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Title: Improving work environment and safety within the Swedish equine sector through novel methods and tools

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Abstract:
The work environment in horse stables is known to be characterized by low mechanization, high physical workloads and high injury risks. The Swedish Work Environment Authority has also reported a lack of knowledge in the systematic work environment management and risk assessments as well as shortcomings regarding work environment and work conditions in the Swedish equine sector. The aim of this study was to identify, adapt and implement methods and tools for systematic work environment management, with emphasis on characteristics to stimulate motivation and commitment at work, in order to improve the work environment in the sector. The study had a participatory action research approach, and were conducted at four workplaces, two riding schools and two trotting stables, in Sweden. The employees were guided to identify the challenges in their work environment, both physical and organizational, through a combination of methods including surveys, interviews and observations. A workshop with the employees was then organized to discuss and prioritize actions needed to improve the work environment based on the identified needs, resulting in an action plan. The project group were coaching the workplaces through the action phase, including e.g. support to managers in the systematic work environment management, changing working routines and equipment, improving work ergonomics, and improving communication and information with digital aids. Preliminary results indicate that this approach can help to create involvement and motivation and to provide valuable insights on how to improve health and safety.

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