



UNIVERSITIES FEDERATION FOR ANIMAL WELFARE

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Blindfolding Makes Horses More Nervous

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The use of blindfolds on horses during handling and transport makes them more stressed and less well-behaved a leading scientific journal reveals.

The study is in the November issue of *Animal Welfare* (volume 13, issue 4) which is published by leading scientific charity the Universities Federation for Animal Welfare.

Blindfolding has been shown to have a calming effect on other species such as cattle and poultry. However, researchers found that blindfolding significantly increased heart rate and fractious behaviour in all three experimental situations. These were at rest in the stable, whilst being led in a ménage and during loading onto a lorry. Applying blinkers to the horses affected them in a similar but milder way. The horses became even more difficult and stressed when handled by the least experienced handler.

Despite the negative impact on the horses, the use of blindfolding should not be ruled out to help handle difficult animals where safety maybe otherwise compromised.

The study involved 15 horses (nine mares and six geldings) aged between four and 30 years. Animal breed and type ranged from large thoroughbred to a small mixed-breed pony which represents the range of horses kept throughout the UK for recreational purposes.

It was carried out at the School of Veterinary Science, University of Bristol, and was supported by a Dorothy Sidley award from the Humane Slaughter Association (www.hsa.org.uk).

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SCIENCE IN THE SERVICE OF ANIMAL WELFARE

Chief Executive and Scientific Director: James K Kirkwood BVSc PhD CBiol FIBiol MRCVS
Secretary: Donald C Davidson
Registered Charity No. 207996 (Registered in England) and Company Limited by Guarantee No. 579991



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The Universities Federation for Animal Welfare (www.ufaw.org.uk) is an internationally recognised, independent, scientific and educational charity. It promotes high standards of welfare for all animals including wild, captive, farm, laboratory animals and pets. It depends on members and supporters for all funding. UFAW improves animal welfare worldwide through its programme of awards, grants and scholarship schemes; by public education especially at university and college level; by providing information in books, videos, articles, technical reports and in its quarterly scientific journal *Animal Welfare*; by providing expert advice to government departments including the drafting of legislation and guidelines, and by working with animal keepers, scientists, vets, lawyers and all those who care about animals.

“Improvements in the care of animals are not now likely to come of their own accord, merely by wishing them: there must be research and it is in sponsoring research of this kind, making its results widely known, that UFAW performs one of its most valuable services.” (Sir Peter Medawar, CBE, FRS, 8th May 1957 – Nobel Laureate (1960), Chairman of the UFAW Scientific Advisory Committee 1951-1962)

The Humane Slaughter Association (www.hsa.org.uk) is an independent, scientific and technical animal welfare charity. Formed in 1911, it was originally The Council of Justice to Animals. It is unique as it is the only charity which specialises in the welfare of food animals worldwide throughout the marketing, transport and slaughter process. It depends on donations, subscriptions and legacies for its income. Its aims are met by researching, refining and demonstrating slaughter methods; by publishing educational material such as guidelines, books and videos; by funding research projects and the development of equipment. Specialist technical staff give rational, practical and expert advice on all welfare issues relating to food animals.

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