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Title: The double-sided nature of lifestyle-oriented work in the Swedish equine industry

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Abstract: The equine industry faces problems in terms of recruitment and retention of employees when it comes to fostering decent working conditions and sustainable employments, despite the obvious advantage of offering a lifestyle-oriented work with the privilege of personal leisure interests. The overall aim is to gain knowledge of how employees in the equine industry – here including riding schools and trotting stables – experience their work and work environment. The study is part of two larger research projects, financed by the Swedish-Norwegian Foundation for Equine Research and AFA Insurance, where the purpose is to, in close collaboration with the equine industry, identify and implement methods and tools for a systematic work environment management. The study includes data from a questionnaire, individual interviews and observations. The results showed that the employees considered their work as one of the most important things in life, that they primarily worked for self-realization and good quality of life and that they perceived their current work both attractive and meaningful. Love of horses, passion for the sport, practical work in an outdoor setting, significant, stimulating and varied tasks as well as workplace relations, are the most important factors for the attractiveness and meaningfulness of the work. Nevertheless, imbalance between work and leisure time as well as high physical workload and lack of adequate equipment challenges the experience of an attractive, meaningful and sustainable work. The experiences differed somewhat between the two groups examined, i.e. employees in riding schools and trotting stables.

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Author bio: Åsa Bergman Bruhn is a physiotherapist with a Master's degree in Care Science. Since 2018, she is a doctoral student in Working Sciences. Her interests are in the areas of work environment, working conditions and ergonomics, i.e. factors and methods that foster attractive, meaningful, healthy, safe and sustainable employments. An overall purpose of her PhD project is to contribute to the development of safe and healthy working conditions and sustainable careers in horse-related professions by generating knowledge on how long-term work environment management can be practically integrated and continuously operated.

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