

Horse movement and space use on the trail paddock



The newest trend in horse keeping is to establish paddock trails instead of or attached to open grazing areas where horses can move around freely. Instead of one open area, circular trails are created with trees, shrubs and different substrates, with scratching posts, shaded and rolling areas and several feeding stations along the way. This keeping concept follows the idea to simulate conditions close to those wild horses experience in their natural habitat. These paddock trails are assumed to increase the movement of horses significantly with great benefits for their health, like for example the hoof quality.

The riding stable PSV Töplitz e.V. Reiterhof Leest has established a trail paddock on their land in 2013. The 500 m and approximately 12 m wide long trail offers the horses a lot of variety with different substrates, like sand, gravel, weed, several areas to rest in the shade and smaller obstacles, like tree stumps, along the way to explore.

With the use of GPS trackers we would like to evaluate the potential benefits of their trail paddock by analysing the movement and space use of horses on the trail. The thesis will include getting to know the GPS as trackers and establishing the best way to attach them to horses, as well as collecting, analysing and presenting the movement and space use data with appropriated programs (R and potentially GIS/QGIS).

Contact person: Prof. Dr. Jana Eccard (eccard@uni-potsdam.de)