



# THE EFFECT OF EQUINE-ASSISTED ACTIVITIES ON CHILDREN'S DEVELOPMENT

BARBARA ALEXANDRA KUDLACSEK, KAROLY BODNAR  
*Hungarian University of Agriculture and Life Sciences, Szarvas, Hungary*

**Abstract:** *The influence of animals on children is very significant, within which the role of horses is highlighted. Children's early love of animals greatly develops their personality, and handling and caring for them also affects the behavior of young people. In order to prepare a research, a short overview of horse-assisted activities that support the physical and psychological development of healthy children and children in need of development was prepared based on the literature. Horse therapy has been used for a long time, but its value and effects have only recently begun to be appreciated.*

## • Introduction

Equine therapy uses the knowledge of horses, riding and working with horses for rehabilitation, education, skill development and the relief of several psychological problems. Any kind of activity with a horse has several positive effects. The children's personality development and communication skills improve by being part of a community, they have to communicate with the instructors and their peers, and of course with the horses as well. Imagination, learning and humility, which we think is natural, but it may not be the case in all cases.

## • Material and method

The present work is based on research results presented in the Hungarian and international literature. The examination of the previous data of the researchers of the topic serves the preparation of a research project that is about to start.

Equestrian gymnastics develops movement coordination and balance



## • Results and discussions

Animal-assisted therapy sessions can be based on regular visits, where people regularly meet the animals at certain intervals for therapeutic purposes. In the case of other therapies, the constant presence of animals and the effects they produce are used during the therapy. During therapeutic work, animals play a special role, helping people to heal, develop and achieve an improved quality of life.

Therapy sessions that take advantage of the beneficial effects of the human-animal relationship can help people in many areas. The goals of these therapies can be very diverse, for example:

- *Movement improvement:* Helps to improve coordination and induce more movement, especially for people with limited mobility.
- *Emotional development:* The presence of animals can help achieve emotional balance and develop empathy.
- *Social development:* Working with animals can help develop social skills, for example, it helps in building trust and building relationships.
- *Cognitive development:* Interaction with animals can help improve cognitive functions, such as focusing attention and developing problem-solving skills.
- *Stimulating communication:* Dealing with animals can help develop communication skills, for example, it helps with speech development and improves verbal and non-verbal communication.
- *Improving the quality of life:* The relationship with animals can help improve the quality of life, increase the feeling of joy, and reduce stress.