

HORSE INDUSTRY STAKEHOLDERS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS BIT-RELATED MOUTH LESIONS IN HARNESS RACING HORSES – A PILOT STUDY

K. Tuomola^{a*}, N. Mäki-Kihniä^b, A. Valros^a, A. Mykkänen^c and M. Kujala-Wirth^d

^a Research Centre for Animal Welfare, Department of Production Animal Medicine, University of Helsinki, Finland

^b Independent researcher, Pori, Finland

^c Department of Equine and Small Animal Medicine, Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, University of Helsinki, Finland

^d Department of Production Animal Medicine, Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, University of Helsinki, Finland

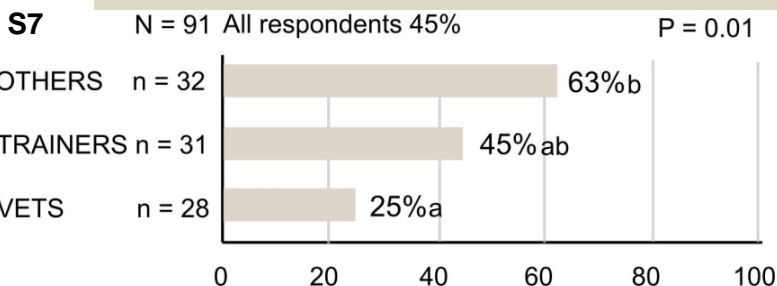
* kati.tuomola@helsinki.fi

1. INTRODUCTION

- In harness racing the horse's mouth is examined if bleeding is observed.
- The veterinarian may remove a horse with mouth lesion from the race or require a health certificate before the next race.
- The aim was to investigate differences in horse industry stakeholders' attitudes towards bit-related lesions in harness racing horses.

2. MATERIAL AND METHODS

- 12 photographs of authentic moderate or severe oral wounds with imaginary scenarios.
- Q: Allow to compete or not?
- Q: Require a health certificate or not?
- Respondents N = 93
 - VETS (vets + race vet assistants) n = 28
 - TRAINERS n = 32
 - OTHERS n = 33
- Pearson Chi-square test



Proportion of respondents removing the horse from the race.

Photo of a lesion in the left bar.



3. RESULTS

- Between groups, statistical differences in responses in 6 out of 12 scenarios.
- OTHERS withdrew the horse from the race or stipulated a health certificate more frequently than other groups did.

4. CONCLUSIONS

- In this study veterinarians, assistants, and trainers less commonly withdrew the horse from the race or required a health certificate than did other stakeholders such as grooms.
- Differences in ethical attitudes might cause conflicts.
- Not removing horses with severe oral lesions from the race might compromise horse welfare and society's trust in the discipline's surveillance system.