Why should human-animal interactions be included in research of working equids? welfare?

Luna, Daniela

Tadich, Tamara A.

The livelihood of working horses' owners and their families is intimately linked to the welfare of their equids. A proper understanding of human-animal interactions, as well as the main factors that modulate them, is essential for establishing strategies oriented to improve the welfare of animals and their caretakers. To date, there is still a paucity of research dedicated to the identification and assessment of the human psychological attributes that affect the owner-equine interaction, and how these could affect the welfare of working equids. However, some studies have shown that empathy, attitudes towards animals, human perception of animal pain and the owner's locus of control are some of the psychological attributes that participate in human-equine interactions and that these can result in poor welfare of working equids. A better understanding of the relationship between human attributes and equids' welfare can provide an opportunity to improve the quality of interactions between owners and their working equids and thus improve their welfare. This review aims to explain why the inclusion of human psychological attributes that modulate the human-animal interactions can benefit welfare research in working equids. The role that empathy, perception of animal pain and locus of control play in the promotion of good welfare in working equids is emphasized.