

**Presenter's name:** Claire Neveux

**Degree, affiliation:** PhD student

**Curriculum vitae:**

Claire Neveux worked in racehorse breeding in France, Ireland and South Africa for several years. She graduated with a master's degree in animal behaviour (University Paris 13-Sorbonne) and became a consultant in equine behaviour in France for over a decade. She is now a PhD student at Bristol Veterinary School (United Kingdom). Her research project focuses on the selection, training and welfare of Post-racing Thoroughbreds used in Equine Assisted Services. This project is carried out by the University of Bristol and the UK-based charity Racing to Relate and is funded by the John Pearce Foundation.

**Category:** Oral presentation

**Topic:** Horse Related Topics: Skills and techniques for working with horses in EAT

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**Title:** POST-RACING THOROUGHBREDS IN EQUINE ASSISTED SERVICES: IS THERE AN IDEAL PROFILE?

**Keyword 1:** Personality

**Keyword 2:** Welfare

**Keyword 3:** racehorses

**Abstract:**

The retraining and welfare of post-racing Thoroughbreds (TBs) is a highly topical issue. TBs are often retrained for sport or leisure purposes and are increasingly being considered for Equine Assisted Services (EAS). However, the personality and behavioural profile of successful TBs in EAS have not yet been evaluated. The objectives of this project were: 1- to identify the perceived characteristics of TBs in EAS programmes, 2- to characterise the personality and behavioural profile of successful TBs used in EAS. The first phase, an online survey aimed at EAS practitioners, received 129 responses, of which 56.3% (71) agreed that TBs have specific characteristics making them especially useful for EAS. Respondents particularly mentioned their sensitivity, body/movement characteristics, responsiveness, intelligence, and past experience. Detailed survey information was provided about 57 TBs (median age: 14 years old, geldings: 78.57%) who were less frequently used in ridden EAS programmes than other breeds (OBs) (31.58% vs 64.85%,  $p < 0.001$ ). The second phase, an experimental study, compared the

personality of 52 TBs and 44 OBs all used in EAS, and 55 TBs in general retraining. TBs in EAS were more sensitive to tactile stimulation ( $p < 0.001$ ) than OBs. Even if TBs showed stronger responses on some emotivity tests (unknown surface,  $p < 0.05$ ), their response to other tests such as the suddenness test was lower than OBs ( $p < 0.01$ ). TBs in general retraining expressed higher emotivity reactions ( $p < 0.01$ ) and more positive behaviours towards humans ( $p < 0.05$ ) when stabled than successful EAS horses. These results move towards an understanding of the key features of successful TBs used in EAS programmes. TBs are capable of adapting to some EAS programmes and could be selected from general retraining.