

Do You Know Which Way They Neigh?

This experiment investigated which way horses stand to stay warm when the wind is blowing. Inspiration for this project came from watching ponies and horses in their field. When the wind is blowing, they do stand different ways. Looking at which way horses and ponies stand when the wind is blowing to stay the warmest is a good question to answer. This project was started in January, when it was still cold. On some days it was noticed that one of the ponies would be facing N or SW with no wind, they can also be facing other directions on windy days.

This project has two parts: field observations and a model horse experiment. For the field observations two fields were chosen with a mix of horses (two thoroughbreds and one yearling) and four adult ponies beside each other. Field observations were done at Small Victory Farm in Norwood. From January to March, pictures of each field were taken. Which way the horses and ponies' heads were facing were recoded in a spread sheet. For each day the wind speed and direction, and temperature and wind chill for Norwood was looked-up. For the model horse experiment, a model horse was used, a desk fan, a digital thermometer and a stopwatch. A measuring tape was used to make sure the model horse was 10 inches from the fan for each experiment. A damp piece of paper towel was used to simulate a wet horse blanket. The model horses' temperature every 15 seconds for 5 minutes was recorded. The model horse was standing side on, head on and rump on to the wind from the fan.

The conclusion was that on very windy and cold days most of the horses and ponies, were standing with their rump to the wind and the model horse experiment showed that the model horse was warmest with its rump to the fan. When it was not as windy most of the horses were standing side on into the wind. Thus the horses and ponies stand with their rump to the wind because their tail stops the wind from going under their belly and keeps them warmer.