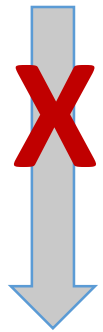


# *Horse housing: Active stable and tracks systems*

*Management and practices in Belgium  
and France*

M. Humbel, J.F. Cabaraux & M. Vandenheede

- Social species
- Herbivorous
- Day long feeding
- Movement
- Rest



Individual stable



Active stable



Track system

- ID owners
- Belgium & France
- Questionnaire
  - resources
  - feed management
  - health management
  - horses
- 93 stables approached
- 46 valid questionnaires returned
- 60 herds for analysis
  - 47 Tracks
  - 7 Active stable
  - 6 Paddock

## OWNERS

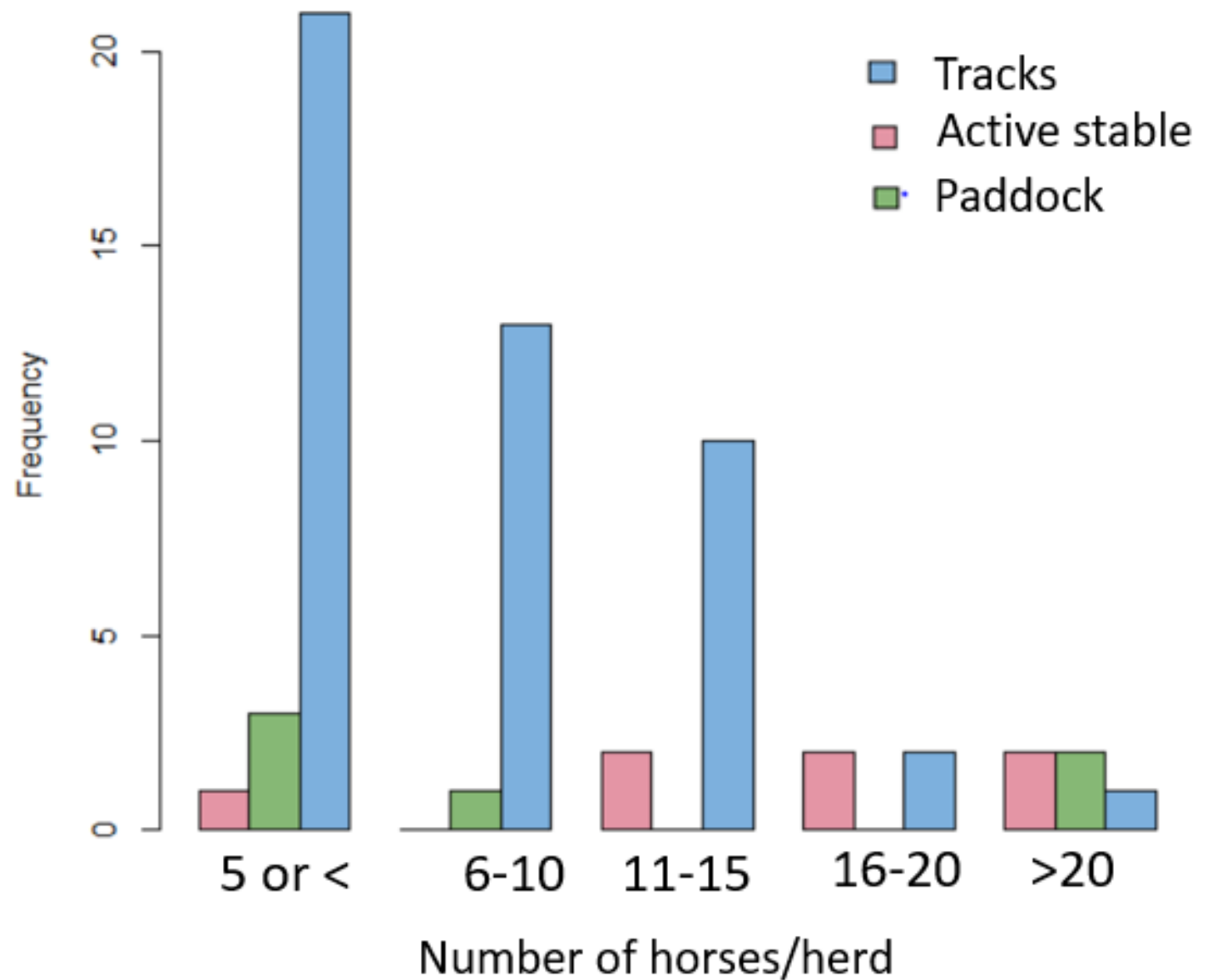
- Woman: 80%
- Mean age: 41 years
  
- Main job: 50%
- Boarding service: 82%
  - demand for those alternatives
  
- Recent openings : mean < 3 years





## HORSES

- Mix gender herds
- Stallions rare (0,9%)
- Leisure horses



## SIZE & AVAILABLE AREA

### Active stable

- Overall size > Tracks
- More pasture



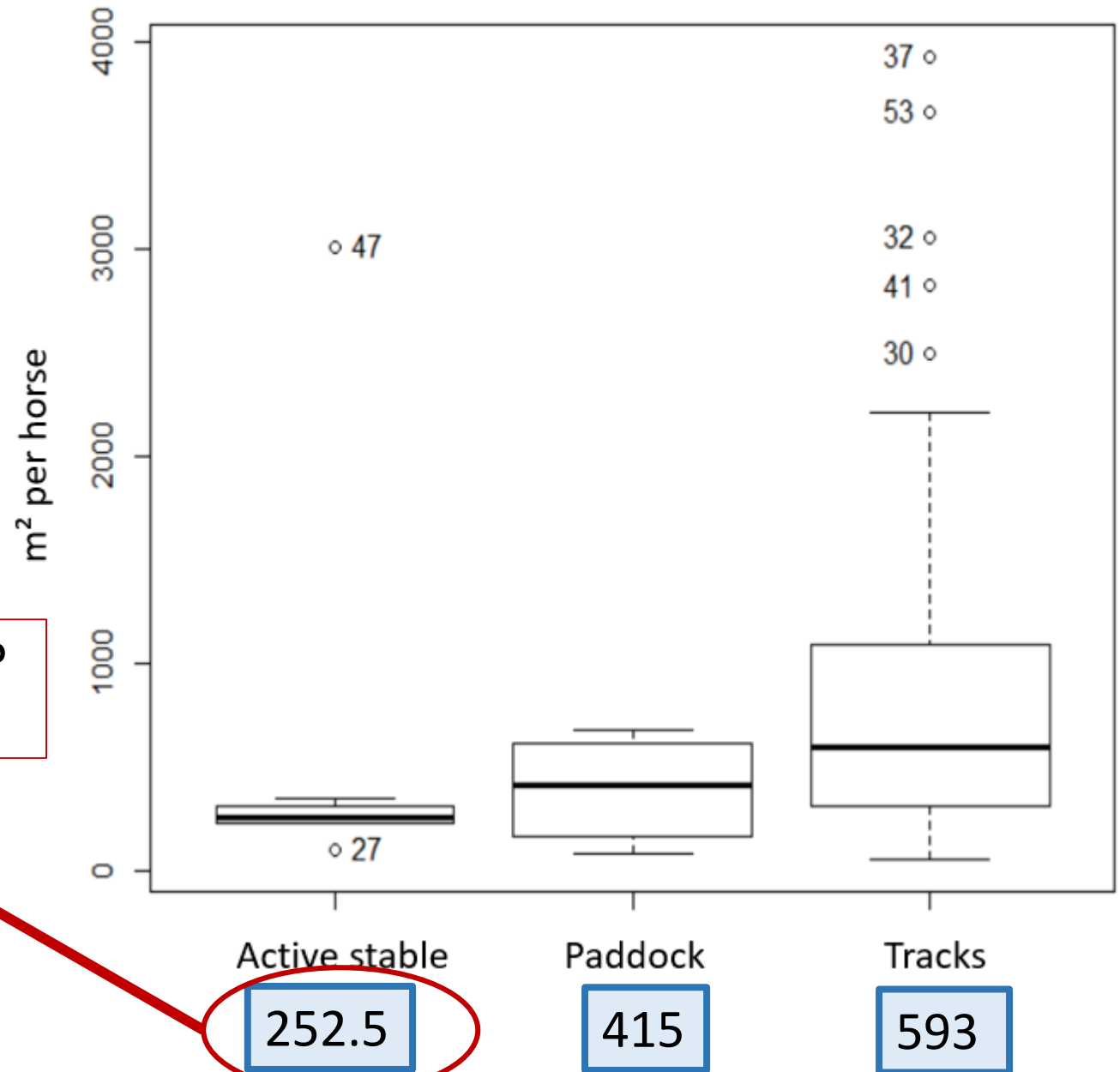
Pasture: at least a few hours a day in summer

## SIZE & AVAILABLE AREA

Mean available area: 0.65 ha

Mean area per horse: 850m<sup>2</sup>

< 331 m<sup>2</sup>/horse → agonistic interactions ?  
(Flauger & Krueger, 2013)





## SIZE & AVAILABLE AREA

	Active stable	Paddock	Tracks	P-value
Level of stabilisation (%)	88.2 ± 31.3	50.1 ± 40.9	9.7 ± 19.8	***



Mud control by extensive soil stabilisation

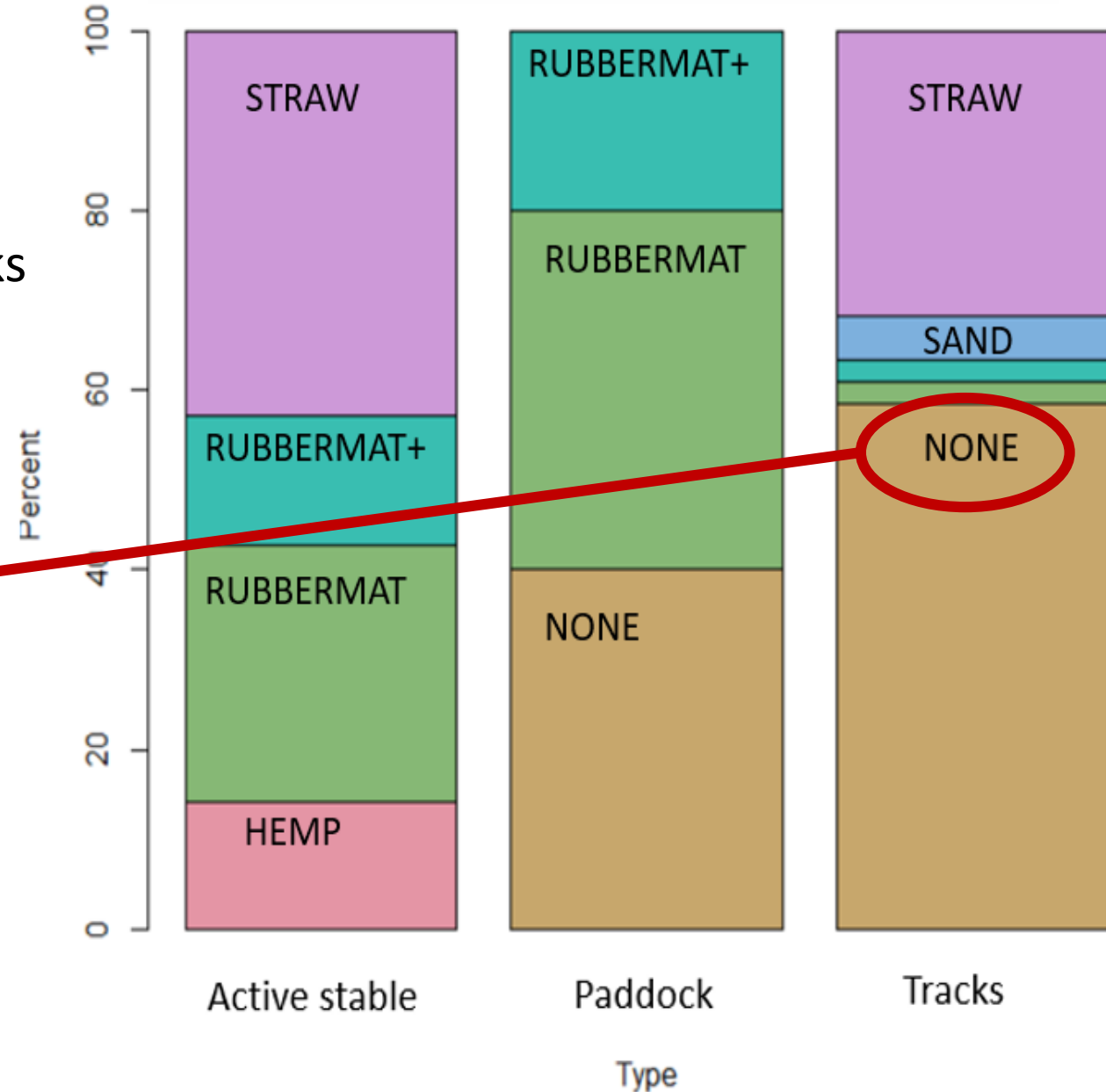




## SHELTER

Shelter always present → 12,8% natural in Tracks

Impact on rest or sheltering behaviour?



## FORAGE MANAGEMENT

**Active stable:** Hay rack only (automated or not)



Adequacy?  
Stress?

## FORAGE MANAGEMENT

**Tracks:** hanging nets (51,5%) , hay racks (23,4%)

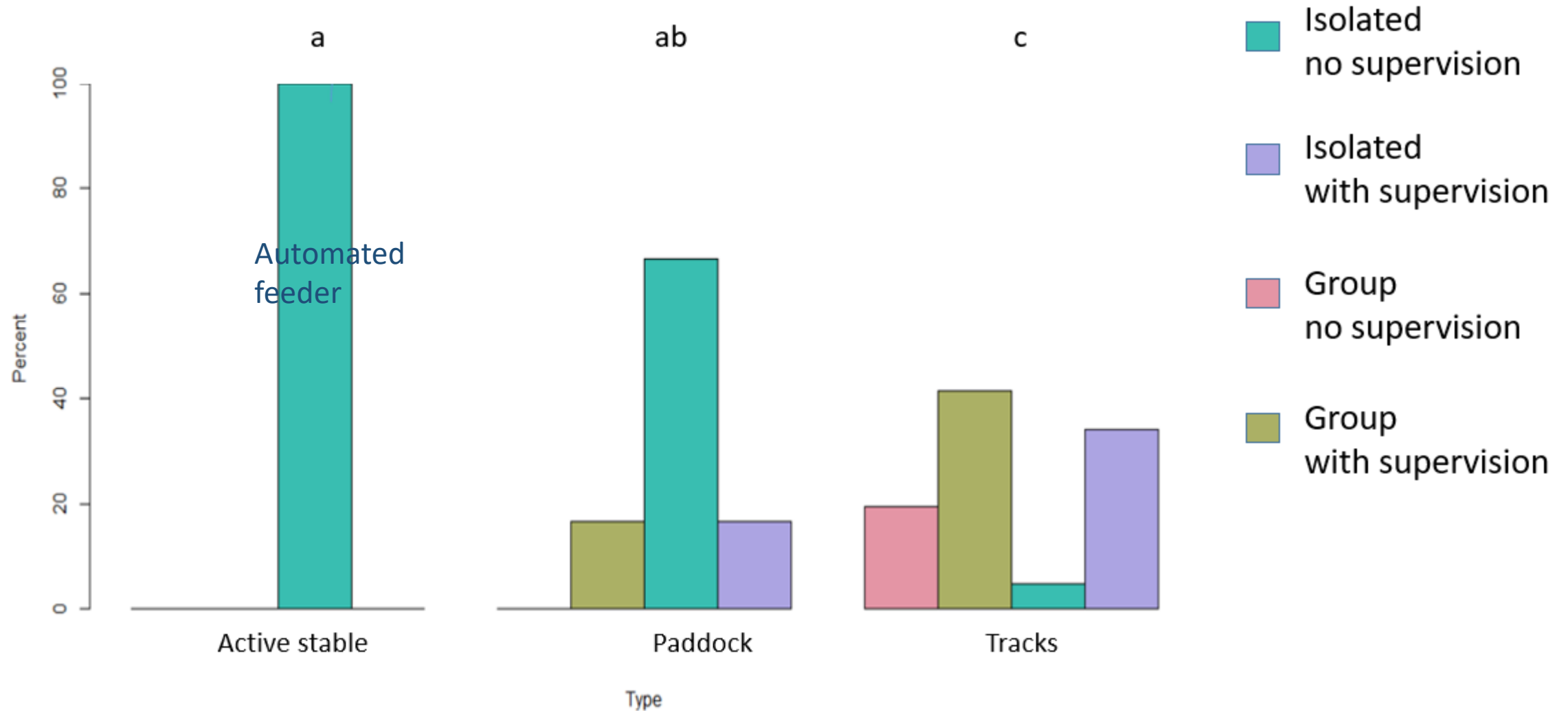


74,4% small mesh nets

Pulling forces?  
Frustration?



## COMPLEMENTS



## HEALTH MANAGEMENT

- Deworming:
  - Tracks: more use of « natural » dewormer (p:\*)
- Shoeing
  - Tracks: almost never allowed
- Feet care:
  - « natural » feet care in all types
  - Exclusive for 72,3% of Tracks

## LOCOMOTION STRATEGIES

- Multiplication of forage zones: tendency for Tracks ( $p= 0,051$ )

- Tracks = feature of track systems ( $p:***$ )

Stress?  
Interactions?





## KEY FEATURES

### Active stable

Larger herds

Bigger overall size

High level of soil modification  
(mud control)

Litter always present in shelter

Rubbermat frequent

Hay rack (auto or not)

Automated feeder

### Tracks systems

Smaller herds

Few soil modification

Natural shelter

Tendency for no litter in shelter

Hanging hay nets

Tendency to multiply forage zones

Group feeding or supervision needed

Tracks

« Natural » dewormer and « natural »  
feet care

## CONCLUSION

- Differences & similarities in management
- Philosophical difference → « natural » in Tracks
- Positive aspects
- Impact on welfare & health to be investigated

# THANK YOU!



University of Liège, Belgium  
Veterinary faculty

[mhumbel@uliege.be](mailto:mhumbel@uliege.be)