

The acceptance of complementary therapies in equine communities and what therapists need to know.

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The Research

What pre-disposes horse owners in Wales to choose complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) for their horses?

A mixed methods study of over 170 horse owners and riders across Wales, ranging from competitive riders to 'happy hackers', traditional and natural horsemanship, and those keeping their horses at home and in livery

Preliminary Findings – 1

- 157 people owned one or more horses (avg 4.25 horses each)
- 596 horses lived at home and 81 were in livery
- People had owned horses for an average of 24 years
- 76 kept their horses traditionally, 18 naturally and the rest mixed
- 78 kept their horses out full time, 96 out in the day and 118 turned out with at least one other horse

Methods

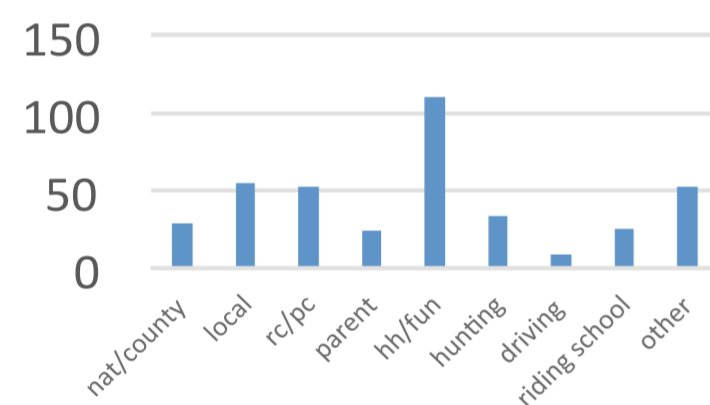
- Introspective Essay to develop questionnaire
- Questionnaire to determine high level information and gain interview candidates
- Interviews to get rich, descriptive data
- Text research – 10 years of popular equine press recording articles and adverts on CAM – for added understanding

Preliminary Findings – 2

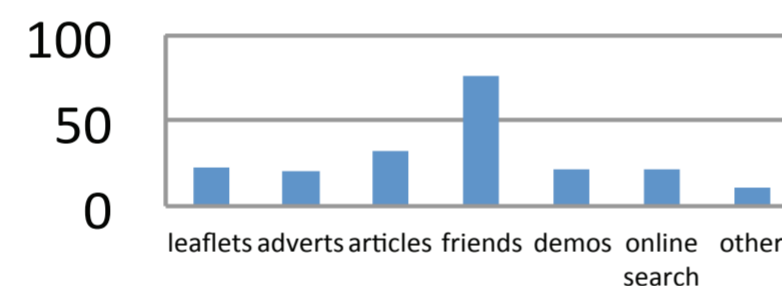
- 109 use or have used CAM* on their horses
- 106 use or have used CAM on themselves
- 11 have joint session with their horse(s)
- 166 do or would use CAM on themselves or their horses

*Complementary and Alternative Medicine

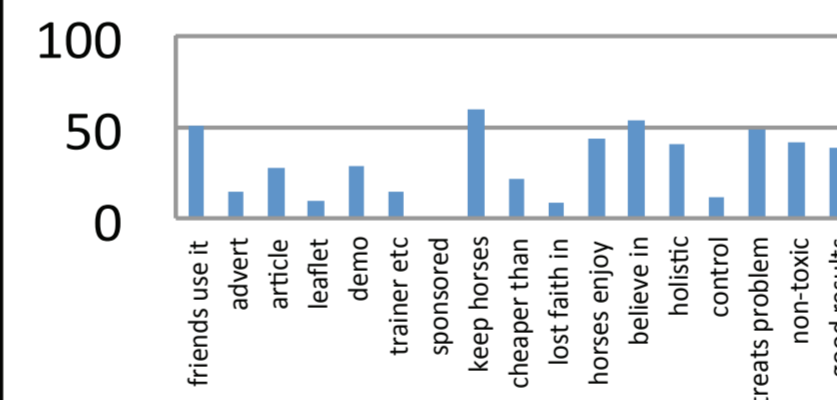
Equestrian Lifestyle



How do you hear about CAM?



Why Use CAM?



Top Five Treatments

1. Massage
2. Chiropractic
3. Herbs
4. Osteopathy
5. Homeopathy

Bottom Five Treatments

1. Cymatics*
2. Shamanic
3. Crystals
4. Equine Touch
5. Laser

*98 had never heard of this

Text Research - Popular Equine Press

- Horse & Hound (weekly), Horse (Monthly)
- Last 10 years plus random samples of other magazines
- Interest in CAM ebbs and flows
- Most popular articles on herbs, massage/back problems, barefoot, behaviour/intelligent horsemanship
- Others on reiki, acupuncture, communication and CAM for riders such as TFT, NLP and hypnotherapy
- Many adverts for herbs – supplements, creams and remedies

Overall Findings (Preliminary)

- Most respondents have some acceptance of CAM
- Bodywork CAM has the greatest acceptance
- Energy and esoteric CAM has the least acceptance
 - (Apart from homeopathy which is well known)
- Herbs also used widely as feed supplements
- Natural horsemanship/mixed respondents most open to CAM
- Word of mouth is the best marketing tool
- Articles rather than adverts in press useful

Preliminary Advice for Equine Therapists

- Educate your markets on esoteric and energy therapies
 - Use mainstream equine media where possible
- Target customers carefully
- Piggyback on well known therapies
- Find 'thought leader' in livery yards and other groups and convert them
- Use vet referral if possible – educate the local vet
- Professionalism, qualifications and confidence will give the customer confidence
- Build up referrals through positive word of mouth