


Equine Behavior Systems



Behavior Systems

- *Equine:*
 - *Protective Behavior*
 - *Ingestive (eating and drinking) behavior*
 - *Eliminative behavior*
 - *Sexual behavior*
 - *Care-giving and care-seeking (mother-young) behavior*
 - *Agonistic behavior (combat)*
 - *Allelomimetic behavior (gregarious behavior)*
 - *Shelter-seeking behavior*
 - *Investigative behavior*

Protective Behavior

- *Stems from millions of years roaming the prairies for food and water while staying out of harms way*
- *Environmental safety:*
 - *Turn rear end towards a storm*
 - *Turn broadside to the sun*
 - *Seek shade in hot weather or try to expose very little of their bodies to the sun*
- *Only the ones with speed, agility, and endurance were able to produce*
- *Well developed Senses:*
 - *Hearing, sight, and smell*
- *All instincts to protect itself or its herd*

Ingestive (Eating and Drinking) Behavior

- *Animals cannot live without feed and water*
- *Foals:*
 - *Born with the instinct that they need to nurse*
- *Habits and Characteristics:*
 - *1. Evolutionary trend of larger teeth aid in the horse's ability to eat forages*
 - *2. Longer legs means a need for longer neck and head in order to reach the ground*



Ingestive (Eating and Drinking) Behavior

- *3. Mouth and teeth are designed to eat grass from the ground*
 - *Lips- feel the ground and can gather grass*
 - *Front teeth- pull grass from the ground*
 - *Cheek teeth - grind grass to be digested*
- *4. Will paw at snow to uncover grasses*
- *5. Sensitive lips and whiskers aid in the horses ability to gather grasses since it has a blind spot at its nose*
- *6. Rarely will eat non desirable food (trees, shrubs, weeds)*



Ingestive (Eating and Drinking) Behavior

- *7. Prefer to be able to see around them while eating/grazing in order to watch for enemies*
- *8. Prefer to eat small amounts throughout the day (small stomach)*
- *9. Horses will stay close to a water source*

Eliminative Behavior

- *behavioral activities associated with defecation and urination*
- *Typically will not deposit feces and urine on their food*
- *Two main reasons:*
 - *1. Stallions marking their area and their herd*
 - *2. To provide protection from parasites transmitted through feces*

Sexual Behavior

- *behavior related to courtship and mating between males and females.*
- *Horses are seasonal breeders*
- *Hormone levels are influenced by the length of the day (amount of sunlight)*
- *Stallions initiate mating with smelling of a mare and then displaying the Flehmen response*
 - *Will also nip or bite at the mare*
- *Spring time has the most favorable conditions for foals*
 - *Lots of sunlight aids in mare's milk supply*
 - *Mild climate is safe for newborn*

Epimeletic Behavior

- *behavior related to giving care and attention, most common between a mare and foal, but also between other horses, such as horses standing together under shade and “switching” flies from one another.*
- *I scratch your back, you scratch mine*

Epimeletic Behavior

- *Mother-Young*
 - *“maternal” behavior*
 - *At birthing time, mares like to be away from herd*
 - *1. To allow imprinting time for mare and foal*
 - *2. To protect against predators*
 - *Mares and foals will never lose sight of one another*
 - *Mares will always protect their foal by keeping it close because:*
 - *1. If foal wanders into the path of a predator, it is defenseless*
 - *2. Mare is the foal’s only protector*
 - *3. Young foals nurse as much as 2-3 times an hour*

Agonistic (Combat) Behavior

- *behavior associated with conflict or fighting, including anger, aggression, submission and flight from conflict. Sometimes behaviorists separate this into two categories (aggression and fearfulness).*
- *Actions may include biting, kicking, rearing*
- *Stallions typically act in this behavior due to testosterone*
 - *Used to establish social order*
 - *Used to protect his herd from predators or other stallions*



Agonistic (Combat) Behavior

- *Mares will act in this behavior only when necessary*
- *Castration*
 - *Process of removing of the testicles*
 - *Stallion turns into a gelding*
 - *Aids in producing docile male horses due to the lack of hormones*



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Allelomimetic (Gregarious) Behavior

- *behavior related to mimicry; contagious or infectious behavior such as when one horse copies the behavior of another. If one horse starts running, for example, others are likely to join in. This may be a defense maneuver that is typical of wild horses.*



Allelomimetic (Gregarious) Behavior

- *Survival instinct to follow the crowd/stay with the herd*
 - *Towards water, away from a storm, run from a predator, etc*
- *Horses alone will be lonely, depressed, frightened, and/or irritated*



Shelter Seeking Behavior

- *Can survive in hot and cold weather due to their ability to find shelter and food in a multitude of conditions*
- *Environmental safety:*
 - *Turn rear end towards a storm*
 - *Turn broadside to the sun*
 - *Seek shade in hot weather or try to expose very little of their bodies to the sun*



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Investigative Behavior

- *behavioral activities associated with curiosity; the exploration of the surroundings or objects.*
- *Horses are noted for using all their senses to thoroughly “check out” any new item, horse or place with which they are presented.*
- *Horses survival over millions of years is based around being aware of its surroundings*

