

POSSIBILITIES AND CONTENTS IN ADDING HORSEBACK RIDING TO RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES

MOGUĆNOSTI I SADRŽAJI PRIMJENE JAHANJA U REKREACIJI

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is to present the possibilities and contents in adding horseback riding to recreational activities. Horses - noble animals have always had an important place in human society. The horse is a loyal animal to the human and it is therefore considered to be a helper and a friend of the human. The relationship horses have with people is sometimes unusual and intimate. Horses exhibit a calming and healing effect on most people, and socializing with animals in psychiatry has long been a well-known therapeutic method. Being aware of this nobility and the ability of horses, the human decided to use these virtues for the purpose of health-rehabilitation and recreational tourism in the countryside. This approach also allowed for the most important thing, preserving the tradition of horse breeding and rural life. This is very important to note, as an increasing number of people from urban areas want to get closer to nature and experience the way of life in the countryside. It can be said that equestrian clubs as well as rehabilitation horseback riding associations are constantly developing, expanding and opening their new locations. Recreational activities that include horseback riding or just spending time with horses in nature are also on the rise, and we hope that the number of recreational clubs, tourist offers and all horse-related activities will only grow and expand from year to year.

Key words: horseback riding, horses, recreational activities, therapeutic horseback riding.

SAŽETAK

Cilj ovog rada je prezentiranje mogućnosti i sadržaja primjene jahanja u rekreativnim aktivnostima. Konji - plemenite životinje, oduvijek su imali važno mjesto u ljudskom društvu. Konj je čovjeku odana životinja te mu je zbog toga njegov pomagač i prijatelj. Odnos koji imaju sa ljudima je doista nekad neobičan i blizak. Na mnoge ljude djeluju umirujuće i iscjeljujuće, a druženje sa životinjama u psihijatriji je već odavno ponata terapijska metoda.

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Uvidjevši, tu plemenitost i sposobnost konja, čovjek je te vrline odlučio iskoristiti u svrhu zdravstveno-rehabilitacijskog te rekreacijskog turizma na selu. Takav način pristupa omogućio je i ono najvažnije, očuvanje tradicije uzgoja konja i života na selu. To je vrlo važno napomenuti, s obzirom da se sve veći broj ljudi iz urbanih sredina želi približiti prirodi i osjetiti način života na selu. Može se reći da se konjički klubovi kao i udruge za rehabilitacijsko jahanje neprestano razvijaju, šire i otvaraju svoje nove lokacije. Rekreacijskih aktivnosti koje uključuju druženje s konjima i jahanje u prirodi također je u porastu, te se nadam kako će iz godine u godinu broj rekreacijskih klubova, turističkih ponuda i svih aktivnosti vezanih uz konje samo rasti.

Key words: jahanje, konji, rekreacijske aktivnosti, terapijsko jahanje.

INTRODUCTION

Horses - noble animals have always had an important place in human society. The horse is a loyal animal to the human and it is therefore considered to be a helper and a friend of the human. In the course of evolution, horses helped humans to conquer and travel great distances, to conquer the terrain, horses participated with humans in hunting, in warfare, in transporting cargo, in cultivating land, horses were also a food source, civilizations arose on the hard work of horses, horses also were significant companions in conquering continents, trade developing and connecting societies. The horse additionally served the human for fun and recreation, and in return the horse received safety, care and protection from predators. The development, we can say, of a symbiotic relationship between human and horse is closely related to the development of human society, because the above reasons have greatly enabled the humankind to develop population faster and easier. Anyone who understands a horse as an attraction alone does not understand the depth of the relationship between the horse and the human, does not understand the sense of reciprocity and dependence on one another when sitting on the horseback. The relationship horses have with humans is sometimes unusual and intimate. Horses exhibit a calming and healing effect on most people, and socializing with animals in psychiatry has long been a well-known therapeutic method (Signal, Wilson and Nelson, 2016). Horses have a much more developed and more sensitive sense of hearing than humans. That is why they fear shouting and loud speech; so they like humans to speak in a calm tone. The touch plays an important role in the communication of / with horses, and so often we can see them nibbling on each other and massaging around their neck and withers, thus enhancing their interconnections and positively affecting their interrelationships. Humans are very important to them because when they are nervous and scared, gentle touches and speaking in a calm tone mean a lot to them. The relationship with a horse should be based on respect, not fear and pain. Until such a connection is established, you need to "convince" the horse that you are in charge. When you show insecurity, they will play with you and tempt you (Hermsen, 2003). Your horse is almost always bigger and stronger than you. Given that it weighs about 500 kg, the average riding horse is six times heavier than the average human, so you cannot overcome it with strength (Vogel, 2008). The horse must do an objective or move, only if it wants to, or it expects it, not because it fears you. Riding a horse and imprinting yourself in nature, leaving behind the greyness, noise and stress of a busy city life, is a unique recipe for enhancing the body and spirit of the modern day human.

There are many benefits of horseback riding as an activity: strengthening the physical musculature in all segments, increased levels of joint mobility, trained movement motility, and above all, horseback riding affects the psychophysical sense of pleasure, better functioning of the heart muscle and cardiovascular system.

It is up to the individuals to enjoy themselves, to indulge in the magic of this wonderful sport, without losing sight of the basic principles of the sport, which involves the synergy of the rider and the animal itself. If positive experience is made, horseback riding will undoubtedly become an unforgettable and pent-up part of your life for all time, and your pet will receive a wonderful horseman to share beautiful moments of sport, care and love with, and maybe get some carrots, apples or sugar cubes.

The aim of this paper is to present the possibilities and contents in adding horseback riding to recreational activities and tourism.

Psychophysical benefits of horseback riding

There are various types of sports that include outdoor activities and horseback riding. In equestrian sports, there is no age limit for practicing or participating in this sport, so we can include absolutely all generations of people in recreational and touring programs with horses. Horseback riding is considered an activity with excellent therapy qualities. Spending time outside and enjoying the fresh air enhances your well-being in the body and reduces stress. There is a sense of freedom and quality breathing, which is often considered the best feeling for a person. In addition, developing a sense of trust between the rider and the horse is a big deal. Horses can distinguish emotions in the human voice, so it is important to always be calm and gentle in the vicinity of the horse, then the time spent together will be done in the best possible atmosphere. There is always a dose of risk in this sport, so successfully meeting all the challenges is a great boost for self-confidence. Another thing that has a very positive effect on self-confidence is taking care of the animal, even greater than it is for itself. This also affects the happiness and satisfaction of the rider. Horseback riding is a great exercise and offers a number of health and fitness benefits:

- Develops/builds leg muscles
- improves balance and posture
- improves mental concentration
- develops/builds arm muscles and arm agility
- it also refreshes and clears the mind.

Three-dimensional rhythmic horse movements are similar to walking movements. By placing the rider in different positions on the horseback, different muscle groups can be exercised. Stopping and starting again and changing speed and direction when on horseback - all of it contributes to the desired effect.

Muscles become stronger due to increased handling while horseback riding. Although horseback riding is an exercise, it is perceived as pleasure and therefore the rider has greater tolerance and motivation to extend his/her training time. Being close to a horse alone has a calming effect on people.

Such a powerful and large animal with such gentle and sensitive touches evokes the best in humans, and many riders can attest to the following: “Anyone who once meets a horse and spends a moment with it will fall in love for all time, and that love is unbreakable.”

Therapeutic horseback riding

Therapeutic horseback riding is a relatively new therapeutic method in our country, which provides effective and stimulating therapy for people with disabilities, as well as people who have difficulties in social and emotional adaptation. The use of horses for therapeutic and rehabilitation purposes goes back four centuries. Liz Hartel of Denmark, who won a silver medal for Individual Dressage at the Olympic Games in Helsinki (1952), is a strong impetus in recent times.

Although suffering from polio, she has, in competition with many young and healthy people, achieved an enviable second place, clearly emphasizing the importance of using horses in therapy (Kušen, 2002). Since then, horseback riding therapy has attracted the attention of professionals and people who work with horses professionally.

There are three basic areas that indicate the need for the use of horses for therapeutic purposes:

- Medicine: Therapy for the development of motor skills of disabled individuals or "hypo-therapy"
- Pedagogy / Defectology: Therapy aimed at developing a personality of behaviour,
- „Pedagogical horseback riding“, „Defectological horseback riding“
- Sport: Therapy for recreation, competition, motivation development and recreational horseback riding

In working with children with special needs, we can also use equestrian vaulting (gymnastics on horseback, a very effective Olympic discipline in which vaulters on a galloping horse perform group figures).

The discipline is, of course, slightly modified, but is primarily intended for children with minimal physical disabilities, i.e. children with psychomotor and cognitive problems. The discipline is implemented by special educators-rehabilitators (defectologists), psychologists, social workers and similar professions, with of course additional training in special pedagogical vaulting.

Recreational activities, field training and workshops for younger age groups

The tourist offer for children of younger ages can be conducted as field training, recreational activity and workshops with horses. Beginner horseback riding courses can be enrolled by children aged seven at least. Horseback riding is an ideal form of recreational activity for children. In addition to horseback riding, indispensable care for the horse is a source of encouragement for the healthy development of the child. By taking care of animals, children develop their emotional and social life skills, they develop the ability to cope with new

situations and gain self-confidence. The program can offer horseback riding on ponies and horses, with professionally trained trainers for children.

It consists of hiking and gymnastics, horseback riding on ponies and horses with expert guidance, and introducing children to the way horses live on the ranch and in the wild. Horseback riding consists of putting a child on horseback and guiding the horse in a fenced-in riding area, creative workshops on the subject of horse life, art workshops, and educational workshops.

Programs for older children and adults

In schools, tourist offers and equestrian clubs, horses are used that are appropriate in size and strength to riders, that is, slower steeds with calm temperament and submissive behaviour.

This excludes temperamental horses and requires special assessment of the psychological profile of the steed. So, in addition to the body structure that allows for even movement, then good health, it is necessary to evaluate the extent to which the steed is ready to obey the inexperienced rider, but also how it tolerates misdirection and often erroneous movements. In order to spend free time even better, in recreational sports and tourist offers, it is necessary to design programs for horseback riders – amateurs, so they can choose the most interesting program for themselves.

Some programs that can be implemented at any time of the year, which include working and spending time with horses, can be:

- recreational horseback riding through nature
- horseback riding training in nature
- tour of old buildings or sights in the surrounding area on horseback
- family horseback riding
- horseback riding for beginners and experts
- unique equestrian marathons (one-day and several-day)
- excursions and camping with horses (tents, campfire, nature)
- various horse-related games for experienced riders - polo, medieval tourneys, horseball
- equestrian vaulting (horse gymnastics)
- equestrian competitions (various derivatives of sports disciplines for recreation).

Programs for the elderly

Programs that would involve the elderly must be planned and aligned with their capabilities and affinities. Therapies and exercises with horses are very effective both psychologically and physically. Older people generally have problems with excess leisure time, loneliness, and a great need for companionship and belonging. Horses play a big role in this context because their therapeutic effect on every segment of the human is widely known. Program content that would include such persons could only be a stay in nature with horses, hiking, socializing but also the mere touch of a horse.

Horseback riding is an action that has a positive effect on movement, psychosocial functions and has a physiotherapeutic effect, regardless the condition and disorders (Landsverk, 2019). Therefore, it is very useful to involve the elderly in gymnastics on horseback, as it affects the complete human being (body, mind, soul).

If there is no interest in gymnastics on horseback (which is because of fear or physical disability), another activity involving horses can be introduced, which is the horse drawn carriage ride. Horse drawn carriage rides have nothing to do with physical fitness and mobility, they simply allow people, regardless of their physical condition, to socialize with horses, and moreover, it is possible to organize sightseeing of cultural sites in the surrounding area.

CONCLUSION

Being aware of the nobility and ability of horses, the human decided to use these virtues for the purpose of health-rehabilitation and recreational tourism in the countryside. This approach also allowed for the most important thing, preserving the tradition of horse breeding and rural life. This is very important to note, as an increasing number of people from urban areas want to get closer to nature and experience the way of life in the countryside. On this basis, an increasing number of economies are managing to fulfil their potential in the form of tourism development. The potentials of already existing farms/ranches, which underpin horse-related business and the rural environment in Bosnia and Herzegovina, are certainly in development. However, they have certainly not reached their peak yet. It can be said that equestrian clubs as well as rehabilitation horseback riding associations are constantly developing, expanding and opening their new locations. Recreational activities that include horseback riding or just spending time with horses in nature are also on the rise, and we hope that the number of recreational clubs, tourist offers and all horse-related activities will only grow and expand from year to year.

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