Is group-housed horses less reactive?

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THE AIM was to study if the horse’s reactivity relates to the housing system.

Hypothesis:
“A horse housed in an individual box is more reactive than a group-housed horse”.
HIT Active Stable
Material and Methods

- 14 + 14 SWB-geldings (8-19 yrs)
- Pre-trial – 8 weeks – post-trial
- Novel Object Test
- Heart rate and behaviours
  - feeding,
  - standing still,
  - walk,
  - “trot & canter”,
  - head position (high/low).
- Statistics:
  - 2-way RM ANOVA
  - post-hoc test Holm-Sidak.
Heart rate Results
Pre- vs Post-trial

- HR_{peak} (p=0.013),
- HR_{1\ min} (p<0.001),
- HR_{increase} (p=0.013).
Heart rate Results
Box vs Group-housed

HR_{peak} (p=0.049)
Box 134 bpm
vs
Grouped 105 bpm
**Results**

- **WALK** ($p=0.052$)
  Box (mean 20% ± std 20%) vs Group-housed (mean 10% ± std 16%).

- No other significant differences.
Conclusions

1. The horses got accustomed to Novel Object Test from the pre- to post-trial. (HR)

2. The hypothesis couldn’t be accepted. (behaviour).

3. Further studies are needed.