The Effect of Talking on a Horse’s Heart Rate When Grooming the Neck and Withers After Exercise

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The bond between horse and human is a crucial part of equine therapy, as well as various equine activities. This experiment studied the effect of different combinations of talking to and/or grooming a horse on the neck and withers after exercise. The objective of the project is to lower the heart rate, which benefits the equine world in therapy and competitions. The horses were split into two groups to collect data for the control of neither grooming nor talking, just talking, just grooming, and both talking and grooming. Their resting heart rates were taken with a stethoscope before exercise. The horses were exercised for three minutes, and the heart rate was taken immediately after. One of the four tests was then administered for one minute, and the heart rate was taken again. Eight rounds of data and 186 tests were collected. The results indicated a statistically significant difference in heart rate with a p-value of .000 in all tests performed, talking and grooming combined being the most effective group. Talking to a horse is a non-threatening interaction, which could further decrease stress levels and enhance positive behavior changes in those involved in equine therapy. This project shows an effective way to cool down a horse, which helps prevent pneumonia and other ailments, as well as having the potential to improve performance, and help horses in various situations and environments including competitions such as endurance racing or leisure activities.

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