

Program: Impact of Riding in Rollkür-posture on Welfare of Performance Horses



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In Partnership With
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Objective:

To determine

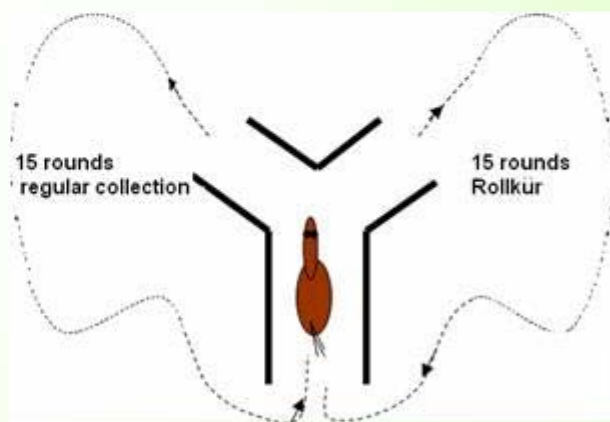
- (1) If horses will show differences in stress responses as measured by heart rate and behavior when ridden in Rollkür as compared to regular collection
- (2) If they show preferences between the two riding styles when given the choice.

Materials and Methods

Fifteen riding horses inexperienced with Rollkür were ridden 30 times through the Y-maze randomly alternating between sides. Each ride through was preceded by a brief stop with loose reins in the entrance to the Y-maze. Riding through one maze-arm was always followed by a short round ridden in Rollkür, whereas riding through the other maze-arm was followed by a short round ridden in regular collection. Association of maze-arms with treatments was randomized across horses, but both treatments included riding equally in both clockwise and counterclockwise circles either in walk or trot. Immediately after the conditioning phase, horses were again repeatedly ridden into the maze, however, after the brief stop the riders did not predefine any directions to the horse other than to move forward, leaving it to the horse to decide which arm of the maze to enter.

Results

Mixed model analysis revealed no significant ($p > 0.1$) differences in heart rates between treatments, but higher ($p < 0.05$) frequencies of aversive behavior such as tail swishing during Rollkür. Moreover, 14 of the 15 horses chose significantly ($p < 0.05$) more often the side associated with the normal collection rather than Rollkür. These findings indicate that the Rollkür position may be uncomfortable for horses unaccustomed to it.



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Community Benefits Include: Improved horse welfare during riding practices