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Natural and Classic Type of Stables

Case: Club de Polo y Equitación and Equilibre in Chile

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Natural and Classic Types of Stables
Case: Club de Polo y Equitación and Equilibre

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Luonnollisten ja klassisten hevostallien vertailu
Vertailu: Luonnolliset ja klassiset tallit

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Tämä opinnäytetyö vertailee Chilessä sijaitsevaa kahta erilaista hevostallityyppiä, jotka ovat luonnollinen ja klassinen tyyppi. Luonnollinen hevostalli tarkoittaa paikkaa hevosille, mikä on mahdollisimman lähellä hevosten luonnollisia elinoloja, niin kuin ne olisivat vapaudessa. Paikassa ei välttämättä edes ole itse tallia tai minkäänlaisia sisäkarsinoita, vaan hevoset pidetään ulkona koko päivän ja niitä ruokitaan tavallisella ruoalla tarpeen mukaan. Klassisella hevostallilla tarkoitetaan yleisimpiä ja suosituimpia talleja, joissa hevosilla on sisätila, talli tai karsina, yksi jokaiselle. Jokaisella hevosella on oma ruokavalionsa ja hevostarvikkeita on käytössä enemmän. Tavoitteenani on, että jokaisen hevosen omistaja olisi hieman kehittyneempi hevosen hoidossa ja tietoisempi hevostrendeistä.

Tutkimuksen tavoitteena on saada enemmän käytännön tietoa luonnollisista hevostalleista hevosen omistajille, hevosharrastajille ja matkailijoille. Opinnäytetyössä käsitellään ja vertaillaan tallityyppien negatiivisia ja positiivisia ominaisuuksia. Tutkimuksen kohteena ovat olosuhteet talleilla ja ulkotarhoilla, ruokinta ja toiminnan kustannukset.

Tutkimusmenetelminä käytetään havainnointia ja kameralla dokumentointia molemmilla talleilla.

Opinnäytetyön tulosten mukaan useimmissa tapauksissa luonnollinen hevostallityyppi on hevosystävällisempi kuin klassinen vaihtoehto. Tuloksissa korostuu myös, kuinka paljon samanlaisuuksia on hevosilla, jotka elävät luonnollisessa tallityypissä ja hevosilla, jotka elävät vapaudessa. Kun hevoset ovat tyytyväisiä ja niistä pidetään hyvää huolta, myös tallilla käyvät omistajat ja asiakkaat ovat tyytyväisiä ja nauttivat enemmän tallilla harrastamisesta. Negatiivisia ja positiivisia puolia löytyy molemmista vaihtoehdoista ja niiden esiintuominen on tarkeaa. Keskustelemalla aiheesta ja ottamalla huomioon erilaisia näkökulmia voidaan saada hyvä kokonaiskuva. Muun muassa hevostallien olosuhteita parantamalla voidaan kehittää ja markkinoida hevosmatkailua.

Asiasanat: Chile, hevonen, hevosmatkailu

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Abstract

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Natural and Classic Types of Stables.
Case: Club de Polo y Equitación and Equilibre

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This thesis compares two different stabling options for horses: natural and classic type. A natural stable means a place for horses which equivalent the most natural way possible, as if the horses would be in freedom. There might not be any in-door boxes, horses are staying outside basically the whole day and they are fed the basic food a horse needs. The classic type of a stable means the most popular one where there are stables; one for each horse, specific food diet for everyone, and the equipment used are more elegant and there are many extra supplements to make every person's horse hobby or job more sophisticated. In this thesis the negative and positive aspects of both types are studied, getting into more details on stables, feeding, paddocks and costs.

The primary objective of writing this thesis is to show horse owners and other people interested in horses the natural type of a stable, which in many cases is more horse friendly than the classic type. This study emphasizes the similarities the natural stable has with horses being in freedom than when they live in classic stables. When the horses are happy and well taken care of, also the customers will enjoy more being at the stables. As research methods observation on both types of stables was used.

There are negative and positive sides in both types of stables which are brought up in the study. By discussing the topic from many different points of view it gives a good picture of it as a whole. The topics discussed include positive and negative aspects of stables, feeding and paddocks, comparison of costs of both types, and development suggestions.

Keywords: stables, horses, horse tourism development

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1 Introduction

I did not think of, or at least I tried not to think about, a topic of my thesis during my first and second year of studies. Actually the first idea of my topic found me when I was talking with my housemates. They knew I was interested in horses since during that time I went to one nearby stable many times a week. They threw ideas for me such as "How to build a good stable" or "Guiding horse treks in Finland or abroad". Those ideas stayed in my head for more than a year till one day I was writing a diary of my internship for school and I found my current topic which I know a lot about and what would be good to write about.

My second internship was conducted at a horse stable in Santiago, Chile. That stable is "a natural type of a stable" which in short means that the horses are kept in a very natural way, not in indoor-stables but all the time outside, along with the other horses, never alone. They looked so much happier and did not have any of the normal illnesses which many horses have who are kept inside in boxes. Therefore I wanted to examine it more closely and write my thesis about it so maybe this will give a different point of view to people who have their own horse(s) and are thinking about which kind of a stable to choose for their horses. I wanted to find out if it is necessary to give a special food diet for every horse or if horses need a cover outside or if a horse will be more sick when it has been kept inside all day.

Horses' wellbeing in the development of horse tourism is the main reason why I chose this topic. I care for horses and I want them to be as happy as possible, still taking into consideration what their owners' goals are. I would like to make people more aware of natural riding centers in cases when they are not competing in high level of horse competitions, and even though they were, classic stables could still adapt some characteristics from the natural version. I am not saying natural stables are the one and only option to keep horses in but depending on the climate and the use of a horse which option would be better. As I would like horses to live more naturally, maybe my thesis will encourage horse owners to choose the natural way.

To start off, I have one real example of both types of stables with good photos and explanations. What I will furthermore discuss about are the positive and negative aspects of both stable types.

1.1 Research method and aims

I will use observation as my research method. I received the permission to go to both types of stables and take photos for this work. Since my topics will concern feeding, paddocks, and

stables I will try to take many good photos of Club de Polo and Equilibre but in case it is not possible I will use the Internet as my other source for illustrative photos.

My aim is to be as objective as possible when comparing these two stabling possibilities.

Depending on the horse owner what he/she wants to do with the horse, also which kind of a stable to choose. I would like to tell the positive and negative aspects of both to give more information for other people interested in horses and hopefully make their decision easier.

2 Club de Polo y Equitación - a classic type of a stable

No matter where in the world you go, the classic type of stables are always easy to find since they are without a doubt the most popular and desired ones. As for the purpose for this thesis I did not face any difficulties finding one in Santiago, Chile. I visited a stable "Club de Polo y Equitación" (CPE). It is a very sophisticated stable which also has its own gym/spa, tennis, football and golf sections, all of them must be paid separately according to one's interests. The sections for horses include horses for polo competitions and the other one for show jumping and dressage. I was not able to go to the Polo Club since I am not a member but I could enter the stables for show jumpers with my friend who is working there. People who are not members are normally not allowed to enter the area; they can only be invited occasionally by a club member. To be a member you will have to pay a membership fee which is around 30.000,00 Euros, plus a monthly rent for your horse, his food and riding classes, so by no means it is a cheap hobby.

There are about 160 horses, nearly all of them have different owners and are competing. They live in boxes all year round (Figure 1) because there are only 6 paddocks and they are for sick horses.



Figure 1: Horses living in their own boxes all day. In CPE there are 5 stable buildings which have boxes on both sides. (Jokinen 2012)

Many horses have their own care taker who helps the owner to get the horse ready before a class and they also help walk the horse in the end and take off the equipment afterwards. CPE is a fancy stable and they even have a walking machine for the horses to be walked before or after an exercise, or sometimes that can be the only exercise during a day (Figure 2). All the horses I could see during one day were clipped, meaning their hair was cut really short all over their body. The reason for this is to make the sweat dry faster after a hard exercise, make brushing easier and faster, and make a horse look tidier in general.

Next to every box there is a closet where the owner of the horse keeps all the equipment. Every horse has its own saddle, bridles, grooming gear, cover, hoof oil, leg protectors, and the owner can keep his/her helmet, jacket, gloves etc. there as well (Figure 3). In bigger stables such as CPE it is good to keep the equipment separately in order to avoid for an example skin diseases. They can be spread among horses by brushes or covers under the saddle. Within 160 horses it would be difficult to control otherwise.



Figure 2: A horse exercising in a walking machine. (Jokinen 2012)



Figure 3: Personal closet for every horse owner to keep all the equipment safe and in a good condition. (Jokinen 2012)

Another extra that not all stables have, CPE has 2 covered arenas. One smaller and other bigger (Figure 4). There are also two large arenas for show jumping.



Figure 4: Large indoor-arena to ride horses (Jokinen 2012)

3 Equilibre - a natural type of a stable

Equilibre was chosen to be the other example because I had my 2nd internship there during my 3rd year of studies. Equilibre is located in Santiago, Chile. Santiago is the capital city with more than 6 million inhabitants. The whole city is surrounded by the big Andes mountain range on the east and the other mountain range on the west. At least in Santiago it is not allowed to build houses higher than in 1000m altitude, and just above that limit you can enjoy riding horses of Equilibre.

That is one reason why many of the students enjoy coming there because they love to get out of the rush, traffic jam and pollution in downtown. The location is not far from the center of Santiago but far enough to feel you are in countryside. From the stables you can see a spectacular view of the whole Santiago city, especially in the evening time.

Equilibre is owned by a French woman, Sandra Meynard, who has lived in Chile for 10 years (Figure 5). She has diplomas in sports tourism, riding teacher and trek guide from France and she is a horseback riding guide and instructor accredited by Association of Chilean Adventure travel agencies (CATA). She has worked with horses in France, Costa Rica and Spain before she moved to Chile.



Figure 5: Sandra Meynard guiding a horse trek on Chilean mountains. (Meynard 2009)

In addition to Sandra, there are only two other persons working to run the business. Equilibre offers riding lessons from basic to advanced level, courses for companies, jumping, dressage, horse games, horse treks and summer camps. Equilibre focuses more on riding in the arena but of course there are every week treks on the mountains. Teaching consists of the basics about the English technique, games and jumping. In addition, students will learn practical and theoretical skills of the horses: how to prepare for riding and competitions, day to day care taking, feeding and about physiology. Depending on the teaching objectives if either traditional English saddle or Chilean saddle is used.

The riding center has good facilities for horses and people. It is very simple and cozy. One sand arena 20m x 50m (Figure 6), one circle training area with roofing, jumps in the forest, 5 paddocks for horses with shelters, small reception/office with bathroom and shower, and a barbeque area.



Figure 6: Sand arena and covered circle arena in the back (Jokinen 2012)



Figure 7: Office, saddle rooms and area to get horses ready for classes (Jokinen 2012)

4 Horses in freedom

Wild horses live in big herds, everyone having their own status in the hierarchy which is solved by every day interactions. There is always one *male* and one *female* leader (=stallion and mare). Stallion is the one who protects the whole herd from predators and the mare being the leader who leads all the other horses to a safer place while the stallion is fighting with the predator(s). The mare decides where the herd, including the stallion, stays. A place with good grass and water, shelter and far from any danger. Horses prefer wide open spaces when they can spot possible dangers from far.

Humans have kept horses as pets for thousands of years but always will have their wild instincts. If there is anything that frightens a horse, the number one reaction is to get away from the scary object. Primary way to defense themselves is to run away, and then think what it was what they ran out from. Horses are not aggressive naturally. Times when they seem to be aggressive are when they play with each other or when they are defending themselves from predators. If a horse is not feeling secure, it will very soon start becoming defensive.

It is natural for horses to become emotional when they are taken away from their herd but they can learn trust humans as their leaders if we know how to lead them. Horses are natural followers, they feel comfortable following the other horses. (Cooper 2012)

There are few simple things which horses need to feel happy mentally, physically and emotionally. First the very basic needs; water and grass accessible at all times; then also shelter and other horses' company. Especially for younger horses it is important to spend time with other horses which have about the same age to be able to grow normally and in a healthy way. In addition a big space to run is important to keep the horse in shape and its hooves in a good condition. In wild horses travel 20-30 kilometers a day, and if people cannot simulate that travelling done by riding them, a big paddock will do. If a horse is injured, proper healthcare is needed. If a horse is to be ridden, proper and fitted equipment must be used. Extra accessories add to this list is not of much importance.

5 Positive and negative aspects of classic stables

One of the unfortunate facts about classic stables is that in too many cases the horses are kept far from their natural environment; most part of the day inside and when they go out the paddock is very small, sometimes with nothing to eat, and the horse is there alone. When a horse is kept this way, it can have a big negative effect on his behavior.

The classic type is better for horses which are competing in a high level of competitions and need more protection from the weather, insects, scratches, regular times for feeding and specific type of food to eat and good facilities and equipment to be trained in. Those stables are beautiful and well taken care of but the dark side of those stables is that the horses most definitely are not as happy as in natural stables. That is when it comes to the topic of horse wellbeing and illnesses. Evaluation criteria are based on stables, feeding, paddock and cost of having either one of the stable options. I chose those criteria since they are the one which makes the biggest differences.

5.1 Stables

In cold countries such as in Scandinavia, Canada, Russia etc. it is nearly a necessity to have a stable to protect the horses from harsh winters. There are only few breeds that can handle as cold temperatures as there can be during winter time but others will need a shelter. The stable does not need to be heated. When all the horses are inside they will warm the stable by themselves with their body heat. If the stable is heated too much it is difficult for the horses to get used to the weather outside and they might not grow their winter hair as they are supposed to in order to keep warm. Also excessive amount of grooming and washing the horse makes the natural grease disappear from the horse's hair and it will not be as waterproof.

Even in cold countries and in winter time the horses are not supposed to stay inside all the cold season. Daytime they can be let outside with a warm cover on (Figure 8).



Figure 8: A horse with a cover on. (Jokinen 2012)

Another good reason for having stables is that sick horses can be put there for awhile to heal themselves. They can lie down and relax without having to worry about anything. Also if they have a broken leg they are forced to rest and keep calm the first days which will help with the healing process. Otherwise there is no reason for stables.

The problems come with the boxes where the horses are kept separately and for a long time. Again comparing to a natural environment which would be the most ideal, the horses are not used to staying inside nor being isolated from its species. This separation brings problems and many mental illnesses.

In that sense CPE would have a lot to develop but we have to remember that there are only competing horses and their owners want to keep them as clean, healthy and without scratches as possible. That is not ideal for the horses but at least they shine when going to shows and it is easier to sell them when they are looking perfect. Natural stables are a fairly new thing in the horse world and many horse owners are overly protective with their horses, even with the ones without a show career. They might not have the knowledge, trust and/or willingness to believe that their horse would survive without stables. Also with stables it is more comfortable for people; if it is raining or really windy it is better to stay inside getting the horse ready, feed or groom them.

There are some horsemen and -women who lecture and share their information on natural horse care and that is one which one day might change how things are in the horse world.

5.2 Feeding

Since horses have been as "pleasure animals" for us for thousands of years, we of course want to protect them the best possible way. In stables we can make sure the horses will have their food and water, and there are less possibilities for the horse to get hurt.

A wild horse needs naturally only two things to eat; grass and water. That is enough to keep the horse alive and happy in the natural environment. Those horses eat 70% of the time, rest and play. When talking about a pet horse who is ridden many times a week, it will need at least bigger portions of food if not some extra supplements. The pet horses, especially the ones who compete in high level of competitions, have to be kept very healthy. To get the maximum capacity of a horse, you have to pay attention also to small details. In the classic type stables it is easy to do that. Since there is one separate box for each horse, it is possible to make sure that each horse has its own specialized food to eat and it can be given any hour of the day. There is no chances that any other horse would take part of it. In this way the horse owner can maximize the nutritional benefits for his/her horse.

The horse food industry is a big business but it is not always based on the natural requirements of the horse. Horses are grazers who travel long distances in wild in order to find grass and water as the wild grasses are low in nutrition. (all-natural-horse-care.com 2012)

There are not really any negative sides in feeding as long as the horse is not overfed or not fed enough. The only negative aspect would be that the horse does not need every mineral and vitamin there is in the stores but if the owner is a perfectionist and his/her horse is used for competitions there must be some extra nutrition. Many horses are fed the extra nutrition without the need of it.



Figure 9: Different types of extra food for horses at Eggersmann Aquamarket. (Jokinen 2012)

5.3 Paddocks

Depending on which country you go to but in many countries in Europe, especially with stables with world famous competing horses, they do not get to be outside nearly as much as they should. And when they do have the chance to go out, the paddock most likely is very small and the horse must be there alone in order to protect him from hurting himself. When we separate horses like this, it is one way how we can put a horse into "a jail" for his life till his competing career is over. Physical contact is even more important for horses than it is for humans.

Again, there are positive effects when using separation. There are fewer chances a horse will break his leg or get scratches which will not look good when showing in a competition. It is an easy way to minimize all the scratches and bites and make the horse look very healthy. Also if a horse is alone in a paddock it is easier to give some food to him without any other horse eating it.

The negative points are that horses can only see each other but it is difficult to have any physical contact which is of much importance, they do not learn to respect and other skills from other horses the same way as they would when they are together. In small paddocks they do not get to move enough to get their daily exercise. With riding it is possible to compensate that but in many cases the horse needs more physical exercise.

In a perfect paddock there is always water, grass, some shelter to protect from hot or cold weather and diverse terrain. CPE would have a lot to improve in the matter of paddocks. I was shocked when I heard there are 160 horses and I could see only 6 paddocks. The only times when the horses get out are when they are ridden or if they become sick.

5.4 Illnesses

If a horse behaves strangely, there is always a reason for it. Whether it is something physical, mental or emotional, many times there is also very easy cure for it. It can be an equipment which does not fit and that is why a horse is kicking or biting. It can be boredom why a horse is chewing wood, and for that it must be let out more to play with other horses. Behavior which harms the horse or people is not acceptable but instead of punishing the horse for doing that, look for the reasons behind it and try to help. The horse is only trying to communicate with a human and wanting to tell them there is a problem. Never ignore a situation like this. When a problem is ignored for long enough time the horse might not get back to normal again even though the situation has changed.

The Major causes which bring behavioral problems are physical pain and/or that the horses are separated from one another. Many horses have these problems in classic stables when they cannot interact with other of the same species. They get bored and that brings up

unwanted behavior such as air sucking, wood biting, head tossing, weaving etc. Mental health problems can develop because the horse has physical and/or emotional problems caused by people. We can overcome these problems by improving our knowledge of horse psychology, horsemanship, equipment and hoof/health care. Some horses can cope better with pain than others. In all cases it is in the horses' nature that they will hide every physical problem they might have since in wild if they show any weaknesses, they will be the next lunch for a predator. (Naturalhorseworld.com 2012)

When I was working in Equilibre the first weeks I was amazed how none of the horses had any of the major illnesses that I have seen in many, many other classic stables and which are listed above. There are always between 4 and 12 horses in one paddock, they have their pecking order solved, no-one bites wood, sucks air, weaves or tosses head. Everyone, including young horses, are calm while being groomed and saddled, they do not bite or kick. In total there are about 25 horses. The only "illnesses" I could find were small scratches on almost every horse and sometimes someone had a sore leg, which does not sound too bad among 25 horses.

In CPE I found marks of wood biting in all of the paddocks (Figure 9) and one horse sucking air in his box. I did not have many hours time to observe but the time I had I tried to see as much as I could. It is not that the horses are treated badly, the way they live is not natural. The care takers are not aggressive (as you can see in some stables) and they know how to give care for the horses, many of the owners come to see their horse many times a week, it is impossible to find even one scratch from a horse since they are all the time inside and there is no chance they could hit themselves or that other horse could do something. Furthermore, if a horse has been stabled since it was born it is not used to being outside like horses in Equilibre. Still, some hours outside besides riding would do good for them.



Figure 10: Marks of wood biting in a paddock. Sign of boredom. (Jokinen 2012)

6 Positive and negative aspects of natural stable

The natural stable, like Equilibre –example above, provides a more natural environment for horses. They are stables where the horses are kept the in a very natural way as they would live in freedom. Many times a practice called “Natural horsemanship” is used. “Natural Horsemanship has increased our awareness of relationships with horses – the terms partnership, respect, leader, alpha etc. have become common. A natural horseman is someone who gives the horse security. The horse perceives them as a Lead or Alpha horse, someone the horse can trust, follow, look to and respect.” (Cooper. 2012)

“Natural horsemanship focuses on working with the horse’s natural behavior, instincts and personality in a clear and kind manner. Studies of horses in the wild have given the foundation on which this is based. Body language is used to communicate to the horse and by learning to listen to the horse by watching for subtle moves that indicate understanding, a two-way conversation can be achieved.” (All Natural Horse Care. 2012)

6.1 Stables and feeding

When talking about natural stables, it can mean no stables at all. The word “stable” only tells that there are horses. In reality, they live outside in a paddock all night and day. It is the very natural way of being outside all the time. If there are stables they are most definitely, like in Equilibre, made for sick horses. The natural type stables in cold countries must consider the

stable option unless there are only horses which can deal with the cold. Not many horses can survive the winters night and day without a stable to go into at least for the nights or if there is a storm.

Physical health is taken care of by offering the most natural options that there are; water, grass and shelter. In natural stables giving a specified diet for the horses is possible but a little more time consuming than in classic stables since they do not have any separate boxes or yards. That can be dealt with by tying the horses on trees and then giving them the food.

6.2 Paddocks

As mentioned at the very beginning of the thesis, a horse does not need anything too special to feel perfectly happy. Left outside in a big meadow with the company of other horses of the same age (Figure 10), enough water accessible, grass to eat, and a shelter and/or trees to protect from sun and cold (Figure 11) will keep the horses as happy as they would be in total freedom. Living in a herd they learn the social skills that only other horses can teach. With human care they do not even have to be worried about predators.



Figure 11: Horses in Equilibre living outside in a big paddock all night and day. There are many trees to protect them from the sun and wind, and they have correct company. (Jokinen 2012)

Many times especially in very dry areas it is difficult to provide fresh grass for horses. For an example in the northern part of Chile it rarely rains so the grass does not grow and for that reason the horses must be fed extra hay because there is no grass in the paddocks.

In nature, horses spend time grazing 17 hours or more a day. Their stomach is relatively small and so eating small amounts many times is ideal. If the stomach is left empty for long periods of time the stomach lining can be damaged which happens more with stabled horses. (All Natural Horse Care. 2012.)

Horses have a natural mechanism in their body which helps them to keep warm. They have tiny muscles attached to every single hair and when the weather cools down the muscle tenses, lifts the hair up and creates a space between the hair and the skin to store air warmed by the horse itself. Whenever it comes to extreme weather conditions and this system is not enough, there are covers for horses which they can use while spending time outside (Figure 12).

When horses move in the paddock it helps gaining more bone density. This is particularly important for foals and young horses. Different type of terrains stimulates the hooves and conditions them at the same time. If a horse is getting enough movement, its hooves will start to maintain themselves. This is called self-trimming. Hills and rocks will help develop tendons and muscles and aid the horse in becoming more surefooted. (All Natural Horse Care. 2012.)



Figure 12: Wooden shelter to protect from the sun. Because it does not have any walls it does not protect from wind but in that area there is not so much wind it would bother the horses (Jokinen 2012)

6.3 Illnesses

Horses living in natural stables have fewer problems than the ones who live in classic stables. It is possible to see that many of them are calmer and they do not have problems in a big herd with other horses.

The usual problems with horses in natural stables are scratches from bites or kicks from other horses when they are solving the hierarchy of the herd or only playing (Figures 12, 13, 14). Horses are social animals and since they have all the day socializing with other horses they will not have mental or emotional problems such as in classic stable types.

Another normal problem comes up when a new horse is brought to the stables and it usually takes time for him to find his own place in the herd. The other horses can try to kick, bite and keep more separated from the original herd but it is only a matter of time when the newcomer is accepted.



Figure 13: Scratches on the loin. (Jokinen 2012)



Figure 14: A chafe on the belly because of an unfitted girth. (Jokinen 2012)



Figure 15: Big scratches on the hind leg which are almost totally healed. (Jokinen 2012)

7 Development of horse tourism

In this chapter three different factors are introduced which affect or might have an affect on horse tourism.

7.1 Costs

The aspect in this thesis that most affect horse tourism business probably is the cost effectiveness. Every stable owner who are doing tourism business wants to decrease the cost to the minimum to also offer lower cost tours for regular clients and tourists.

Factors that have to be taken into consideration are hiring enough people to run the business such as cleaners, riders, veterinarians and trainers. In addition, basic food and extra supplements for the horses, equipment such as saddles, bridles, covers, brushes and tools. For maintaining the stables and paddocks you will need paint, brushes, shovels etc. For the boxes there must be something soft on top of the floor to make it more comfortable for a horse, for an example peat or sawdust.

Natural stable can be very cheap. Since there are neither stables nor boxes to clean there are less people working there, none of the peat or sawdust, and one big building less to maintain.

Of course there are the basic needs which have to be covered in the both stable types such as grass/hay and water, riding equipment, veterinary costs, some hoof maintenance, and maintenance of the buildings.

7.2 Customers' safety

Thinking of a company which organizes horse treks or just normal riding classes, the most part of the customers will not have much if any experience of horse riding and for that reason it is essential to have horses which are trustable and calm. In general, if horses can live close to freedom and have company of other horses they are calmer. For that reason I would prefer the natural type. There are of course exceptions, not that all horses in the classic stables are nervous and difficult to handle.

7.3 First impression

When tourists come to any stable they get right away their first impression of the whole place. The classic stables such as CPE would be an ideal place to make the tourists think the horses are treated the best way and the horses are enjoying their lives as in no other place. In contrary to the other option, the natural stables the tourists might think the horses are treated badly because they have scratches, grown long hair for winter and it does not look so tidy or because they are outside even when the weather is not good. Natural stables are something so new that it might create prejudices in some people. Too many people want to treat horses like humans. It should be remembered they are horses-animals who are not supposed to look perfectly clean. On a hot sunny day horses like to have a mud cover to protect them from the hotness and insects.

Still, even though natural stables would be financially much cheaper and the horses would be calmer, it is not the popular stable type. I blame the need of the people to protect their horses so much that they become blind to the knowledge that the horses would be fine without stables in countries where it does not get too cold. Classic stables are still the current trends but I hope the natural option will come to the same level sometime soon.

8 Development suggestions

As I visited CPE I also asked a few people how satisfied they are with the stables and if there were something they could improve. All of them were very happy and they liked the fancy style. One of them mentioned that it would be better if the horses would get to go outside

more. For them the fact that horses should be more outside did not have too much of an importance.

I then decided to come up with a new paddock option which would be easy to make and good for horses. To make the horses move more the picture below shows what kind of a paddock would be useful. Inside a bigger fence there can be built a smaller one to create a track. By doing this, the horses will have to walk more while eating. Also if there is natural grass, it will not be all eaten all at once if another smaller track is built in the middle of the inside fence, the grass can grow in the old track. This option is good for few horses only to make sure no horse will corner another one. Even a better version of this would be to make it all a circle so it is not even possible to corner anyone. The main existing fence can be built by using wood but the ones inside could be electric fencing to be able to move it as one wants to let the grass grow in the other parts.

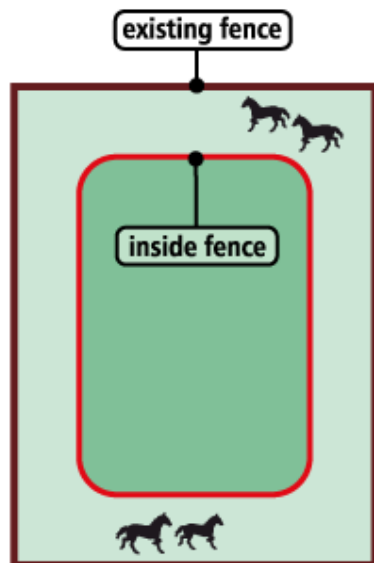


Figure 16: Development suggestion for a paddock (All Natural Horse Care 2012)

9 Conclusion

In Finland this topic is not as relevant as it is in other European countries since in Finland in general horses are let to stay out for longer periods of time than elsewhere. Still even in Finland there are elements which can be improved and I hope people who work with horses will hear more about the natural stable option. In that way horses will be happier and with less illnesses. At the same time their behavior will change, they probably will be steadier when people are riding them. It would be good for horses and good for riding school clients.

Now I am working at a natural stable and when I have talked with the horse owners they are really happy about the option and they do not want to take their horses back to the previous stables if it has been a classic one. Remembering that all these horses are not competing or if some of them are, it is not on a high level of competitions.

In case you own a horse, and you are not competing and are still keeping the horse in classic stables I would suggest for a change.

“Living on 320 acres of meadows, hills and rocky terrain, enormous, well fed, 1500 pound animals who are joyous and free and in perfect health. They run on flint hard feet, connecting to and absorbing the energy of the Earth. Why is it humans feel a need to interfere with what is natural, taking away the life that affords sustenance. Horses need to roll, graze and run on feet that touch the Earth, pumping the blood through their bodies with every hoof beat. They need friends and freedom for the health of their bodies and minds, and nights spent under the stars.

Why do humans, confine, control and command such wondrous creatures, when connection and communication will fulfill our dreams. If we can educate ourselves in the way of the horse and learn horse psychology or ‘know the nature of the beast’, we will be more tolerant of their natural behavior and be able to educate them to cope with human demands.”

(Cooper. 2012)

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María López (Interview. August 2012)

Carolina Novoa (Interview. August 2012)

Figures

Figure 1: Horses living in their own boxes all day. In CPE there are 5 stable buildings and have boxes on both sides

Figure 2: A horse exercising in a walking machine

Figure 3: Personal closet for every horse owner to keep all the equipment safe and in good condition

Figure 4: Large indoor-arena to ride horses

Figure 5: Sandra Meynard guiding a horse trek on Chilean mountains

Figure 6: Sand arena and covered circle arena in the back

Figure 7: Office, saddle rooms and area to get horses ready for classes

Figure 8: A horse with a cover on

Figure 9: Different types of extra food for horses

Figure 10: Marks of wood biting in a paddock. Sign of boredom.

Figure 11: Horses in Equilibre living outside in a big paddock all night and day. There are many trees to protect them from the sun and wind, and they have correct company.

Figure 12: Wooden shelter to protect from the sun. Because it does not have any walls it does not protect from wind but in that area there is not so much wind it would bother the horses

Figure 13: Scratches on the loin.

Figure 14: A chafe on the belly because of an unfitted girth.

Figure 15: Big scratches on the hind leg which are almost totally healed.

Figure 16: Development suggestion for a paddock.