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PhD in Neurosciences University of Salamanca, Spain, and a Master Degree in Zootechnical Engineering, from the University of Evora, Portugal, she made her fellowship and Graduation Thesis, at INRA, Tours, at Centre de Bien Être Animal et Ethologie , in France. Coordinator of some Research Projects in the field of Human-horse relationships", and Author of several Research Articles focusing on the effects of stress in emotional outcomes. Collaborator at the Institute of Neurosciences of Castilla y Leon, in Spain. Founder and President of the International organization THEKIDSFELLOWs Research Group in Anthrozoology, is working in some international Projects. Academic member of the International Society for Equitation Sciences (ISES) and Associate Editor of HETI, The Federation of Horses in Education and Therapy International.

Category: Poster

Topic: Treatment methods of equine-assisted psychotherapy: Natural horsemanship techniques: the horse as a base of connection and communication

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Title: HOW DOES HORSES HEAL? AN OVERVIEW OF THE LITERATURE ON THE IMPACTS OF EQUINE-ASSISTED SERVICES ON HUMAN'S HEALTH AND RESILIENCE

Keyword 1: human-horse bond

Keyword 2: coping with stress

Keyword 3: mental support

Abstract:

Since the beginning of the century, the World Health Organization (WHO) has considered stress as the health epidemic of the 21st century, acknowledging its devastating effects on our emotional and physical health. In the last few years, lifestyles, and rhythms, as well as various traumatic, sudden, and uncontrollable events (unexpected wars, COVID pandemic, natural disasters and economic crisis) escalated distress, and anxiety feelings, more visible in vulnerable populations. The need to develop programs for stress intervention has increased and there is some research on interventions with horses, but it is still too general and scattered. Recognizing the importance that Equine Assisted services (EAS) might have as a support for the health and well-being of various populations, this study aimed to collect the latest published works focusing on using horses for mental support. We aimed to identify and describe key concepts and information about these interventions, highlighting populations, contexts, methodologies, and results, to deepen the contribution that EAS may offer as an approach to deal with stressful or difficult events. Preliminary results, reviewed herein, suggest that the implicit features of the horse (as a social, sensitive, fearful, and powerful animal) by eliciting

emotions and attachment, might be the basis for their potential therapeutic role. From the review emerged the several theories that have been constructed about the working mechanisms in EAS, all recognizing their meaningful potential to enhance resilience and mental health, across various contexts. But it also identifies the several limitations in the existing literature. The implications and recommendations for future research are discussed, demanding more objective and adequate methodologies, to fully understand EAS effectiveness in mental health, in different settings and age groups