

The Relationship Between Arabian Dams' Personality and Offspring Personality

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Abstract

Investigating factors that can aid in predicting the personality of horses is beneficial for general rider safety, professional horse riders, and equine industries such as breeding organizations. For these reasons the dams' influence on offspring personality, a neglected area of research, should be addressed. To investigate the potential influence dams may have on their offspring's personality, 12 dam-offspring dyads were objectively tested by undergoing seven different personality tests to assess five different personality traits. The five personality traits included reactivity to humans, tactile sensitivity, social reactivity/gregariousness, fearfulness/curiosity, and locomotor activity. All five personality traits have been shown to be stable across both time and situations in horses. Significant differences were found between the offspring and the dams on a test measuring the personality trait human reactivity and on one of three tests measuring the personality trait fearfulness. For the other five tests (tactile sensitivity test, social isolation test, suddenness test, novel surface test, locomotor activity) no significant differences were found between the offspring and the dams. Despite the small sample size, this study implies that the personality of the dam is important to understand offspring personality. A larger sample for future research would allow for more complex analyses to be conducted which may allow for more informative conclusions.