

Final report

Too young to ride? A study of riding school activities for pre-school children from safety and horse welfare perspectives

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Main applicant

Susanna Hedenborg

Idrottsvetenskap

Malmö universitet

Susanna.hedenborg@mau.se

Co-applicant(s):

Oskar Solenes

Høgskolen i Molde

oskar.solenes@himolde.no

Annika Rosén

Idrottsvetenskap, Malmö universitet

Annika.rosen@mau.se

Gabriella Torell Palmquist

Ridskolan Strömsholm

gabriella.torell-palmquist@rsflyinge.se

Part 1: Detailed summary

Idag erbjuder många ridskolor i Sverige och Norge ridning för förskolebarn, trots att ridlärare upplever att barnen är ”för små för att rida”. Syftet med projektet *Är de för små för att rida?* är därför att öka kunskapen om häst- och ridundervisning av yngre barn med avsikt att utveckla säkrare hästmiljöer som tar hänsyn till hästarnas välfärd. Projektet inkluderade även ett doktorandprojekt som fokuserade på hästunderstödda aktiviteter för yngre barn med olika typer av funktionsnedsättningar. Material för projektet samlades in genom ridskolors webbsidor, en

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enkät, intervjuer med ridlärare och verksamhetsledare, föräldrar, fysioterapeuter och assistenter samt observationer.

Ridskolans framväxt och särskilda betydelse som institution för att lära ut ridning till barn ligger till grund för utvecklingen. När det gäller det samtida materialet visar studierna att mer än hälften av ridskolorna erbjuder aktiviteter för förskolebarn och att många ridskolor erbjuder hästunderstödda aktiviteter för barn med funktionsnedsättning.

Aktiviteterna kan innebära ridning men även olika typer av lektioner i stallet kring hur man tar hand om hästar. Ridning och stallaktiviteter för de yngre barnen är utmanande – inte minst eftersom de bygger på att föräldrarna kan hjälpa till och att ridläraren är kreativ och flexibel när det gäller att undervisa denna åldersgrupp. Aktiviteterna innebär säkerhetsproblem som är relaterade till föräldrarnas okunskap samt att den säkerhetsutrustning som finns inte alltid är helt korrekt avpassad till de yngsta barnen. Det är även tydligt att många ridlärare saknar en förberedande utbildning för att på ett pedagogiskt anpassat sätt kunna undervisa de yngsta barnen och att föräldrar skulle behöva utbildas i hästkunskap. Ridlärarna har god kunskap om hästarna och problematiserar hästarnas roll i relation till aktiviteterna. Till aktiviteterna behövs hästar med särskilda kompetenser och erfarenhet. Samtidigt behöver hästarnas roll och välfärd problematiseras ytterligare – inte minst i relation till att många av föräldrarna behöver mer kunskap om hästen. Slutligen behövs mer forskning om barnens upplevelser av aktiviteterna.

Resultaten från doktorandprojektet pekar på att studier om de hästunderstödda aktiviteterna för de yngre barnen är få och här saknas även jämförbara studier eftersom olika begrepp och aktiviteter används. En intressant slutsats är att aktiviteterna utgår från kroppslig funktion snarare än ålder, vilket troligtvis kan förklaras av att aktiviteterna ramar in av en medicinsk diskurs. Detta skiljer dem från andra aktiviteter för de yngre barnen – dessa ramar in av en diskurs som handlar om 'idrott-för alla'. Vidare framgår att studier som fokuserat på den sociala kontexten av de hästunderstödda aktiviteterna saknas – trots att den sociala kontexten är avgörande för huruvida aktiviteterna kan bedrivas. Preliminära resultat visar att hästkunskap och "know how" anses vara viktigt, relaterat till både säkerhet och professionalism i dessa aktiviteter. Terapeuter måste vara trygga med att arbeta med stora grupper för att aktiviteterna ska vara (ekonomiskt) hållbara. Samarbeten med andra professioner välkomnas, men ersättningspolicyn är förbehållen sjukgymnaster. Det finns ingen enhetlig beskrivning av lämpliga hästar vad gäller ålder eller ras för de hästunderstödda aktiviteterna. Men precis som i aktiviteterna för förskolebarn anses mindre hästraser och ponnyer passa bättre. Hästar väljs ut på grund av sitt temperament, gång, storlek och bredd, och en mängd olika hästar är idealiska för att matcha de olika barnens behov och utmaningar. Även här behöver kunskapen om hästen öka för några av de aktörer som hjälper till vid aktiviteterna för att hästarnas välfärd ska kunna säkras.

Projektets genomförande påverkades av Covid19-pandemin, framför allt genom att insamlingen av källmaterial hindrades i Norge genom att aktiviteterna stängde ned (även på den svenska sidan påverkades projektet av nedstängning, men inte i samma grad). Vidare påverkades projektet av en längre sjukskrivningen på den norska sidan. Sjukskrivningen har lett till att den planerade doktorsavhandlingen kommer att färdigställas under 2024 och 2025. I dagsläget har en översiktsartikel sammanställts som visar på bristen av studier om yngre barn med funktionsnedsättning och hästunderstödd terapi. Vidare har intervjuer med

ridfysioterapeuter, ledare, föräldrar och assistenter genomförts. Tre artiklar ska ingå i avhandlingen (en litteraturstudie samt två artiklar baserade på intervjuerna och bearbetade i relation till teman).

Projektets resultat har tillgängliggjorts för sektorn genom föreläsningar för hippologstudenter och kursdeltagare som läser distanskurs i Pedagogik och Ridskoleverksamhet för SRL 2 vid Ridskolan Strömsholm. Vidare har resultaten presenterats för Ridsportförbundets ansvariga för ridskoleverksamheten samt genom populärvetenskapliga artiklar och föredrag. Spridningen av resultaten har bidragit till att

- representanter för ridsporten har djupare kunskap om aktiviteterna för de yngre barnen
- utbildningen av ridlärare har förstärkts när det gäller hur ridning för de yngre ryttarna går till och kan utvecklas
- kunskap om vikten av föräldrautbildning och hur denna kan se ut har ökat.

Vi har inte haft möjlighet att utveckla pedagogiska redskap tillsammans med sektorn (inte minst på grund av förändrade aktiviteter under Covid19 pandemin), men vill, med utgångspunkt i projektets resultat, lämna följande rekommendationer till sektorn för att utveckla säkrare hästmiljöer som tar hänsyn till hästars välfärd: För det första är det tydligt att ridlärarnas utbildning behöver byggas på med specialistkunskap när det gäller de yngsta barnens motoriska, psykologiska och fysiologiska utveckling. Denna rekommendation gäller inte bara de yngre barnen. Ridning har i allt högre grad blivit en aktivitet för olika åldersgrupper och olika kroppsliga förmågor, med olika förkunskaper. För att kunna möta 'alla hela livet', menar vi att ridlärare behöver erbjudas specialistkunskap för olika åldrar och kroppsliga förmågor vilket skulle kunna ge ridlärare en möjlighet att specialisera sig och därigenom profilera sig tydligare. För det andra behöver ridskolorna arbeta systematiskt med utbildning av föräldrar, föräldrautbildningar som hjälper föräldrarna att bli den tillgång de skulle kunna vara i aktiviteterna med de yngre barnen och i de hästunderstödda insatserna. Utbildningarna behöver ta utgångspunkt i föräldrars olika kunskapsgrund och genusföreställningar (hos både föräldrar och ridlärare). Några ridskolor erbjuder redan föräldrautbildningar. Dessa skulle behöva undersökas och goda exempel skulle behöva skalas upp. För det tredje rekommenderar vi att det tas fram checklistor och vägledning i första hand till föräldrar men även i viss mån till ridlärare om vilken säkerhetsutrustning som krävs samt hur föräldrar och barn ska använda och anpassa säkerhetsutrustning och övrig utrustning så som hjälm, säkerhetsväst, sko med klack, sadel med handtag och extratyglar. Vägledning behövs även avseende hur föräldrar behöver agera stödjande och möjliggörande men inte pressande vid ridaktiviteter för yngre barn. För det fjärde behövs systematiserad vägledning för hästunderstödda insatser riktade till barn med funktionsnedsättningar för att dessa ska bli tillgängliga men även bli lustfyllda upplevelser för föräldrar och barn. För det femte bör ersättningssystemet för de hästunderstödda aktiviteterna förändras för att skapa möjligheter för fler att delta i aktiviteterna genom att utöka ersättning till personer som behövs för att stötta barnet (förutom ridfysioterapeuten).

Part 2: Main report (max. 10 pages)

Introduction

A few years ago, media reported on a 7-year-old girl who was killed during a riding lesson in Sweden. Equestrianism is one of the sports most affected by serious accidents (Ball et al, 2007; Carmichael et al 2014; Carrillo et al 2007) and the accident with the young girl evokes questions about children, horses, and safety. Children are small and horses big, and the horse is a herd and prey animal whose behavior is partly controlled by instincts. Today, many riding schools in Sweden and Norway offer riding for pre-school children. There is, however, no research on pre-school children and horse riding. In general, there are few studies of younger children in comparison to studies of older children, adolescents, and adults (Söderlind & Engwall 2005). This also applies to research in sports sciences (Hedenborg & Fransson 2011). It is therefore of crucial importance to collect data on how activities for pre-school children are carried out and can be adapted to ensure rider safety and horse welfare. The aim of the project *Too young to ride?* is to increase knowledge of horse and riding education for preschool children with the objective of developing safer horse environments in Sweden and Norway.

Material and methods

Texts

The investigation of the websites of the Swedish riding schools took place in the spring of 2018 and was based on a list of riding schools that were members of the Swedish Equestrian Association (at this time the Norwegian Equestrian Federation could not produce a list of Norwegian riding schools). The total number of Swedish riding schools was 462 and about half of these provided activities for young children. The websites of the riding schools were searched and investigated based on questions about whether there were activities for younger children, what these consisted of, how much time was given for these activities, how much they cost, and who was responsible for these activities. The latter question proved impossible to answer based on the riding schools' websites. To understand whether the activities we found were aimed at younger children, we studied what the riding schools told us about the activity, for example which age group the activity was intended for. Investigating riding schools' activities in this way may seem like a blunt tool, but it gives us an idea of how big the business is. It is through their websites that riding schools can advertise what activities they have for new groups and it is likely that this is where parents look for information about what activities may be available for their children. Admittedly, not all riding schools had active websites and sometimes the information was old. This mainly applied to smaller riding schools in rural areas. In addition to websites, riding schools where we lacked information were searched on Facebook, from which we could obtain some additional information.

In Norway, a search of riding schools was done too, with the aim of making a list of riding schools together with the Norwegian Equestrian Federation. After the project started a new organization, "Bransjeforening for Rideskoler", was established and provided easier access to riding schools and instructors. For the PhD project, a content analysis of websites and internal documents from the Norwegian Equestrian Federation and the

Norwegian Physiotherapist Association, research reports and published literature have been conducted.

Survey

The survey was published over a period of just over a month (2019-05-24–2019-06-30) through the Swedish Equestrian Federation's and the Norwegian Equestrian Federation's digital channels as well as Facebook. The survey was not only addressed to riding schools that were members of equestrian associations, but instead we asked broadly about activities for younger children. There were many who opened the survey – just over 500, but the number who completed the survey was only 111. We do not know why those who opened the survey chose to end before completing it. Possibly there were too many questions, perhaps the person who opened the questionnaire felt that they could not or did not really want to answer. Publishing a survey in this way says nothing about response rate, that is, how many people within a specific group answered the questions. This means that based on the survey, we cannot answer questions about, for example, how many of the riding schools have a certain activity. However, the survey responses give us a broad idea of the activity. Two-thirds of those who answered the survey came from Sweden and a third came from Norway. Most (75%) who responded were activity managers or riding instructors at a riding school. Among the respondents were also employees of the riding schools, members and parents (25%). In the survey, background questions were asked about who answered, how the respondents viewed the activities of riding schools for younger children, what type of activities were offered and how these activities were organized.

Interviews

The researchers in the project have conducted interviews and observations at riding schools in southern and central Sweden and in southern and central Norway. The riding schools were selected on the basis that their websites showed that they offered activities for younger children and that they were geographically close to the researchers. The empirical material consists of 11 interviews with riding instructors or managers of riding schools in Norway and Sweden and 10 interviews with parents in Sweden (it was not possible to conduct interviews with parents in Norway during the Covid19 pandemic). For the PhD project, an additional 24 interviews have been conducted in Norway with equine physiotherapists, managers of riding schools, parents, and assistants.

The interviews were conducted both on site and over the phone and lasted between 30 and 60 minutes. An interview guide was used, and the interviews were structured in four sections: background and expectations, content of the horse riding, safety, and horses. The interviews were recorded and transcribed. During the interviews with the riding instructors, they were asked if the researchers could make participant observations during the horse riding at the riding school.

Observations

We carried out 10 observations at 6 different riding schools. The observations were guided by an observation matrix and were mainly carried out on two occasions at each riding school and

the same group was observed both times. The observations lasted between one and three hours, depending on the activities. The observations began before children and parents arrived at the riding school. Field notes were taken during the observations. The researchers were passive observers, but some participation proved to be necessary as the participants addressed and asked the researchers about things that had to do with riding. The researchers were, for example, asked to hold a horse or help demonstrate or perform something. On one occasion, the researcher caught a child falling off the horse.

Results and discussion

Historical background (published as Hedenborg et al 2021a, Hedenborg et al 2021b)

Up until the end of the nineteenth century, horse-riding in Sweden was primarily practiced by army men and members of the upper class. Today, horse-riding is one of the most popular sports for children and young people. Most riders are girls and women, many of whom learn how to ride at horse-riding schools. An explaining factor behind this development, through which a sport practiced by adults in the army became a grassroot sport for girls, is the public support for the emerging new horse-riding schools for leisure riding from the second half of the twentieth century until today. Public support and its consequences distinguish Swedish equestrian sports and the activities of the riding schools from horse-riding activities in many other countries. Childification and feminization are linked to changes in the status of the horses, who was responsible for the activities, ideas on formal and informal education and learning, and what the activities comprised.

Riding school activities for pre-school children (published as Hedenborg et al 2021; Rosen et al 2021; Hedenborg et al 2023; Werner manuscript, Rosen et al forthcoming)

The mapping out of riding school activities (as they are presented online) showed that at a majority of the Swedish riding schools, who are members of the Swedish Equestrian Federation, offer activities for pre-school children. These activities can include short riding lessons where adults/parents help to hold the horse or longer activities in which the children are involved in the care taking of horses (brushing, putting on saddles and bridles). Most of the young participants are girls. The time for these activities varies between 15 minutes and several hours and costs vary from 60 to almost 300 SEK/visit.

Riding schools do not stand out in relation to other sport associations. A comparison with other sport federation's activities for pre-school children show that gymnastics and swimming are sports that for a longer time than others have organized activities for this age group. In addition, they have special activities directed to them (and their parents). Some federations that offer many activities for this age group are not even aware that this age group constitutes many of their members. These federations underline that they do not offer specific activities and if they offer activities, they point to the important of these not being competitive. The demand for activities for young children is high from parents, and the federations believe that the demand has increased.

Little is known about equine assisted activities for young children. An interesting result is, however, that in relation to disabled children function, rather than age, guides how these activities are organized. This is likely related to that equine assisted physiotherapy derives from a medical discourse, rather than a 'sport for all' discourse,

whereas the latter frames the preschool children's activities. In addition, research on the social context of the equine assisted activities for young children is lacking, even though the social context is essential for the carrying through of these activities.

Representatives from the riding schools see a high demand for the activities for the young children too. The purpose of the activities is to include as many as Possible ('sport-for-all' discourse). There is also a question of economic driving forces for the activities which is complex. Some of the managers claim that they need to offer the activities for economic reasons. Others say that these activities cost them more than they can earn (the local activity subsidy is not given for very young children). For some of the instructors/managers the activities are seen as expensive for the riding school, but important as they prepare future members for the riding school.

Children are welcomed from a very young age (sometimes 0 years) and it is underlined in the online information that the young children will, during these activities, be prepared for ordinary riding activities (in which the children can take part from 7 years). Riding is not seen as the primary activity. Rather it is the learning about horses, and that parents can handle the horse that are seen as important goals. Interviews and observations show that instructors, parents and children express joy and happiness during the activities. According to parents, children express that they want to ride and participate in activities in the stable. It is worth noting that, unlike previous studies on the activities of riding schools, the activities for younger children are based on principles other than military commands. Here, different types of games are used instead to convey how the horses should be taken care of and ridden. The learning goals are, however, traditional. The young children are taught how to cross the riding arena in different ways – between different letters (even though the letters are exchanged for e.g., animals).

Safety aspects are seen as important, and the use of a certified helmet is compulsory – when riding as well as visiting the stable. Observations show that it is possible to borrow helmets, safety vests and sometimes shoes and gloves. Different and sometimes opposing ideas on safety vests are, however, presented. Sometimes they are seen as making the child more unbalanced – as they are not well fitted; and sometimes children seem to expect that they will not fall off if they wear a safety vest. The managers and parents discussed the mandatory requirement of wearing a helmet and a safety vest. The results show that there are several problems in finding small enough helmets and above all safety vests to buy fitting children from 2–3 years. The vests are too big and hinders the child to sit in a correct position keeping its balance on the horse. It also hinders the child from interacting in a safe way with the movements of the horse. Parents lack knowledge of how to use the vest and the managers discuss that using the vest can be contra productive and implicate a false feeling of safety.

The survey and the interviews point to that some managers think that instructors working with the preschool children ought to have a riding instructor education, whereas others underline that youth leaders are used in these activities. In the interviews with parents, opinions differ too. For some it is more important that the one leading the activities cooperate well with parents and children and that they can work in a good way with this age group (independent of education).

The mentality (and sometimes size) of the horse is seen as crucial – experienced and calm horses (and sometimes smaller horses) are used. In addition, it is underlined that horses should live in a close to natural habitat as they become more harmonious (which is seen as better for the children). Horses are seen as competent helpers in the activities for young children, by the instructors. Parents see the horses in several different ways. Some parents like to work together with the horses, others express that they are afraid of the horses. They also underline that they prefer the smaller horses, which are seen as easier to handle than the larger ones.

In relation to the equine assisted activities for disabled children preliminary findings suggest equine knowledge and “know how” is considered important, related to both safety and professionalism in these activities. Therapists must be confident working with large groups for the services to be sustainable. Groups solely for preschoolers are not possible, thus groups can be mixed age. Side walkers are required, but the economy give little room for paid employment for others than the physiotherapist. Collaborations with other professions are welcomed, but the refund policy is reserved for physiotherapists. There is no uniform description of suitable horses regarding age or breed. However, like in the activities for preschool children, smaller horse breeds and ponies are preferred due to the side walkers work position, ability to aid the child, and the child’s safety. Horses are chosen due to their temper, gait, size and width, and a variety of horses are ideal to match the different children’s needs and challenges.

Parenthood in riding school activities for young children (Hedenborg et al 2023; Rosen et al., submitted 2023)

Instructors and riding school managers underline that parents/accompanying adults are essential for the activities. As the children are young and small, parents need to help the children to take care of the horses and to walk them (and sometimes to hold the child in the saddle). Furthermore, instructors direct some of their instructions to the parents/accompanying adults rather than the children. The fact that parents may not have horse related knowledge is lifted as a problem by instructors and riding school managers. They see this as a safety issue and so do some of the parents/accompanying adults, who say that they are not given enough information to be able to handle the situations that may occur. They underline that there needs to be much more information on safety, but also information about all the stable specific concepts used (halter, rope, brushes, etc...). Answers from both instructors/riding school managers and parents point to the importance of organizing learning activities for the parents in horse welfare/handling.

During tiny tots riding the child and the accompanying adult (often a parent) interacts and perform as a team. The parents support the child and through this support the parent control their impression management (Cf. Goffman 2014; Goffman 2020). The performance is successful if the parent and child team is perceived as knowledgeable with the right abilities to participate in horse riding. The parents secretly help the child to cope with the tasks to control the environment's impression of the child and its abilities. The riding activity is also seen by the parents as an opportunity to develop and strengthen the relationship between child and parent.

Parenthood and expectations of mothers and fathers are gendered. In the stable, mothers are supposed to be knowledgeable and competent in their interactions with horses and other parents. If the mother behaves in this way, she receives respect and is characterized as a horse girl. The mothers enjoy respect for their behavior in the same way as old-time horse men in the stable did. The horse girl mothers perform a role as knowledgeable and orderly and as someone who likes to help others. They have authority and can take on responsibility as leaders and they can give feedback to others. Through their own experience and growing up in the stable, these mothers has often created a solid knowledge, which leads to them being able to perform at the riding school as a stage and within the framework of stable culture, in front of her child and in front of other adults. These mothers strive for a respected position for themselves and their daughters. They, however, risk to push their daughters too much to make them successful in the stable to. Through their ‘pushyness’, these mothers sometimes challenge the riding instructor and through that they upset the balance of power. When the balance is threatened, these mothers overstep their roles and lose their mask, to speak with Goffman. The pushy mother does not receive respect.

Except for the horse girl mother and the pushy mother, there is another role performed by mothers at tiny tots riding: the chicken mother. These mothers present themselves as ignorant of horses and riding and as scared of horses. They pose a problem for the riding instructors and other parents who expect mothers to be knowledgeable, and mothers who are not fulfilling the horse girl role are not respected. Horse riding instructors even underline that they must help with the horses anyway – as this is required of parents. The chicken mothers try to relate to another context outside of the stable in which they may have received respect as ignorant and scared, but in the stable they do not perform in a way that is accepted. The fathers are perceived as ignorant of the “know how” in the stable. However, the ignorant father seems to be easier to handle for riding instructors and parents. He does what is expected of him and is unknowing in the stable. There is a belief that a father does not possess the same skills as a mother, and he plays his role as the ignorant father in a convincing manner exactly according to the expectations he has of himself when he arrives at the stable. The fathers are neither conflicted nor disinterested, just perceived as incompetent and unprepared for the tasks they face when they find themselves in riding school environment. In some cases, the father can, however, be portrayed as potentially dangerous – he may be too strong or too clumsy. In difference from the chicken mothers who put the blame on themselves for not having prepared backstage the father justifies his role by referring to that he is not a horse man.

Challenges for the horse-riding instructor (Torell Palmquist et al., manuscript to be submitted august 2023)

As already mentioned, the riding instructors meet several challenges in the activities for the young children. These can be analyzed using a developed form of frame factor theory (Imsen, 1999) and the concept of stable culture (cf. Thorell & Hedenborg, 2015). The results show that the riding schools are organized similarly in terms of activities for younger children, in Norway and Sweden. According to the administrative frame, the involvement of accompanying adults and the engagement of the riding instructor (rather than education)

appear to be important factors. In relation to the resource-related frame, there is an economic connection to riding activities for young children. The instructors said that these activities do not burden the horses in the same way as ordinary activities – therefore the horses can be used more. In addition, the activities are a possibility to recruit new pupils so that they do not choose other, competing activities.

Riding lessons are not governed by a set curriculum from the Equestrian federation in Sweden and Norway. Instead, the riding instructor and/or the riding school must create and shape the goals and the content for the riding lessons. The educational frame show that content is primarily focused on motor skills and balance with play as a method. In addition, the interviews point to the importance of repetition, variety, and adaptation. The lessons become more interesting by varying the lesson content and learning environments. Working with an imaginary world for the children with elements of jungle animals helps to reinforce the points to be practiced in a playful way. But safety is always important and a strong organizational frame. The organizational frame is signified by culture. The riding instructors are anchored in what previous research has called stable culture (cf. Thorell & Hedenborg, 2015). In conclusion, this result has shown that traditional horse riding teaching cannot be fully applied to younger children. It has been challenged and changed (somewhat), as the traditional model is not suitable for working with younger children. Therefore, the riding teachers are forced to change to find new didactic tools, as younger children require something different from the ordinary groups.

Future research

To inform the equine sector further, more research is needed on:

- 1) Children's motoric, physiological, and psychological skills in relation to horse riding
- 2) Parental courses already in place – how are they organized, attended, and what is taught (and learnt) – in equestrian sports and other sports.
- 3) How safety equipment can be adapted to young children and how instructions on their use can be developed for parents (and to a certain extent riding instructors).
- 4) Age-specific pedagogy and pedagogy develop related to bodily function.
- 5) Negotiations concerning horse welfare in Swedish riding schools focusing riding activities for special groups.
- 6) Children's experiences of the activities.

Conclusions

The aim of the project *Too young to ride?* was to increase the knowledge of horse-riding activities of younger children with the intention of developing safer horse environments that take the welfare of horses into account. Early in the work on the project, it became clear that a historical study of the Swedish riding school was necessary to make activities in the riding schools understandable to an international audience. The rise of the riding school and its special importance as an institution for teaching riding to children was presented and laid the foundation for other studies in the project. Today more than half of the riding schools offer activities for preschool children and many riding schools offer horse-assisted activities for children with disabilities. The activities can be horse riding but also different types of lessons in the stable about how to take care of horses. The activities are challenging – not least

because they are based on the parents being able to help and the riding instructor being creative when it comes to teaching this age group.

The activities for the younger children involve safety problems that are related to the parents' ignorance and that the safety equipment available is not adapted to the youngest children. It is also clear that many riding instructors lack preparatory training to take care of the youngest children and that parents would need to be trained in horse knowledge. The riding instructors are well aware of horse welfare and use horses with special skills and experience needed for the activities. Parents' lack of horse knowledge, however, influence the welfare of horses.

The results from the PhD project indicate that knowledge about the horse-assisted activities for the younger children is scarce and there are also no comparable studies because different concepts and activities are used. An interesting conclusion is that the activities are based on bodily function rather than age, which can be explained by the fact that the activities are framed by a medical discourse. This distinguishes them from other activities for the younger children – these are framed by a discourse about 'sport-for-all'. Furthermore, it appears that studies that focus on the social context of the horse-supported activities are lacking – even though the social context is decisive for whether the activities can be carried out. Preliminary results show that horse knowledge and 'know how' is considered important, related to both safety and professionalism in these activities. Therapists must be comfortable working with large groups for the activities to be (financially) sustainable. Collaborations with other professions are welcomed, but the compensation policy is reserved for physiotherapists. There is no uniform description of suitable horses in terms of age or breed for the horse-assisted activities. However, just as in the activities for preschool children, smaller breeds of horses and ponies are considered more suitable. Horses are selected for their temperament, gait, size and width, and a variety of horses are ideal to match the different children's needs and challenges.

Relevance for the practical horse sector incl. recommendations

The project's results have been made available to the sector through lectures for hippology students and course participants who are studying a distance course in Pedagogy and Riding School Operations for SRL 2 at Ridskolan Strömsholm. Furthermore, the results have been presented to the Equestrian Association's responsible for the riding school operations as well as through popular science articles and lectures. The dissemination of the results has contributed to that

- representatives of the equestrian sport have a deeper knowledge of the activities for the younger children
- the training of riding instructors has been strengthened in terms of how riding for the younger riders takes place and can be developed
- knowledge about the importance of parent training and what this can look like has increased.

We have not had the opportunity to develop educational tools together with the sector (not least due to changed activities during the Covid19 pandemic), but would like, based on the

The project has been financed by:

project's results, to submit the following recommendations to the sector to increase rider safety and horse welfare:

- 1) Managers of horse-riding schools and horse-riding instructors need more knowledge about young children's motoric, physiological, and psychological development to adapt their activities to this group. The higher education institutions within the equine sector need to develop horse-riding instructor courses about children's motoric, physiological, and psychological development and age relevant pedagogy. Education on the teaching of horse riding to different age groups could be a further development, as well as education on teaching people with diverse bodily functions. A specialization (and possibly a certificate or likewise) of the horse-riding instructor profession would clarify competencies for teaching specific age groups or needs. For example, X is a horse-riding instructor with a specialization in early childhood education/in adults learning/in children with special needs. Courses could be hybrid courses (onsite and online).
- 2) The Equestrian Federation and/or directors of horse-riding schools and horse-riding instructors need to develop parental courses based on previous knowledge of the parents and that could teach parents about horses and horse riding, so that they become more competent when they help their children. Courses need to take gender constructions in to account.
- 3) Safety equipment and behavior– checklist, advice, and guidance to work within teachers' education and parental education should be developed.
- 4) The compensation system for equine assisted therapy needs to be changed so that the equine physiotherapist can get adequate (personnel) support for the activities

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Part 3: Result dissemination

State all result dissemination from the financed project into the appropriate section, including information as indicated in each section. Additional rows can be added to the table.

Scientific publications, published	<i>Author(s), year, title, journal, Vol, No, pp. (doi/link if applicable)</i>
	Hedenborg, S, Rosen, A, Solenes, O & Thorell, G (2019), <i>Too young to ride? A study of riding school activities for pre-school children from safety and horse welfare perspectives</i> , 2019, https://idrottsforum.org/featurehedenborgetal190308/
	Hedenborg, S, Rosén, A, Thorell, G, Solenes, O och Werner G, (2020), <i>Bland knattar och minisar. Ridskolornas verksamhet för de allra yngsta</i> . https://idrottsforum.org/hedenborgetal201015/
	Annika Rosén, Gabriella Thorell & Susanna Hedenborg (2021), The competent child and (in)competent others. Horse-riding school activities for preschool children, <i>Sport in Society</i> , 25:12, 2501-2518, DOI: 10.1080/17430437.2021.2015333
	Susanna Hedenborg, Gabriella Torell Palmquist & Annika Rosén (2021a) The Emergence of the Swedish Horse-Riding School from the Mid-Twentieth Century, <i>The International Journal of the History of Sport</i> , 38:6, 607-630, DOI: 10.1080/09523367.2021.1959321
	Hedenborg, S., Torell Palmquist, G., & Rosén, A. (2021b). Vad gjorde de svenska ridskolorna med ridsporten? <i>Idrott, historia & samhälle. Svenska Idrottshistoriska föreningens årsskrift 2021</i> , pp 9–12.
	Hedenborg, Susanna, Torell Palmquist, Gabriella, Rosén, Annika, Solenes, Oskar, 2023, 'Dilemmatic spaces' och föräldrars deltagande i ridskolornas verksamhet för de yngre barnen, Idrottsforum. https://idrottsforum.org/hedenborgetal230510/
Scientific publications, submitted	<i>Author(s), title</i>
	Annika Rosén, Gabriella Thorell, Ellinor Källén & Susanna Hedenborg (2023), Team Performance and Gendered Parenthood in horse riding activities for young children, submitted to <i>Sport in Society</i> .
Scientific publications, manuscript	<i>Author(s), title</i>
	Rosen, Annika, Torell Palmquist, Gabriella, Hedenborg, Susanna , We want workmates that are old, experienced, and calm: Riding instructors' perceptions of horses in activities for young children from an intersectional perspective. Manuscript.

	Rosén, Annika, Gabriella Thorell Palmquist & Susanna Hedenborg (2023), Hästen och idén om hästen med den unga ryttaren, <i>Idrottsforum</i> , Manuscript.
	Rosén, Annika, Gabriella Thorell, Ellinor Källén & Susanna Hedenborg (2023), The perception of the young rider, is it a boy or a girl? Manuscript to be submitted to <i>Gender Studies</i> .
	Rosén, Annika, Gabriella Thorell, Ellinor Källén & Susanna Hedenborg (2023), Lack of safe behavior and safety equipment in horse riding activities for young children, Manuscript.
	Torell Palmquist, Gabriella, Hedenborg, Susanna, Linner, Susanne, Rosén, Annika & Solenes, Oskar, Flexibility, creativity, and imagination. A frame factor analysis of riding lessons for young children. Manuscript. Submission to <i>Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy</i> planned in August 2023.
	PHD project: Article 1: Werner, Guro Fiskegård & Solenes, Oskar, Systematic scoping review mapping descriptions of Equine-Assisted Therapy (EAT) for preschool children, specifically in regards to contextual conditions such as competence, collaboration and milieu. Planned submission autumn 2023 (was submitted 2020, but rejected).
Conference publications/ presentations	<i>Author(s), year, title, conference name, location and date, (link if applicable)</i>
	THORELL PALMQUIST, G., ROSEN, A, HEDENBORG, S, YOUNGER CHILDREN AND OLDER HORSES, EQUESTRIAN SPORT FOR PRE-SCHOOL CHILDREN, ECSS, Prague, 2019, http://ecssccongress.eu/2019/19/index.php/programme
	SOLENES, O., HEDENBORG, S. TOO YOUNG FOR SPORT: AN ANALYSIS OF ORGANIZED SPORT ACTIVITIES FOR YOUNG CHILDREN IN NORWAY AND SWEDEN, ECSS, Prague, 2019, http://ecss-congress.eu/2019/19/index.php/programme
	THORELL PALMQUIST, G., ROSEN, A, <i>Too young to Ride? A study of riding school activities for pre-school children from safety and horse welfare perspectives</i> , <i>Equine Cultures in Transition/Leeds/19-21 June 2018</i> .
	Solenes, O, “ <i>THE SPORTING CHILD – A HISTORICAL STUDY OF THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF CHILDREN’S’ BODIES THROUGH SPORT</i> , Invited session, ECSS, online conference 2020-10-28–2020-10-30. http://www.ecssccongress.eu/2020/20/index.php/programme/scientific-programme
	THORELL, G., HEDENBORG, S., ROSÉN, A., <i>TOO YOUNG TO RIDE?</i> , Invited session, ECSS, online conference 2020-10-28–2020-10-30. http://www.ecssccongress.eu/2020/20/index.php/programme/scientific-programme

	Torell Palmquist, G. (2021, 22-24 June). <i>The Swedish riding school: a social arena for young riders. Conference presentation. Equine Cultures in Transition – Past, Present and Future Challenges (ECT), Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Uppsala.</i>
	Torell Palmquist, G. (2022). <i>Preschoolers, parents and ponies – military traditions challenges by pedagogical play at Swedish and Norwegian Riding Schools [poster presentation]. European College of Sport Science (ECSS), Sevilla, Spain.</i>
	Rosén, Annika (2021, 22-24 June). <i>Swedish pony riding schools. TPK a case. Conference presentation. Equine Cultures in Transition - Past, Present and Future Challenges (ECT), Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Uppsala.</i>
	Werner, Guro Fiskergård & Solenes, Oskar (2021, 22-24 June) <i>Preschoolers, ponies and professionals – organizing equine-assisted therapy for preschool children in Norway. Conference presentation. Equine Cultures in Transition - Past, Present and Future Challenges (ECT), Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Uppsala.</i>
	Werner, Guro Fiskergård, (2021, 22-24 June), “Disability, sport and equine therapy”, Conference presentation. <i>Equine Cultures in Transition - Past, Present and Future Challenges (ECT), Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Uppsala.</i>
	Werner, Guri Fiskergård, <i>Contextual conditions for equine assisted therapy with preschool children, 25th Annual ECSS Congress Seville/ Spain. July 1.-2. 2020 (accpeted for the conference)</i>
	Werner, Guri Fiskergård (2023), <i>Equine-assisted physiotherapy-treatment and activity for children with disabilities in Norway, Children with disabilities and quality of life – challenges and possibilities 2023 in Arusha, Tanzania.</i>
	Solenes, Oskar (2022, 29. June–2. July) <i>Children and horses. The history of Norwegian riding schools. Conference presentation. International Society of the History of Physical Education and Sport (ISHPES) Conference 2022, Norwegian School of Sport Sciences, Oslo</i>
	Torell Palmquist, G. (2022). <i>Se upp för krokodilerna på spåret! En intervjustudie med ridlärare om när ridskoleverksamhet anpassas till yngre barn. Svensk Förening för Beteende- och Samhällsvetenskaplig Idrottsforskning (SVEBI), Malmö, 14–15 juni 2022. Oral presentation.</i>
	Torell Palmquist, Gabriella, Rosén, Annika, Hedenborg, Susanna, <i>We want workmates that are old, experienced, and calm: Riding instructors’ perceptions of horses in activities for young</i>

	children. Conference presentation. Interspecies perceptions on decent work. 24 May and 21 June, 2023 (Online)
	Rosén, Annika, Sport and Parenthood: Parental Roles in Horse Riding Activities for Toddlers. Conference presentation accepted, ECSS 4– 7 July, 2023, Paris.
Other publications, media etc.	<i>Title, year/date, place of publication (link if applicable)</i>
	Rapport på svenska till Ridsportförbundet samt presentation av denna: Susanna Hedenborg, Annika Rosén, Gabriella Thorell Palmquist, Oskar Solenes, Guro Werner Fiskegård, <i>För ung att rida? Rapport från forskningsprojektet Too young to ride?</i> 2019-11-13
	Svt Värmland – Intervju Gabriella Torell Palmquist: Ridning – från mansdominerat till tjejsport (12 mars 2020). https://www.svt.se/nyheter/lokalt/varmland/ridning-fran-mansdominans-till-tjejsport
	Werner, Guro Fiskegård, Barn har lik rett til terapiridning, men tilbudet er ulikt. Kronikk. Romsdals Budstikke. 2021.
Oral communication to horse sector, students etc.	<i>Title, year/date, group presented to (link if applicable)</i>
	Too young to ride? Flyinge, 08042019, PhD students Malmö University, Students at Flyinge
	“For ung til ri?”, Norsk Hestesenter 19062019, staff and students, as well riding school teachers. (https://www.nhest.no/faglig-paafyll-forridelaerere . 6230362- 467706.html)
	Oral presentation: Rapport på svenska till Ridsportförbundet samt presentation av denna: För ung att rida? Rapport från forskningsprojektet Too young to ride? 2019-11-13
	Oral presentation, Sport Science research seminar, Malmö university, 24/2 2020.
	Oral presentation: Exploring contextual conditions for Equine Assisted Interventions with preschool children. Faglig foredrag. Beitostølen helsesportsenter 2020.
	Oral presentation, Research seminar at Barn, Unga, Samhälle, Malmö university, 180516
	Föreläsning Strömsholm, studenter åk 2, 18 feb 2021
	Föreläsning Strömsholm, studenter åk 2, 20 sep 2021
	Forskningspresentation Hippologlärardagar, Wången, 12-13 okt 2022
	Föreläsning Strömsholm, studenter åk 2, 14 nov 2022
	Oral presentation Flyinge 11/1 2023
	Oral presentation Swedish Equestrian Federation 26/1 2023
	Oral presentation, Sport Science research seminar, Malmö university, 19/6 2023.

Student theses	<i>Author/Student, co-authors/supervisors, year, title, type of thesis (doi/link if applicable)</i>
	Tallberg, Jonna and Rydén, Maja, 2021. Barns perspektiv på ridlekis: en kvalitativ intervjustudie genom fokusgrupper med yngre barn. Grundnivå, G2E. Uppsala: SLU, Institutionen för anatomi, fysiologi och biokemi. https://stud.epsilon.slu.se/17131/
Other	<p>Under hela projektperioden har forskarna i projektet har regelbundna möten (ca 1 per månad samt telefonmöten vid behov) samt tredagarsmöten vid NIH, Malmö universitet och Strömsholm. Till de senare har andra forskare, samt (på Strömsholm) representanter från sektorn bjudits in för att diskutera resultat. Vi organiserade även 2019 (januari) ett uppstartsmöte på Norges idrottshögskola med representanter för Stiftelsen hästforskning, Norsk hestecenter, Svenska ridsportförbundet, Norges Rytterförbund för att diskutera projektets utgångspunkter. Slutligen organiserades ett avslutande möte 19-21 juni projektet samt andra forskare för att diskutera projektets slutsatser.</p> <p>Presentation för allmänheten: 7/4 2022 föreläsning för senioruniversitetet Växjö</p> <p>Projektets slutsatser presenterades även på GIHs frukostseminarium om ridsportens ledarskap och sund idrottsmiljö, 16/6 2023.</p>