association monitors the quality and implementation of EAS in Finland. In addition, the associations handle national and international co-operations. Equine-facilitated therapy is a holistic individual rehabilitation approach carried out by the certified therapist and the equine as a team. Depending on the occupational basic training of the therapist, the therapy goals are related to the rehabilitation plan. They can be focused on the participant's motor, educational or emotional needs.

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**Asociación Proyecto Caballo, association for developing sustainable equine welfare projects** - our mission is to provide knowledge and practical solutions to people in the equine world, enabling a smoother transition towards sustainable models through education, interdisciplinary collaboration, and research. Sensitisation and social awareness: Based on the welfare and future of equines as a species, includes benefits for the people involved, both in the study and in the rehabilitation of equines. Physical and mental rehabilitation of equines: Organising activities and creating situations and environments which favour the rehabilitation and development of equines for them to approach a physical, mental and social state close to their species-specific nature. Introduction of equines in natural spaces: Equines are increasingly crucial in managing permanent grasslands throughout Europe. Grazing equines promotes biodiversity and is suitable for cleaning and restoring semi-natural pastures and woodland maintenance.

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## 5 Purpose of the EvaSE

Equines play a crucial role in EAS, incorporating the physical, mental and social development of individuals with various conditions or disabilities. Here are some reasons why it's essential to evaluate equines:

**Enabling Informed Decision-Making:** EvaSE provides practitioners with a standardised and structured approach to assess equine suitability and readiness to be trained in EAS. By utilising the system, practitioners can make informed decisions about which equines are best suited for specific services. This helps protect equines from being assigned to tasks that may be beyond their capabilities or comfort levels.

**Suitability:** Not all equines are suitable for EAS. The evaluation helps determine if an equine has a suitable temperament, willingness to cooperate with humans, adequate level of training, and physical capabilities. This ensures that equines are well-suited to the unique demands of the role.

**Safety:** The safety of both the equines and the participants is most important. Evaluations help identify any issues that could pose risks during sessions. Ensuring that equines are well-trained and have good manners reduces the chances of accidents or incidents that could harm participants.

**Participants' Needs:** Participants have varying needs, and the evaluation process helps them select, prepare and match the appropriate equine. Evaluations consist of factors such as the equine character, willingness, size, gait, and responsiveness to cues, to ensure adequate support for the specific goals of the sessions.

**Progress Monitoring:** Regular evaluations of equines can help track their progress and well-being. This includes monitoring their physical health, mental state, and overall happiness. This feedback allows practitioners to make informed decisions about the equine's continued program participation and make adjustments when necessary.

**Legal and Ethical Considerations:** In many countries, animals taking part in AAS, including equines, must meet specific national standards and guidelines to ensure the quality of services. Evaluations help fulfil legal requirements, certifications, and licensing needed to incorporate and protect these animals.

EvaSE provides more insights into the comprehensive evaluation process. It offers structured Evaluations, guidelines, or tools explicitly tailored for evaluating equines in EAS programs.



## 6 An ideal therapy equine

An ideal therapy equine possesses a combination of physical and behavioural characteristics that make them suitable for therapeutic interventions. While the specific requirements may vary depending on the therapeutic context and individual needs of participants, here are some general qualities that an ideal therapy equine may exhibit.

**Breed:** There is no specific breed for EAS. Different breeds and types of breeds have distinct traits that can influence their behaviour, size, and movement patterns.

**Temperament:** An ideal therapy equine should possess a serene and patient disposition, displaying tolerance and openness to various situations and interactions in a positive attitude.

**Willingness:** Interacting, providing comfort, and building positive relationships with therapy participants.

**Trustworthiness:** A therapy equine should be reliable and trustworthy, demonstrating consistent and predictable behaviour. It should be well-trained and responsive to cues from their handlers, ensuring a safe and secure environment for therapy participants.

**Gait and Movement:** A smooth and comfortable gait in a therapy equine is desirable. They should have balanced and rhythmic movements that provide stability and comfort to riders or participants engaging in therapeutic activities.

**Conformation:** While perfect conformation is unnecessary, a therapy equine should have a well-balanced and structurally sound body. This helps maintain the equine's long-term soundness and comfort during therapy sessions.

**Size and Build:** The size and build of a therapy equine should be appropriate for the intended participants. They should be able to accommodate riders of varying sizes and physical abilities, ensuring a safe and comfortable experience for all individuals involved.

**Sensitivity and Responsiveness:** Ideal therapy equines should be sensitive to its riders' or participants' subtle cues and needs. They should respond appropriately to the physical and emotional states of the individuals they work with, offering support and connection.

**Adaptability:** Therapy equines should be adaptable and able to handle different environments, including indoor and outdoor settings and various sensory stimuli. They should be comfortable with changes in routine and be able to adjust to other therapeutic approaches.

**Affectionate and Gentle:** A therapy equine should have a natural inclination towards human connection and enjoy being in the company of people. They should be willing to interact, provide comfort, and build positive relationships with therapy participants.

**Maturity:** The age of the equine helps match its capabilities with the specific requirements for the EAS. Physical and mental development requires maturing. The age at which an equine is ready for a full workload can vary depending on several factors, including breed, individual maturity, and the specific type of workload involved. While equines may start their training and light work at a younger age, allowing them sufficient time to develop physically and mentally before taking on a full workload is generally recommended. A minimum age recommendation for engagement in EAS is five years.

**Note:** It's important to note that no equine is perfect, and individual variations are to be expected. **The ideal therapy equine should undergo a thorough evaluation process, including Evaluations for temperament, suitability, and health, to ensure they meet the specific requirements of the EAS and the needs of the participants.**

## 6.1 Working readiness according to the age

**Physical Development:** Equines continue to grow and develop until their skeletal system is fully mature, typically between the ages of 4 and 6 years. The growth plates in their bones need time to close and solidify before subjecting them to intense work.

**Mental and Emotional Maturity:** In addition to physical development, an equine's mental and emotional readiness should also be considered. They need time to mature mentally and gain the necessary experience to handle the demands of a full workload. This can vary from equine to equine and may depend on their temperament and training history.

**Training Progression:** Following a systematic training progression that gradually increases the workload and intensity of the equine's training sessions is essential. This allows them to develop strength, stamina, and coordination over time, minimising the risk of injuries and promoting long-term soundness.

**Breed Considerations:** Different equine breeds may have varying physical and mental maturity rates. Some breeds may mature earlier than others, while others may take longer. It's essential to consider the breed's specific characteristics and growth patterns when determining the readiness for a full workload.

**Professional Guidance:** Working with an experienced trainer or equine professional can provide valuable insights and guidance regarding the equine's readiness for a full workload. They can assess the equine's physical condition, training progress, and behaviour to determine if they are prepared for increased demands.

**Note:** It's important to remember that each equine is unique, and the timeline for readiness can vary. **Rushing an equine into a full workload before they are physically and mentally prepared can increase the risk of injury and compromise their long-term well-being.** Consulting with a veterinarian and equine professionals familiar with the specific equine's history and development can help make an informed decision regarding their readiness for a full workload.

## 6.2 Maximum weight capacity

The maximum weight capacity for an equine can vary depending on several factors, including the equine's size, build, fitness level, and overall health. Considering the equine's well-being and comfort is crucial when determining an appropriate weight limit. While there is no universally set weight limit for all equines, here are some general guidelines:

**Equine Size:** Larger and more robust equine breeds, such as draft equines or some warmbloods, may have a higher weight-carrying capacity than smaller breeds, such as ponies or light equine breeds. Their larger bone structure and musculature can often support more significant weight.

**Body Condition:** The equine's body condition and fitness level significantly affect its ability to carry weight. A well-conditioned and muscled equine may handle more weight than an equine that is out of shape or lacks muscle tone.

**Rider's Skill and Balance:** The rider's skill level and ability to maintain proper balance also impact the equine's comfort and well-being. A balanced rider can distribute their weight more effectively and minimise the impact on the equine's back.

**Saddle/Equipment fit:** Ensuring proper equipment fit is crucial for weight distribution and preventing discomfort or injury to the equine's back. An ill-fitting saddle can create pressure points and cause pain, even with an appropriate weight load.

**As a general guideline, it is recommended to aim for a weight limit of approximately 20% of the equine's body weight, including the rider's weight and equipment.** However, this should be considered a starting point, and individual factors must be considered. It is essential to consult with a knowledgeable equine professional, such as a veterinarian or an experienced trainer, who can evaluate the specific equine's condition and provide appropriate guidance regarding weight limits.

**Note:** Remember, the equine's welfare should always be the top priority, and weight limits should be determined with their physical well-being in mind. Regular monitoring of the equine's condition, including body weight and overall soundness, is crucial to ensure their health and prevent any potential issues associated with carrying excessive weight.

## 7 The EvaSE and Equine Welfare

By developing the EvaSE, we aim to promote the welfare of equines in EAS following HETI (Horses in Education and Therapy International A.I.S.B.L.) Ethical guidelines. The modern animal welfare concept of five domains (Nutrition, Environment, Health, Behaviour, and Mental domain) was considered as a base for the EvaSE. The Evaluation form can be used as a moral compass in providing the best possible relationship and experiences for the equines working in EAS. This form can be used as a yearly self-evaluation of the practice to detect the welfare of the equines.

**Promoting Physical Health:** The evaluation system considers the equine's conformation, musculoskeletal health, and overall well-being, including nutrition. EvaSE helps identify any physical limitations or conditions that may affect the equine's ability to engage in EAS by assessing these factors. This promotes the equine's physical health and reduces the likelihood of injury or discomfort. (Domains 1 and 3)

**Promoting Mental Health:** Mental health covers mental skills, well-being, and natural behaviour. By promoting mental health conditions, we enhance the safety of the equine and its well-being. (Domains 2 and 5)

**Promoting Natural Behaviour and Behavioural Interactions:** Willingness to cooperate and positively associate with humans. EvaSE includes tasks that assess the equine's reaction to various stimuli, such as touch, pressure, sound, and environmental elements. Evaluating these responses helps identify signs of stress, fear, or discomfort the equine may exhibit. This allows practitioners to tailor sessions accordingly, ensuring the equine's emotional well-being and minimising the risk of negative experiences. (Domain 4)

## 8 Creating EvaSE

We spent 3 years developing this document in 7 face-to-face and several ZOOM meetings from 2020 to 2023. Every team's approach to therapy equine selection, evaluation and preparation differs, yet the goal is common for all. **Preparing a reliable equine to perform high-quality and safe therapy sessions, but with high regard to maintaining equine welfare and well-being.**

We discussed and sought a common foundation to build such an evaluating system. We are a group of passionate people of different nationalities, temperaments, habits, and beliefs. Still, we have always managed to listen to other opinions and think about them.

Each partner selected one key task and provided a step-by-step approach to evaluating equines. Below are detailed descriptions and evaluation protocols as a guideline. All can be adjusted, adding more tasks to fit the evaluation demands.

### **Six tasks selected by the project participants:**

1. Evaluation of equine conformation
2. Evaluation of equine walk
3. Evaluation of positive association to humans and interactions
4. Evaluation of equine reactions to various environmental stimuli
5. Evaluation of the equine willingness to be touched
6. Evaluation of the equine's reaction to different sound stimuli

### 8.1 Czech Republic - How to Evaluate Equine Conformation

- Understanding the significance of equine conformation in therapy equines
- Explanation of key conformational traits and their impact on equine performance
- Step-by-step guide on evaluating equine conformation

#### 8.1.1 Introduction

In EAS, the selection of suitable therapy equines is of paramount importance. One critical aspect to consider when evaluating therapy equines is their conformation. Conformation refers to an equine's physical structure and appearance, including its skeletal and muscular proportions, balance, and overall symmetry. This chapter will delve into the significance of equine conformation in therapy equines, explain key conformational traits and their impact on equine performance, and provide a step-by-step guide on evaluating equine conformation.

#### 8.1.2 Significance of Equine Conformation in Therapy Equines

##### 8.1.2.1 Enhancing Performance and Comfort

Equine conformation greatly influences an equine's ability to perform tasks comfortably and efficiently. A well-structured equine is more likely to move fluidly, distribute weight evenly, and maintain balance, contributing to a smoother and safer experience for the equine and the rider or participant.

#### 8.1.2.2 Soundness and Longevity

Good conformation promotes soundness and reduces the risk of injury or lameness. Properly aligned limbs, strong skeletal structure, and well-developed musculature can better withstand the demands placed on therapy equines during work, allowing them to remain productive and comfortable for extended periods.

### 8.1.3 Key Conformational Traits and Their Impact on Equine Performance

#### 8.1.3.1 Balance and Proportions

A balanced equine possesses harmonious proportions, with body parts appropriately sized and aligned. Balance affects the equine's overall stability, movement, and ability to carry itself and its rider or participant effectively.

#### 8.1.3.2 Limb Conformation

Limb conformation is crucial for weight-bearing and soundness. Properly aligned and correctly angled limbs contribute to efficient movement, reduce joint stress, and enhance shock absorption, ensuring the equine's long-term soundness and comfort.

#### 8.1.3.3 Back and Topline

A strong, well-muscled back and a level or slightly arched topline provide stability, power, and support for the rider or participant. A healthy back allows the equine to engage its hindquarters effectively and maintain balance throughout therapy sessions.

#### 8.1.3.4 Feet and Hooves

The feet and hooves are vital to the equine's overall conformation and soundness. Straight, well-shaped hooves with proper angles and adequate sole depth are essential for maintaining balance, absorbing shock, and preventing lameness.

### 8.1.4 Step-by-Step Guide on Evaluating Equine Conformation

#### 8.1.4.1 Observation

Begin by observing the equine from a distance, noting its overall appearance, balance, and proportions. Look for symmetry, body condition, and overall muscling.

#### 8.1.4.2 Head and Neck

Assess the equine's head and neck, observing for proper alignment, proportion, and balance. Evaluate the neck's length, shape, and set and the equine's facial features and expression.

#### 8.1.4.3 Shoulder and Forelimbs

Examine the equine's shoulder angle, length, and muscling. Evaluate the alignment of the forelimbs, paying attention to the pastern angle, size, and overall balance.

#### 8.1.4.4 Back, Topline, and Hindquarters

Evaluate the equine's back, noting its length, strength, and muscling. Assess the topline for levelness or slight arch. Examine the hindquarters for muscling, size, and overall balance.

#### 8.1.4.5 Hind Limbs and Feet

Examine the hind limbs, observing their alignment, angles, and muscling. Evaluate the hock angles, pastern angles, and overall balance. Assess the feet and hooves for shape, size, and overall health.

## 8.2 Finland - How to Evaluate Equine Walk

- Importance of a harmonious and balanced gait in therapy equines
- Description of different gaits and their characteristics
- Techniques for assessing and evaluating the gait of a therapy equine

### 8.2.1 Introduction

In EAS, the walk of an equine plays a crucial role in ensuring a safe and effective outcome for the participant. This chapter will open the equine walk and its characteristics (rhythm, reach of the walk, straightness, bending and character of the movement). It provides methods for assessing and evaluating the walk of an equine.

### 8.2.2 Key elements of walking and their impact on the equine movement

#### 8.2.2.1 Rhythmical movement

A good equine walk is defined as a relaxed four-beat rhythmic movement forward where legs follow each other in sequence 1-2-3-4. At the walk, the equine alternates, having two or three-leg support on the ground.

#### 8.2.2.2 Reach of the gait

For an equine to move (the body mass) forward, this movement pattern can produce three-dimensional movement for the participant. Ideally, the hind leg reaches and oversteps the mark of the front leg on the ground. The more the equine overreaches the mark, the smoother the movement will become.

#### 8.2.2.3 Straightness

The straightness of an equine means that it is aligned from the head to the tail. The hindquarters of the equine are wider than the front part, so the hind legs cannot be aligned straight behind the forelegs. A vital equine can move the hindlegs in line with the forelegs underneath the body and bear weight. This is true straightness.

#### 8.2.2.4 Bending

Bending is a lateral curvature of the equine's body from head to tail. The equine should bend along its whole body, with the rib cage swinging outwards.

#### 8.2.2.5 The character of the movement

When an equine is relaxed and moving willingly, the is not showing any signs of distress, like swishing with the tail.

### **8.2.3 The benefits of a harmonious and balanced gait in equines in EAS include:**

#### 8.2.3.1 Stability and Safety

An equine with a balanced walk provides stable movement for individuals with physical disabilities or impairments. It reduces the risk of unexpected moves, allowing participants to feel secure and confident during EAS.

#### 8.2.3.2 Physical Comfort

A smooth and regular walk minimises jarring and bouncing movements, reducing physical discomfort for participants. This is particularly important for individuals with sensory sensitivities, joint issues, or chronic pain conditions.

#### 8.2.3.3 Emotional Support

A therapy equine with a harmonious gait can create a calming and soothing experience for participants. The rhythmic motion can promote relaxation, reduce anxiety, and enhance emotional well-being during therapy sessions.

#### 8.2.3.4 Facilitating Engagement

A balanced walk enables participants to focus on EAS rather than constantly adjusting or accommodating an unsteady or uncomfortable equine walk. This promotes active engagement and maximises the therapeutic benefits.

### **8.2.4 Techniques for Assessing and Evaluating the walk of an equine**

When evaluating the walk of an equine, several techniques can be employed to ensure a comprehensive Evaluation. These techniques may include:

#### 8.2.4.1 Visual Observation

Visual observation of the equine's walk involves observing the equine's posture, movement, and footfall patterns from various angles free and being led with a rope and halter if possible. Look for rhythm, reach, straightness and bending, adding the character of movement into observation. For example, the walk's reach can be measured from the hoofmarks left to the ground by equine.

#### 8.2.4.2 Hands-on Evaluation

Physical Evaluation of the equine's body, particularly the back, neck, and legs, can help identify any pain, tension, or stiffness that may affect the gait. Palpation and manipulation can provide valuable information about muscle tone, range of motion, and overall condition.



#### 8.2.4.3 Professional evaluation, if needed

Engaging an experienced equine professional can provide expert insights into evaluating the walk. They may employ specialised equipment or tools, such as gait analysis systems or pressure-sensitive pads, to gather objective data on the equine's movement.

### 8.2.5 Conclusion

Evaluating the walk of equines is essential to ensure a harmonious and balanced experience for participants and equine welfare. A regular and energetic walk contributes to participants' physical and emotional well-being and facilitates active engagement in EAS.

## 8.3 Spain - How to Evaluate Positive Association to Humans and Interactions

- Evaluating equines' positive association with humans and the interactions in service settings.
- Detecting and analysing the behaviours which reflect the level of positive association.
- A high level of positive association is directly proportional to the quality of the services.

### 8.3.1 Introduction

This test has been developed to give practitioners an objective and quantifiable tool to evaluate equines' positive association with humans and interactions. This way, we can ensure that equine well-being is considered and welfare standards are met.

It is vital for equines to have a positive association with humans and the activities they do together for several reasons:

#### 8.3.1.1 Effective Communication

Equines are highly perceptive and sensitive animals. They respond to human cues, body language, and energy. When equines positively associate with humans, they are more likely to be attentive and responsive to their signals and commands. This enhances communication between equines and humans, making it easier to establish clear expectations and effectively work together.

#### 8.3.1.2 Trust

Developing a positive association between equines and humans helps foster trust. Equines are, as well as humans, social animals that naturally form strong connections with others. When equines trust and feel comfortable with their human partners, they are more likely to engage in activities together willingly. This can enhance the overall experience and effectiveness of various EAS.

#### 8.3.1.3 Engagement and Enjoyment

Equines are more likely to engage and participate actively in activities when associating them with positive experiences. When equines enjoy the activities they do with humans, they are more motivated and willing to cooperate, making the experience more enjoyable for both parties and, at the same time, reducing the risk of accidents or potentially dangerous situations. A positive association helps create a harmonious and safe environment for both equines and humans. It leads to increased enthusiasm, improved performance, and a more profound sense of fulfilment and motivation.

In summary, a positive association between equines and humans and their activities together ensures safety, effective communication, trust, bonding, engagement, enjoyment, and the overall well-being of both equines and humans. It creates a mutually beneficial and fulfilling relationship that enhances the outcomes of EAS and promotes a harmonious partnership.

#### 8.3.1.4 Explanation of the test and clarification of the different observations

To apply the test appropriately, you need to initiate the test when going to the equine habitual living space. We recommend repeating the test over several days and with different humans to improve reliability. It can also be used as a follow-up test to observe the effects of changes in activities and handlers.

- The equine's instant reaction when seeing the human?
  - This observation reflects equines association to prior experiences.
- The reaction one minute when approaching the human?
  - This observation confirms or disapproves of the observation in question 1.
- What is the reaction when the human approaches?
  - This observation helps us understand what level of negative or positive association the equine has with the presence of the human.
- The reaction to the halter?
  - This observation can reflect an association to touch as to the activities which usually proceed being haltered.
- How does he stand beside the human?
  - This observation will give us an idea of the equine's level of trust in the human.
- How does the equine interact with the human?
  - This observation will give us an idea of the equine's level of trust in the human.
- How does the equine react to being asked to initiate a walk (moving forward)?
  - This observation will show the level of motivation associated with leaving his living space.
- What does the equine do immediately after leaving the paddock/stables/field?
  - This observation will show us the motivation associated with the activity.
- How does the equine react to being touched when tied up?
  - This observation reveals the association the equine has with being touched.
- How does the human react to being touched?
  - This observation demonstrates the level of trust human has in the equine.
- How does the equine react when getting scared?
  - This observation shows us the level of trust the equine has in the handler
- How does the equine react to being let loose in the arena after the session?
  - This observation expresses how the activity has affected the equine.
- How does the equine react when put back in the field/paddock/box?
  - This observation will express how the equine value being in his living space or outside it.

### **8.3.2 Conclusion**

It only makes sense to incorporate equines in services if there is a positive association, as this is the only way to ensure the services' high standards, quality and effectiveness. From an ethical viewpoint, we also need to consider that equines are sentient beings; therefore, we are responsible for their physical, mental, and social well-being, and the positive association is primal.

## **8.4 Lithuania – How to Evaluate Equine Reactions to Various Environmental Stimuli**

- Importance of habituation to various environmental stimuli for equines
- Evaluation of equine reaction to everyday environmental stimuli that may cause stress or anxiety in equines
- Guide for Assessing Adaptability to Different Stimuli and Other Equines

### **8.4.1 Introduction**

In EAS, equines are essential in supporting individuals with various conditions or disabilities. Equines must be well-adapted and comfortable in different or changing environments and around other equines. This chapter focuses on the importance of habituation to various environmental stimuli.

### **8.4.2 Importance of Habituation to Various Environmental Stimuli for Equines**

#### **8.4.2.1 Enhancing Versatility and Safety**

Equines must be versatile and adaptable to ensure participants' and equine safety and well-being. Habituation to various environmental stimuli is crucial in preparing equines to handle unpredictable situations during EAS. By exposing them to a wide range of stimuli, including sights, sounds, smells, and textures, equines can develop confidence and a resilient mindset, allowing them to remain calm and focused in diverse environments.

#### **8.4.2.2 Comfort and Trust for Participant**

For EAS to be effective, participants must feel at ease and establish trust with the equine. Equines habituated to different elements exude a sense of calmness and stability, promoting a positive experience. When equines demonstrate confidence and adaptability, participants are more likely to form meaningful connections with them, leading to improved outcomes in EAS.

### **8.4.3 Evaluation of equine reaction to everyday environmental stimuli that may cause stress or anxiety in equines**

#### **8.4.3.1 Sensory Stimuli**

Equines can be sensitive to certain sensory stimuli, and identifying the strength of the equine's reaction to common triggers is crucial in assessing their adaptability. Environmental stimuli that may cause stress or anxiety include unfamiliar odours, sudden movements, visual distractions and crowded spaces.

#### 8.4.3.2 Individual Equine Evaluation

Each equine is unique, so what may cause stress for one equine may not affect another. Conducting individual Evaluations allows professionals to evaluate equine's reaction to environmental stimuli. These Evaluations involve observing and noting any signs of discomfort or distress.

### 8.4.4 Guide for Assessing Adaptability to Different Stimuli and Other Equine

#### 8.4.4.1 Preparing the Evaluation Environment

The equine should be evaluated using appropriate equipment: halter and lead rope. Equines should encounter potential stimuli whilst being led on a loose lead rope that does not restrict equine's movements.

#### 8.4.4.2 Selecting Stimuli to be Tested

Compile a range of stimuli that equines are likely to encounter during EAS.

#### 8.4.4.3 Introducing the Stimuli

Introduce each stimulus to the equine and evaluate the strength of initial and continuous reactions during lasting stimulus exposure. Behavioural cues, communication signals and body language should be observed and noted.

#### 8.4.4.4 Documenting Reactions

Make detailed records of the equine's responses to each stimulus. This documentation should include a description of the equine's behaviour. The conclusion is based on the observed stress intensity in the presence of the stimulus.

### 8.4.5 Conclusion

The presence of the reaction and the dynamics and intensity of its occurrence play an essential role in ensuring the safety, well-being of the equine and the effectiveness of the EAS. By understanding the importance of the reactions to the stimuli, practitioners can implement targeted interventions to help equines overcome their fears and anxieties.

## 8.5 Portugal – How to Evaluate the Equine Willingness to be Touched

- Importance of accepting touch
- Evaluation of equine reaction to touch and the tactile reactivity in different zones
- Guide for Assessing equine willingness to be touched

### 8.5.1 Introduction

In EAS, the comfort and well-being of equines are paramount to ensure the safety and effectiveness of the sessions. One crucial aspect is the willingness to be touched while remaining calm and accepting when different tools are applied to various body parts. Touch plays a role socially for herd animals and is the most direct form of communication between equines and people. This chapter explores the significance of touch tolerance in equines used in EAS and the importance of its

responsiveness. The differences in responsiveness (i.e., perception of a tactile stimulus and response to it with a particular behaviour) are defined as Tactile reactivity (Rochais et al., 2023).

### **8.5.2 Understanding the importance of willingness to be touched in equines:**

- Touch tolerance is a fundamental quality for equines as they encounter a wide range of sensory stimuli during sessions.
- Equines comfortable with different touches, pressures, and frequencies allow participants to engage in EAS without causing undue stress or anxiety to the equine.
- Improved touch tolerance enhances the equine's overall suitability for EAS. It promotes the well-being of both the equine and the participants.

### **8.5.3 Methods for assessing the equine's willingness to be touched and the tactile reactivity in different zones:**

- The aim is to evaluate the different areas of a equine's body according to its sensibility.
- By observation: the practitioners observe the equine's reactions and comfort level when touched or when pressure is applied to different body zones.

### **8.5.4 Evaluation of the equine's response to being touched in various body zones:**

- Five different zones of the equine's body are defined according to its sensibility: Zone 1: around the eyes, nostril, lips, sheath, and belly...; Zone 2: abdomen; Zone 3: ears, chest, thigh, tail's dock; Zone 4: hoof and heel; Zone 5: croup, mane, crest.
- The approach should always be slow, diagonal to the equine's shoulder, showing the hand/object in a high position, and indirect gaze.
- When about 10 cm of the body's zone to evaluate, the touch is slow ( $\leq 2$  times in 3 s) or high ( $\geq 3$  times in 2 s).
- Different tools can be used to the different frequencies, e.g. Hand, Hard object with a smooth surface (small $<5$ cm and big $>5$ cm)), Hard object rough/abrasive and soft object (paper, tissue).

### **8.5.5 Conclusion**

The equine willingness to be touched are a vital consideration for EAS programs. By understanding the importance of these qualities, implementing effective Evaluation methods, and employing gradual training techniques, EAS equines can develop a higher level of comfort, ensuring safe and beneficial interactions with participants.

## **8.6 Türkiye - How to Evaluate the Equine's Reaction to Different Sound Stimuli**

- Significance of sound stimuli evaluation
- Identifying different sound stimuli and their potential impact on therapy equines
- Step-by-step guide for assessing the equine's reactions to various sound stimuli

### **8.6.1 Introduction**

In the EAS, evaluating therapy equines' reactions to different sound stimuli plays a significant role. Equines are compassionate creatures, and their responses to various sounds can significantly impact the effectiveness and safety of therapy sessions. This chapter explores the significance of sound stimuli evaluation in EAS, identifies different sound triggers, and provides a step-by-step guide for assessing the equine's reactions to these stimuli.

### **8.6.2 Significance of Sound Stimuli Evaluation**

#### 8.6.2.1 Enhancing Participant Safety

Evaluating the equine's reaction to sound stimuli ensures that therapy sessions are conducted in a safe environment. By identifying potentially distressing or alarming sounds, practitioners can take appropriate measures to minimise any negative impact on the equine's behaviour and the well-being of participants.

#### 8.6.2.2 Maintaining Consistency

Consistency in the therapy environment is essential for the success of EAS programs. Evaluating the equine's response to sound stimuli helps create a predictable and controlled setting, reducing the chances of unexpected reactions that may disrupt sessions.

#### 8.6.2.3 Improving Effectiveness

The Evaluation of sound stimuli reactions allows practitioners to select equines suitable for specific participants or activities. Understanding an equine's tolerance to different sounds helps match them with individuals with particular needs or preferences, thereby optimising the therapeutic benefits and outcomes.

### **8.6.3 Identifying Different Sound Stimuli and Their Potential Impact**

#### 8.6.3.1 Common Sound Stimuli

Therapy equines may encounter various sound stimuli during sessions, such as music, applause, verbal cues, sudden noises, and environmental sounds (e.g., traffic, construction). Each sound has the potential to evoke a different response in the equine, either positive or negative, depending on their prior experiences, training, and temperament.

#### 8.6.3.2 Impact on Therapy Equines

Sound stimuli can affect a therapy equine's behaviour, physiology, and well-being. Some equines may become anxious, agitated, or exhibit signs of stress in response to certain sounds. In contrast, others may remain calm and unfazed. It is crucial to identify these potential triggers to ensure the equine's welfare and the success of therapy programs.

## 8.6.4 Step-by-Step Guide for Assessing Reactions to Sound Stimuli

### 8.6.4.1 Preparing the Evaluation Environment

Create a controlled environment with minimal distractions and consistent conditions. Choose a quiet space and remove any unnecessary equipment or objects that may interfere with the Evaluation.

### 8.6.4.2 Selecting Sound Stimuli

Compile a range of sound stimuli that equines will likely encounter during therapy sessions. This may include recordings of applause, music, spoken commands, animal sounds, and environmental noises. Ensure the sounds are of appropriate volume and quality.

### 8.6.4.3 Introducing the Stimuli

Gradually introduce each sound stimulus to the equine, starting with the least intense or potentially alarming sounds. Observe the equine's reactions closely, noting behavioural cues, body language, and physiological responses (e.g., increased heart rate and muscle tension).

### 8.6.4.4 Documenting Reactions

Maintain detailed records of the equine's responses to each sound stimulus. This documentation should include a description of the equine's behaviour, intensity and duration of the reaction, and any observable signs of stress or discomfort.

### 8.6.4.5 Analysing and Adapting

Evaluate the collected data to identify patterns or trends in the equine's reactions. Use this information to adapt to the therapy environment, tailor sessions to the equine's specific needs, and make informed decisions about appropriate sound stimuli exposure and management strategies.

### 8.6.4.6 Gradual Desensitisation and Training

Based on the evaluation results, develop a desensitisation plan to gradually help the equine become more accustomed to challenging sound stimuli. Employ positive reinforcement techniques and systematic training methods to build the equine's confidence and resilience in the face of auditory triggers.

## 8.6.5 Conclusion

Evaluating the equine's reaction to different sound stimuli is a crucial aspect of EAS. By understanding the significance of sound stimuli evaluation, identifying various sound triggers, and following a systematic Evaluation process, therapy providers can create a safe, consistent, and effective environment for both therapy equines and participants. Through careful evaluation and appropriate desensitisation techniques, therapy equines can develop the necessary skills to support individuals in achieving their therapeutic goals in EAS.

## 8.7 Guidelines to perform the tasks

The teams created detailed guidelines on how to complete the task. Download it [here](#). Note: The excel form has 6 pages.

## 9 Evaluation Protocol

A standardised and structured approach can be applied by implementing an evaluation protocol with specific subtasks for each main task to assess the suitability of therapy equines across different domains. The evaluation results can provide valuable insights for therapy programs and help ensure the selection of appropriate and well-suited equines for the intended therapeutic interventions.

### 9.1 Collecting Information about an Evaluated Equine

- Equine introduction
- Gathering basic information about the equine (age, breed, history)
- Assessing the equine's health and condition

#### 9.1.1 Equine Introduction

##### 9.1.1.1 Information about the evaluation

- **Date of the evaluation:**
- **Name of the evaluators:**
- **Venue of the evaluation:**
- **Name of the owner:**

##### 9.1.1.2 Equine identification

- **Equine Name:**
- **Age:**
- **Breed:**
- **Gender:**
- Colour/Markings:
- **Height (in Cm):**
- Weight (in Kgs):
- **Microchip/ID number (if applicable):**

##### 9.1.1.3 General information - please select the suitable one

- Type of housing:
  - o Stable                      Open stable                      field
- Size of paddock:
  - o 9-15m2                      16-22m2                      larger
- How many hours of paddock does the equine have daily access?
  - o 2-4 h                      5-7h                      day around
- The equine is in the paddock
  - o Alone                      with another equine
- What type of equine are you evaluating?
- What kind of EAS discipline?

#### 9.1.2 Gathering Basic Information about the equine

Information about the history of equines is vital for understanding its past experiences, training, and any potential behavioural or health issues. This may include details about its previous



ownership, veterinary history, training methods, previous work experiences, and any significant events that could have shaped its behaviour and association with humans. This information aids in assessing the adaptability, socialisation skills, and overall suitability of the equine for EAS.

#### 9.1.2.1 History and Background

- Previous Owners/Handlers:
- Past Use/Work:
- Any Major Life Events or Traumas:
- Relationship with Previous Handlers/Owners:

### 9.1.3 Assessing the equine's health and condition

#### 9.1.3.1 Health and Veterinary Information

- **Current Health Status:**
- Vaccination History:
- Deworming History:
- Any Past or Current Medical Conditions:
- Any Known Allergies:
- Farrier Schedule/History:
- Dental Care Schedule/History:
- **Castration date:**

#### 9.1.3.2 Behaviour and Temperament

- Temperament Description:
- Any Known Behavioral Issues:
- Level of Sensitivity:
- Response to New Environments:
- Any Specific Training or Handling Requirements:
- Sociability towards humans:

#### 9.1.3.3 Training and Experience

- Level of Training (Basic, Intermediate, Advanced):
- Disciplines Trained In (e.g., Dressage, Jumping, Trail Riding):
- Previous Therapy Experience (if any):
- Any Specialised Skills or Abilities:
- Systematic application of learning theory (habituation, desensitisation/counter conditioning, positive reinforcement, negative reinforcement).

#### 9.1.3.4 Riding and Workload

- Preferred Riding Discipline (if applicable):
- Maximum Weight Capacity (in kg):
- Workload Limitations (if any):
- Any Known Physical Limitations or Considerations:

### **9.1.4 Additional Notes/Comments**

In bold is information recommended to collect.

Remember to leave enough space for respondents to fill in the required information. Additionally, consider adding contact information for the person completing the form in case any further clarification is needed.

It's essential to customise the form according to the specific needs and requirements of the evaluation system and ensure that the information collected covers all relevant aspects of the evaluated equine.

## **9.2 Tasks and evaluation process**

Proper evaluation conditions are crucial for accurately assessing equines for EAS. These conditions include a familiar environment, adequate space, appropriate facilities, a consistent evaluation team, equine basic needs fulfilled, and prioritising safety measures. Not every equine is ideally suited for every type of EAS, and finding a path that best serves the Qualities of the equine and its welfare is of utmost importance. Understanding these factors can provide valuable insights into potential areas for improvement or alternative roles that better align with the equine's strengths and attributes.

When an individual's equine does not meet the criteria set by EvaSE, it is advised to approach the matter with sensitivity and professionalism. It is recommended to seek the advice and expertise of experienced equine trainers, behaviourists, or professionals. They can provide a more thorough Evaluation of the equine's capabilities and help to identify any specific challenges or limitations that may have impeded the evaluation process.

### **9.2.1 Task Evaluation Scale**

The scale was decided from 1 to 3 (1-Not Suitable, 2-Partially Suitable, 3-Well Suitable) to be easy to evaluate. However, every provider can create its scale to correspond to the outcome expectation and way of execution.

### **9.2.2 Task 1: Evaluation of Equine Conformation**

- Evaluation of overall body structure, proportions, and symmetry.
- Evaluation of the equine's limbs, including alignment, angles, and hoof conformation.
- Evaluation of the equine's head and neck conformation.
- Evaluation of the equine's back and overall musculature.
- Observation of the equine's movement and gait to identify any conformation-related limitations.

### **9.2.3 Task 2: Evaluation of Harmonious and Balanced Gait**

- Evaluation of the equine's rhythmical four beat movement in walk
- Evaluation of the equine's reach of the gait
- Evaluation of the equine's straightness in walk
- Evaluation of the equine's bending in walk
- Evaluation of the character of the movement

#### **9.2.4 Task 3: Evaluation of Positive Association and Bonding to the Human**

- Evaluation of the equine's willingness to approach and engage with humans voluntarily.
- Evaluation of the equine's level of trust and attentiveness.
- Evaluation of the equine's response to handling and interaction with humans.
- Evaluation of the equine's behaviour during EAS activities

#### **9.2.5 Task 4: Evaluation of Habituation to Various (Environmental) Elements and Equines**

- Examine the equine's response to unfamiliar objects or environmental stimuli. Evaluation of the equine's behaviour in different locations, including arenas, trails, and unfamiliar settings
- Evaluation of the equine's tolerance to various environmental factors, such as loud noises or sudden movements.
- Observation of the equine's reactions to the presence of other equines, both in individual and group settings.
- Analysis of the equine's adaptability and ability to maintain focus and calmness in new or changing situations.

#### **9.2.6 Task 5: Evaluation of the Equine's Reaction to Different Sound Stimuli in Adaptive Riding and EFL**

- Evaluation of the equine's response to recorded or live sound stimuli, such as music or spoken words.
- Evaluation of the equine's behaviour during simulated scenarios involving sound effects, applause, or crowd noises.
- Evaluation of the equine's reaction to sudden or unexpected sounds and their ability to remain calm.
- Evaluation of the equine's sensitivity to sound cues given by riders or handlers.
- Evaluation of the equine's ability to maintain focus and perform tasks despite auditory distractions.

#### **9.2.7 Task 6: Evaluation of the Equine can be touched + pressure Applied in Many Places**

- Evaluation of the equine's response to touch in various areas, including head, neck, back, limbs, and belly.
- Evaluation of the equine's comfort level with different types of touch, such as light stroking, firm pressure, or tactile objects.
- Observation of the equine's reaction when pressure is applied to different body parts, such as legs or withers.
- Evaluation of the equine's acceptance of touch and pressure during grooming, tacking up, or mounting procedures.
- Analysis of the equine's ability to remain calm and relaxed when touched or pressure is applied to sensitive areas.

### 9.3 Feedback form

As this is a pilot project, we value your experience and opinion with the EvaSE. Please complete this online form - <https://forms.gle/kdGCJ6BxffJAr5998>.

## 10 Summary

Implementing the EvaSE showcases a commitment to equine welfare and professional standards in EAS. Recognising the diverse nature of EAS practices and the importance of complying with national legislation.

**Methodology Document:** The EvaSE is a comprehensive resource detailing the core components and processes. It provides a step-by-step approach for evaluating equines across six key tasks, including the 1) evaluation of equine conformation, 2) harmonious gait, 3) bonding to humans, 4) habituation to various elements, 5) reaction to sound stimuli, and 6) tolerance to touch and pressure.

**Demonstrating Professionalism and Ethical Practices:** Implementing the EvaSE showcases a commitment to equine welfare and professional standard, safety, and professionalism within the field of EAS. By utilising a comprehensive and standardised evaluation process, practitioners demonstrate their commitment to providing high-quality services, ensuring the well-being of equines, and meeting the expectations of participants, stakeholders, and regulatory bodies.

**Evaluation of Behavioral Responses:** The EvaSE includes tasks that assess the equine's reaction to various stimuli, such as touch, pressure, sound, and environmental elements. Evaluating these responses helps identify signs of stress, fear, or discomfort the equine may exhibit. This allows practitioners to tailor sessions accordingly, ensuring the equine's emotional well-being and minimising the risk of negative experiences.

**Continual Monitoring and Progress Tracking:** The EvaSE is recommended to be applied as an ongoing tool to monitor the equine's progress, well-being, and adaptability in EAS. Regular evaluations help ensure that equines meet the necessary criteria and remain suitable for services. Suppose any concerns or changes in the equine's behaviour or health arise. In that case, appropriate measures can be taken to address them promptly.

**Conclusion:** The creation of EvaSE improved our competencies in the selection and preparation of the equines. It represents a significant milestone in the advancement of EAS standardisation. It can be applied as a comprehensive guide for EAS centres and practitioners, providing the necessary tools to create evaluation procedures that prioritise equine welfare, safety, and the promotion of best practices. By utilising this system, practitioners contribute internationally to EAS's overall growth, credibility, and effectiveness.

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