

## **The unnatural management of stallions by humans in the breeding situation:**

### **Man versus Nature from the Stallion's perspective**

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The presentation will review a number of issues pertinent to stallion reproduction.

Firstly, fundamental differences between natural breeding behaviours and those imposed upon the domestic horse will be reviewed and the effects of these upon the physiology of the stallion and ultimately fertility will be outlined. Academics have clarified the breeding behaviours of free-running equids and compared to those kept in domestic breeding yards (McDonnell, 2000). Such work has been available through traditional routes of scientific communication for some time, namely through publication in peer-reviewed journals. However, lessons from these studies are not being adopted widespread in breeding yards. Several reasons for this may exist, including difficulty for breeders and vets to gain access to such data which are published in subscription-only journals. Thoughts on improving the communication of research findings which may be of practical use to the breeder and veterinarian will be discussed.

Second, the lack of a single, simple test to accurately estimate stallion fertility will be considered. Current measures of fertility have inherent advantages and disadvantages, which will be outlined in the presentation. Factors may include practicality of use, expense, technicality of the procedure (e.g. flow cytometry) as well as true value of some measures for accurate interpretation (e.g. sperm motility).

Finally, the issue of Equine Viral Arteritis (EVA) will be raised, particularly with reference to control and monitoring measures and whether these are fit for purpose

or require further consideration and potential changes to codes of practice. For example, EVA may be more easily controlled should all stallions be required to be vaccinated against the disease; a practice which is only optional in the UK. The advantages and disadvantages of vaccination will be debated and ideas for a positive way forward to improve the control EVA will be welcomed from the floor.

## **References**

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McDonnell, S (2000) Reproductive behaviour of stallions and mares: comparison of free-running and domestic in-hand breeding. *Animal Reproduction Science*. **60-61**: 211-219.