

## REVIEW ARTICLE

# THE HORSE IN THE LIGHT OF VETERINARY MEDICINE AND THE MUSLIM TRADITION - A COMPARATIVE STUDY

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**ABSTRACT**

Of all the animals that accompany humans through almost all stages of human development, horses have the most prominent place. In addition to a presentation of the role and significance of horses in human life throughout history until today, taking the Bosnian mountain horse as a paradigm, a presentation is highlighted of the relationship of the Islamic religion to horses, which are the most valued domestic animals. In Islamic theology, caring for the animal world is mandatory, primarily as an expression of doing deeds that bring us closer to God, where the well-being of horses is especially important.

**Keywords:** Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bosnian mountain horse, Islam, mule, hinny

**INTRODUCTION**

It is assumed that the human population began domesticating horses six thousand years ago, although there are indications that this happened much earlier, but at the same time it occurred much later than the domestication of some other animals (Jansen et al., 2002; Lönker et al. 2020; Vučevac-Bajt, 2012). Over thousands of years, herds of horses gradually merged with human societies. The act of joining two species is referred to by modern scientists as “kinetic empathy” due to their similar and compatible social structures, where the relationship between the two species develops in their common niche (Gustafson, 2023). The cradle of the first domesticated horses were the steppes of today’s western Kazakhstan, southwestern Russia, and Ukraine (Warmuth et al. 2012; Vučevac-Bajt, 2012).

The wild ancestors of today’s domestic horse are considered to be the Asian wild horse, mentioned above (*E. caballus przewalskii*) and the tarpan from Eastern Europe and the Ukrainian steppes, as well as the forest horses of Northern Europe. Research based on sequencing of mitochondrial genomes indicated the possibility that horses were

domesticated several times by crossing local wild horses and domesticated mares (Lippold et al., 2011). Throughout history, horses performed many functions, and played an irreplaceable role in shaping ancient civilizations. Although hunting or finding food was the initial motivation for people in the early stages of the domestication of horses, their role as a basic means of transport and the main trump card in warfare grew progressively throughout the subsequent periods (Orlando, 2020).

Considering the inestimable benefits that man achieved by using horses for his needs, concern for their well-being progressively increased, and special attention was paid to their health. The success of an individual and/or community depended primarily on their horses' health. Vučevac-Bajt (2012) highlights the time in Arab veterinary medicine over a period of 600-1200 years, where considerable work was done on training veterinary staff in charge of the health care and treatment of horses and camels. Horse breeding and training were also approached in a similar way.

The use of horses largely depends on the cultural origin of the people and their affiliation to a certain religion, which often shapes the approach to and perceptions of this noble animal. Cattle, for example, play an important role in Hinduism (Pawshé et al., 2016), which directly affects human mental health (Koenig, 2009), but horses are not part of any religion (Lönker et al., 2020). There is a deficit of published works dealing with this issue, especially when it comes to the attitude of Islam towards this animal population.

The aim of this article is to present the basic features of the horse through the paradigm of the indigenous breed of the Bosnian mountain horse, in the context of veterinary medicine and the Muslim tradition.

### Historical review

In ancient cultures, horses were used extensively in warfare, for transporting loads, pulling carts, and cultivating the land. The Babylonians introduced

the use of four-wheeled chariots, and the early empires of the Assyrians, Hittites and Hurrians were created with the help of horses (Budimir et al., 2009). Horses were the main driving force of numerous Egyptian conquests, and high-quality horses were bred at numerous horse stud farms (Džaja and Severin, 2019). During the time of the ancient Jews, thoroughbred horses were bred, and the development and treatment of war horses, which were used for draft and riding, were encouraged (Turudić, 1977). In ancient China, horses were considered a symbol of fire, speed, perseverance and good intentions, and in this period, during the greatest military reforms, chariots were replaced by cavalry (Vučevac-Bajt, 2012; Džaja et al., 2022). In addition to warfare, the ancient Greeks also used horses extensively in sports, and well-developed horse breeding in that period also led to the training of special specialists who treated civilian and military horses, and were called hippieatres (Gr. *Hyppos*=horse, *iatros*=doctor) (Hadžiomerović and Šatrović, 2004; Džaja, 2017). Apart from their versatile use, horses were associated with various deities, and were the most popular and most present animals in the rich ancient mythology. Centaurs (gr. *Κένταυροι*, *Kéntauroi*), hybrid creatures from Greek mythology, with the upper parts of the human body and the lower parts of the body of a horse, are nowadays the symbol of numerous veterinary organizations (Hausmann and Jöchle, 1988; Džaja et al., 2022). The ancient Romans bred several horse breeds that they used in wars, in their economy and in circuses, that had great social significance. Horses were also used to breed mules, which were highly valued due to their endurance (Vučevac-Bajt, 2012). In the Roman Empire, horses were also a religious symbol, and were used for religious rites and ceremonies (Budimir et al., 2009; Džaja et al., 2022). The cavalry also had great significance for the spread of Islamic culture and religion. Islamic scientists made a significant contribution to the development of Arab medicine and veterinary medicine, which was based on the scientific knowledge of older cultures. The main task in veterinary medicine was primarily the treatment

of horses, which was most often performed by horse farriers (Hadžimerović and Šatrović, 2004). The most famous Arab veterinarian, Abu Bakr ibn Badr, in his work “Kamilus-sana’atejn” (that is, Perfection in two skills (horse breeding and horse treatment)) described over 200 disease conditions in horses and methods of treatment, horse breeding and keeping, horse shoeing, and other procedures related to horse breeding in that period (Hadžibajrić, 1982).

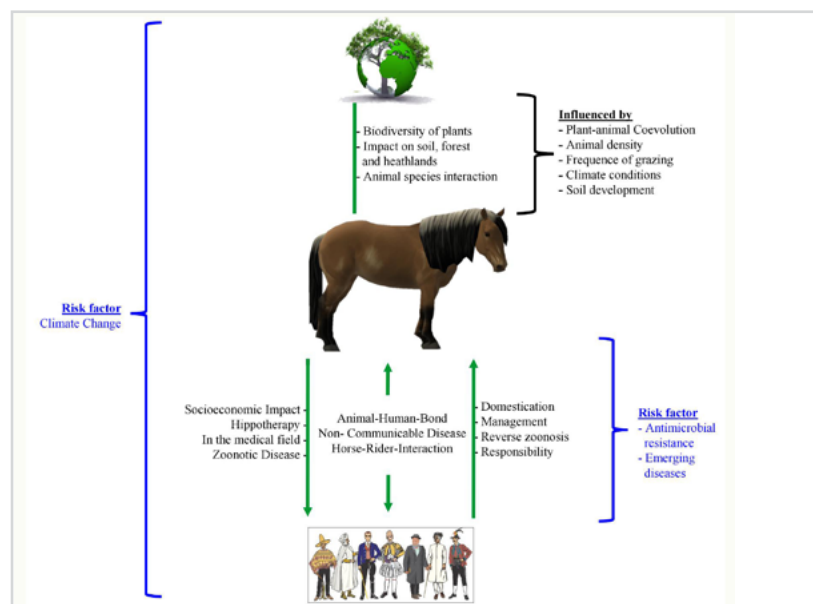
In Muslim empires a special form of animal care was practiced, based on a foundation (*vakuf*), derived from religious and theological reflection, specializing in animal care. Most often, it was about exhausted draft and riding animals such as horses and camels, which were protected by the foundation, and kept free, that is, they were not tied. Also, they were not used for food purposes, and in the winter period they would be provided with sufficient amounts of food (Jašić, 2019). In Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as in other areas under the administration of the Ottoman Empire, there were many of these foundations (Zaimović, 2010; Jašić, 2019).

### Wild horses

Wild horses (*Equus caballus*) can be found on all continents of the Earth except Antarctica (Lönker

et al., 2020). In Bosnia and Herzegovina, wild horses are present in several localities (Katica et al., 2010). A large number of wild horses inhabit the Kruzi karst plateau, which is located at the foot of the Cincar mountain in western Bosnia. According to independent estimates and data from the non-governmental sector in this area, more than 1,000 horses live and reside freely, without direct human control, which are actually the descendants of abandoned domestic horses that served livestock farmers for transport, work in the fields or other activities until the development of mechanization. Moreover, the aggression against Bosnia and Herzegovina was one of the significant reasons for the appearance of a large number of abandoned horses, of which the most are of the Bosnian mountain horse breed, with some of the Arabian breed, and the rest are similar to these two breeds or crosses (Katica et al., 2010).

Apart from the fact that free-living horses all over the planet Earth are a spectacular sight and represent a kind of tourist attraction, wild horses are also credited with a far more significant influence. Through the control of plant growth and the preservation of natural diversity, horses play a major role in the overall balance of the ecological system (see Figure 1). By fertilizing the soil and spreading plant species, they have a positive effect



**Figure 1** Forms of interaction between horse, man and environment (Lönker et al., 2020)

on the biodiversity of animal species, especially reptiles and small mammals, ants, herbivores and some species of birds (Lönker et al., 2020). Wild horses also contribute to the indirect protection of domestic animals, representing one of the most important sources of food for indigenous wild animals, especially wolves (Katica et al., 2010). The population of free-living horses can also have negative impacts on the environment, such as trampling the soil, which can directly or indirectly lead to soil erosion, and through its compaction, reduce water infiltration and reduce the supply of plant vegetation with nutrients (Ostermann-Kelm et al., 2009). In the same way, horses, as animals that reproduce naturally and roam freely, are in some way in competition with the native fauna (Boyce et al., 2021).

However, the population of wild horses in Livno has been recognized as a problem for the human community for many decades. Namely, in search of food, salt or water, herds cover long distances, and they often cause traffic accidents on busy highways. In addition to the danger to human life in such incidents, the suffering of wild horses is also noted, which, along with frequent attempts to trap, steal and/or kill, significantly calls into question their well-being and survival in general (Katica et al., 2010).

### **Infectious and non-infectious diseases of horses**

It is evident that there are several infectious diseases, or zoonoses, that affect both horses and humans (see Figure 1). They occur sporadically, most often moving from the population of wild horses to humans (Reperant et al., 2016). Zoonoses that are transmitted from horses to humans by direct contact (e.g. Hendra virus) (Middleton et al., 2014) or indirectly by infection through food products (e.g. botulism) (Johnson et al., 2016), then by vectors such as ticks (e.g. Lyme borreliosis) (Lehmann et al., 2017) and mosquitoes (e.g. West Nile fever) (Reperant et al., 2016).

The group of non-infectious horse diseases includes cardiovascular disorders, bone and joint diseases, psychological problems, and metabolic disorders

(see Figure 1). Non-communicable diseases are the result of genetic, physiological, environmental and behavioral factors, and persist over a long period of time (Lönker et al., 2020). Psychological disorders can be linked to the inappropriate accommodation of horses (Cooper and Albentosa, 2005). Horses can develop stereotyped behavior, sucking and/or biting a fence or surrounding objects in their box, or walking about in the box, which often happens when horses are housed in poor and inappropriate stables (Waters et al., 2002). Also, unbalanced and poor-quality nutrition can cause diseases such as equine metabolic syndrome (Morgan et al., 2015). Other non-communicable diseases of horses can be caused by poor zoohygiene conditions in stables with poor air quality, they can often develop respiratory problems as well as chronic obstructions, for which the owners or horse breeders are directly responsible (Saastamoinen et al., 2015).

### **Domesticated horses - benefits for people**

Unlike wild horses, domesticated horses live in close contact with humans (see Figure 1). The use of horses is highly dependent on the cultural background. In high-income countries, horses are primarily used for sports, breeding or as companions in free time, while in some poorer countries, horses are still primarily needed for work, thus affecting the owner's economic status (Lönker et al., 2020). In addition to this, horses are used as performers in circuses, rodeos, carnivals, and parades (Katica et al., 2010). Horses played a key role in the development of the first antidote to diphtheria (*Corynebacterium diphtheriae*) in humans (Kaufmann, 2017). As an animal model, horses have been used in hepatitis C research, since that virus has a great similarity with equine hepatitis virus (Tegtmeyer et al., 2019). Furthermore, horses have been used as a model for diseases of the respiratory system (human allergic neutrophilic asthma) (Klier et al., 2019). In addition, horse meat is a common food source, especially in France, Mexico, Argentina, Kazakhstan, etc. (Pawshet et al., 2016).

We are witnessing that, in the postmodern age, a kind of moral deformity is noticeable, namely in

economically developed countries where many homeless people live, rich households are home to pets who, due to their “social status”, enjoy the many benefits of earthly life, in contrast to the traditional exploration of the phenomenon of dialogue and coexistence with the animal world and the environment (Jašić, 2019). Furthermore, in this same postmodern age, horses are often sold by their owners, when they are unable to meet their criteria and expectations, which is not the case with pets (Hausberger et al., 2008).

### **The Bosnian mountain horse**

It is evident that the Bosnian mountain horse is internationally recognized, ancient and the most famous breed in the Balkans, and at the same time the only indigenous breed in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Maletić et al., 2018; Rukavina et al., 2021). The Bosnian mountain horse came to the Balkans with the migration of the Slavs. Its exterior characteristics were probably influenced by the Asian types of horses that appeared in this area with the arrival of the Huns and Avars. When the Ottomans arrived in the Balkans in the 15th century, they brought with them the Arabian thoroughbred, which had a significant influence on the formation of the body structure and the characteristics of the Bosnian mountain horse, because it was a typical representative of the Tarpan type of oriental horse. Under the influence of ecological factors in different areas of Bosnia and Herzegovina, different local types were created (Katica et al., 2010). The Bosnian mountain horse is a warm-blooded oriental indigenous breed, a product of the hot karst and strict selection. It belongs to the group of small horses, it is very hardy, resistant and modest in its diet. It is irreplaceable on rocky and hilly terrain, and its gait is very safe. It is mostly brown, reddish and black in color. It serves as a pack horse that, under a load of 100 to 120 kg, reaches a speed of 5-6 km per hour on a flat track, and can travel up to 40 km during the day. It is also used for towing and riding (Srebočan and Gomerčić, 1996). According to Katica et al. (2010) the total number of Bosnian mountain horses in the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina was 99,803

in 1990, but by 2008 the number was drastically reduced to 22,326. The reason for the extreme decrease in the population of Bosnian mountain horses was the aggression against Bosnia and Herzegovina from 1992 to 1995, where a large part of the population was lost. Unfortunately, the trend of decreasing population continues.

### **Mules and hinnies**

Mules and hinnies, although they are descendants of the same species of ungulates, horse (*Equus caballus*) and donkey (*Equus asinus*), have unique characteristics that make them special. A mule is a cross between a male donkey, a jack, and a female horse, a mare, while a hinny is a cross between a male horse and a female donkey. These crossbreeds differ from their parents in anatomical characteristics, nutritional needs and habits, behavior, and genotypic (number and structure of chromosomes) (McLean et al., 2019). Most mules and hinnies are sterile, although there are also documented reports of individual cases of fertile hybrids (Ryder et al., 1985; Rong et al., 1988; Henry et al., 1995).

Thanks to their physical strength and endurance, more modest nutritional requirements, better adaptation to extreme climatic conditions and other advantages, mules and hinnies have been used since ancient times for various purposes, including transporting people and transporting goods in inaccessible areas, as a labor resource in agriculture, for carrying ammunition and explosives during wars, for recreation, and in competitions in different disciplines. The estimated number of hinnies and mules in the world is about 14 million (McLean et al., 2019), and of the total number present, over 95% of donkeys and mules are found in developing countries (Fielding, 1991).

As crosses between donkeys and horses, hinnies and mules combine the virtues of their parents (Jackson, 2004). For example, mules have the physical strength and endurance, intelligence, patience and perseverance of a donkey, as well as the beauty, speed and enviable athletic abilities originally from horses. Hinnies, which inherit



their form of movement from donkeys, are slower and more meticulous in their movements than mules, which makes them especially suitable for use on inaccessible, steep and rocky terrain. This is enhanced by the physiognomy of their hooves, which are firmer and narrower in hinnies than in horses. Due to the nature and prevailing temperament of the donkey, hinnies are considered more docile than mules (Proops et al., 2012). On the other hand, it has been shown that compared to horses, mules have a greater ability to reason (Pritchard et al., 2005). Also, when assessing their cognitive abilities, mules were rated as very intelligent animals with better mental performance compared to both parents, and even dogs (Osthaus et al., 2013).

In terms of feeding habits, mules and hinnies are less fussy and have more modest requirements than horses. In terms of digestive efficiency (e.g. large bites, longer gastrointestinal transit time, etc.) hinnies and mules are more like donkeys, require less grazing and are adapted to consumption of fiber-rich food, which makes them more suitable than horses for keeping in extreme environments and areas with scarce vegetation (McLean et al., 2019)

Mules and hinnies have for a long time been considered as a species of ungulates that suffer less often or not at all from laminitis, colic and other frequent health disorders characteristic of horses, although today it is clear that these crossbreeds are also susceptible to the pathologies of other ungulates and that, probably due to their greater tolerance to pain, they manifest disease states less, which is why they often go unrecognized (McLean et al., 2019). As is the case with horses, injuries to the skin and locomotor system, poor nutrition, lameness, respiratory and gastrointestinal disorders, dental diseases and other health problems are common in these crossbreeds, which are used as a work and transport resource in various sectors of human activity, especially in poor communities (Burn et al., 2010).

Mules and hinnies tend to form close bonds with other ungulates, and the company of other mules and ponies is recommended for keeping mules,

while hinnies form strong bonds with other hinnies and donkeys (Pritchard et al., 2005). Also, it has been suggested that young mules and hinnies show stronger attachment or affection towards their female parents, that is, mules towards mares and hinnies towards donkeys. Keeping hinnies and mules in such a way that they are isolated and closed in for a long time can lead to changes in behavior and the development of pathological forms of behavior (stereotypes) (McLean et al., 2019). Mules and hinnies are quite distrustful of strangers, and it is not uncommon for them to react to the presence of a stranger by showing clear signs of aggression (e.g. threatening to bite or hit), while this behavior is less likely towards known persons. For this reason, the process of training and sensitization of hinnies and mules should begin from an early age, and this is one of the basic prerequisites for the well-being of these animals and the safety of owners and veterinary professionals in situations of providing health care (McLean et al., 2019).

## Aspects of the Muslim tradition

### Horses in pre-Islamic Arabia

In pre-Islamic Arab society, the horse was a symbol of war, hunting and wealth, and owning a horse was a sign of prestige. The horses were taken care of with great care so that they were almost considered part of the family. When the mares foaled, celebrations were organized, just like celebrating the birth of a child, or when they won a poetry competition (Cengiz, 2021). The love and attachment expressed to horses is evidenced by the statements of some authors that pre-Islamic Arabs would rather leave their families hungry than allow their horses to lack food (Safuri, 2016). The most powerful expression of the pre-Islamic Arabs was expressed through poetry, in which, among other things, horses were described. The famous pre-Islamic poet Imru' al-Qays, describing his horse says:

“He jumps, bounces, appears, steps back in an instant, you see: a rock rolled away, salivated by rain” (Ramić, 1999).

Importance was also attached to the horse's origin, and in order to avoid the mixing of subspecies and blood relations, which was the reason for the existence of genealogies of purebred horses (Cengiz, 2021). It is also stated that Arabs preferred to use mares for riding because they could withstand fatigue, hunger and thirst better than male horses, and did not neigh during an ambush, thus revealing the position of the fighters. Khalid ibn al-Walid, a companion of the Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, and a famous military leader, only rode mares in battles for these reasons (Hattema, 2021). The practice of naming horses according to their characteristics and appearance was present both in the pre-Islamic era and in the Muslim tradition. Gundidžani (2007) recorded more than 800 horse names, as well as basic information about who owned them or the verses in which they were mentioned by that name.

Horses were highly valued in pre-Islamic Arabia, and their status did not change even in the early Muslim community, and the care and love for horses acquired other dimensions, such as an otherworldly reward for the one who keeps horses, which we will talk more about below.

### The mention of horses in the Holy Qur'an

Horses are mentioned several times in the Qur'an, usually in the plural form (*el-hajl*) - horses, which in Arabic language does not have the same singular root (*el-džem'u-l-mufterik*) (Mujić, 2019).

*They were created with a purpose and in them there is a benefit for people: both horses and mules, and donkeys - to ride them, and as decoration* (An-Nahl, 6).

Horses are undoubtedly part of this world's blessings, and due to the strength of love for them that a person may feel, they can be the cause of forgetting the One who bestows these blessings and as such become a sign of passion and desire: *It seems to people that only what they desire is beautiful: wives, sons, piles of gold and silver, beautiful horses, cattle and crops...* (Ali Imran, 14) (Ibn Adžibe, 2015). In this list of human desires, horses are mentioned before livestock and crops,

which indicates that among domestic animals, horses are the most valued and dearest to their owners, and the owner cannot imagine anything better and more valued, due to his heart-felt preoccupation with them. The phrase "wonderful horses" (*El-hajlu-l- musevve*) can also mean horses that are singled out by a color or brand, or those that graze freely in pastures (Bursevi, 2018).

In the surah Al-Anfal, horses are mentioned in the context of preparing for war: *And against them, prepare as much strength and horses as you can for battle (ribatu-l-hajl), in order to frighten the enemies of Allah and yours...* (Al-Anfal, 60). Asad (2004) explains the phrase *ribatu-l-hajl* as "restraining the horses", i.e. "keeping mounted troops ready at all points exposed to enemy invasion". In this verse, the special value of horses is also pointed out, this time in the context of their importance in war, because they are mentioned after strength, although they are certainly included in it (Bursevi, 2020).

In addition to the term (*el-hajl*), horses are also mentioned in the Qur'anic text with other names that describe certain characteristics of horses. Such is the case with the horses of Prophet Sulaiman, peace be upon him, which are mentioned in the Qur'an surah entitled "Sad": *When one evening thoroughbred horses were brought before him that stood on three legs and barely touched the ground with the fourth* (Sad, 31).

According to Et-Tusi (2016) Prophet Suleiman, peace be upon him, had three hundred pure bred Arab horses, the likes of which no ruler before or after him owned, which is also indicated by their special characteristics mentioned in the verse. These were extremely fast horses when galloping, and they would stand on three legs, while the fourth would touch the ground only with the tip of the hoof (Begavi, 1989). They are certainly horses of a noble breed to which Prophet Suleiman, peace be upon him, one day devoted so much of his attention that he missed the time of prayer. This affected him, so according to some interpretations, he slaughtered those horses, while other sources indicate that he showed them respect by asking

them to return them to him and caressing them, since they were horses that were used in battle on God's path (En- Nedžđzar, 2008).

The first five Qur'anic verses (ayats) within the surah entitled "Al-Adiyat" reading: "By the galloping, panting horses, striking sparks of fire with their hoofs, launching raids at dawn, stirring up clouds of dust, and penetrating into the heart of enemy lines!" (Al-Adijat, 1-5.) demonstrate "the striking scene of the war cavalry in the midst of its evening gallop and the sudden morning incursion into the territory of another tribe" which is a war scene deeply engraved in the consciousness of the pre-Islamic Arabs. According to a large number of classic commentaries on the Qur'an, the cavalry mentioned in these verses is the cavalry of fighters on God's path, that is, their attack on enemy positions (Fatić, 2020). Bearing in mind the number of commentaries on the Qur'an, it should be noted that each of the previous examples could be the subject of a separate study. Here, however, in keeping with the topic, we will only focus on the previous short entries.

### **The wisdom of the Blessed Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessing be upon him, about horses**

The Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessing be upon him, loved horses and was kind to them. He did not allow the cutting of the ears of the horses for marking purposes, nor the trimming of their tails and manes, and he recommended taking care of the cleanliness of horses and their nutrition (Es-Subhi, 2011), and that in general they be treated well and nobly (Es-Sidžistani, 2012). Beside that the Prophet, peace and blessing be upon him, warned his companions regarding the treatment of riding animals, not to sit on them unnecessarily (Ibn Džuzejj el-Garnati, 1986). A large number of oral traditions (Hadith) have been recorded of the Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessing be upon him, about the value of horses, the rewards of caring for them, and their importance to the Muslim community. It has been mentioned previously that owning a horse in pre-Islamic

Arabia was a symbol of prestige and wealth that elevated one above others. Although the value of the horse is described in the oral traditions (Hadith) of Muhammad, peace and blessing be upon him, and their possession and care of them is a source of good both in this world and in the next, it should be noted that this good depends on the attitude of the owner himself towards unsuspected bounty, and his inner drive and intention that determine his attitude towards horses, which is discussed in the oral tradition (Hadith) of Muhammad, peace and blessing be upon him: "Horses are for three people: One will be rewarded, another will be protected, and the third will be punished. The reward will be given to the one who keeps them with the intention of fighting in the way of Allah, so if he grazes them in a meadow or a garden, whatever he grazes in that meadow or garden will be recorded in his good deeds. If they break the rope by which they are tied, and run to a hill or two, the owner is credited with good deeds for their feces and feet. If they pass by a river and drink from it, and he did not intend to give them water, that counts as good deeds for him. They are a protection to the one who keeps them for profit and sustenance and does not forget God's right in their necks and backs, and they are a sin and punishment to the one who takes them out of boasting, hypocrisy and enmity towards Muslims" (Es Sujuti, 2022). Special emphasis is placed on owning and training a horse to fight in God's way, which will be a reason for the owner's protection from fire, and all his effort and care for the horse will be on the scale of his good deeds on the Day of Judgment (Es Sujuti, 2009.) The fact that the Muhammad, peace and blessing be upon him, determined one share of the spoils of war for the infantry and two for the horsemen speaks of the value of these horses and horsemen in battle in general (El Munziri, 2008). "Blessings are found in the manes of horses" (El Munziri, 2008), and all that a man invests in a horse is like charity distributed to the needy. A person's wealth is tied up in their horse's mane until the Day of Judgment, and he who spends his wealth on horses is like one who stretched out his hand with charity and did not withdraw it." (Es Sujuti, 2022).



Furthermore, in the oral tradition (Hadith) there are statements describing certain characteristics of horses, for which the Muhammad, peace and blessing be upon him, had sympathy, especially for horses of a reddish color who possess “God’s blessing” (Tirmizi, 2013) or black horses with a white spot on the nose, which are described as the best (Tirmizi, 2013).

### **Training horses and organizing horse races**

The Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessing be upon him, had previously ensured that horses gained weight before starting exercise (Es Sujuti, 2020). There was also a specific way of training horses (muzemmer) to make them gallop faster. First, the horses would be subjected to an enhanced diet, and then the quantity of rations would be reduced. During that period, they were subjected to sweating in such a way that they were covered with blankets in closed spaces. In this way, sweating and fat loss were stimulated. In this way, the horses lost excess weight, and the prerequisites for achieving higher speeds were created (Cengiz, 2021).

The Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessing be upon him, also organized horse races, which was a special incentive for his companions to improve their horse riding skills. A companion of the Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessing be upon him, Ibn Omer, reports that the Prophet, peace and blessing be upon him, organized a race for trained horses between some locations in the wider area of Medina, specifically, from Hafja to Senijjetu-l-Veda’a and for untrained horses a race with a shorter distance from Senija to Masjid Banu Zureyq (El Munziri, 2008).

If the horses of the Prophet, peace and blessing be upon him, participated in these races, then the winners would not be rewarded, and if there were no horses belonging to the Prophet, peace and blessing be upon him, then he would determine the prizes for the winners of the race. The most common prizes were Yemenite robes. The horses would line up at the designated starting point and the race would begin after the third takbir

(Cengiz, 2021). The prohibition is also mentioned of releasing an additional horse that is not racing, or releasing another horse alongside the horses in the race that would stimulate them to run (Es Sujuti, 2020). The practice of organizing races was continued by the Prophet’s, peace and blessing be upon him, close companion Ali (Cengiz, 2021).

Teaching children to swim, ride and practice archery is especially recommended, and the Prophet’s, peace and blessing be upon him, close companion Omer wrote to the residents of Sham that they should teach their children to swim and ride horses (Džumua, 2003). These recommendations should certainly be updated in the times we live in, bearing in mind the numerous benefits of riding for the development and improvement of the “emotional, mental, physical and social state” of every individual today (Itković, 2002).

### **The horses of Blessed Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessing be upon him**

As stated, the Muhammad, peace and blessing be upon him, owned horses and his horses participated in the races he organized. In the literature, the number of the Prophet’s, peace be upon him, horses is stated as seven, on which almost all authors agree (Cengiz, 2021). Basic information about the most famous Prophet’s, peace be upon him, horses is provided:

Es-Sekb: the first of the Prophet, peace and blessing be upon him, a horse that he bought in Medina from the tribe of Benu Fezara for ten pieces of silver. Earlier, he was called Daris and the Prophet, peace and blessing be upon him, changed his name to Es-Sekb, because he was extremely fast, like falling water pouring out. Es-Sekbu rode in the battle of Uhud (Es-Subhi, 2011).

Murtazaj: a white horse that the Muhammad, peace and blessing be upon him, bought from the Bemu Murra tribe (Cengiz, 2021). It was named because of its beautiful hum that was like a song (Es-Subhi, 2011).

Sabha: a golden-yellow horse that the Prophet, peace and blessing be upon him, bought from the tribe of

Juhain for ten camels, after the horse Sabha had won a race (Cengiz, 2021).

Laheef: the horse that Rebia ibn abi Bera gave to the Prophet (peace and blessing be upon him), and was named Laheef because of its extremely long tail (Cengiz, 2021).

Lazaz: the horse given to the Prophet, peace and blessing be upon him, by Mukavkis, the ruler of Egypt. He was named for his pleasant nature and speed of movement, and he was also attached to people. Lizaz won one of the races that the Muhammad, peace and blessing be upon him, organized. Muhammad, peace and blessing be upon him, also rode it in several battles (Es-Subhi, 2011). According to some authors, Mukavkis gave the Prophet, peace and blessing be upon him, a mule called Duldul (Abu Khalil, 2008).

Al-Zarrab: one of the most famous horses of the Prophet, peace and blessing be upon him, which got its name because of its size and fatness, as well as its strength and solidity (Es-Subhi, 2011).

Verd: this horse was presented to the Muhammad, peace and blessing be upon him, by his companion Temim ed-Dari, and the Prophet, peace be upon him, later presented it to his great friend Omar (Cengiz, 2021).

### **From the Muslim tradition**

The stories state, as Schimmel (2014) says, that horses were created by the swift south winds. It is interesting that some authors, such as the Muslim authority Sujuti, cite a longer tradition that speaks of the creation of a horse from the south wind that would be strength for those who please God and a humiliation for God's enemies, and an ornament for those who obey God. It is further stated that the Lord will place people on the horses' backs who will glorify, praise and glorify Him, so whenever they do so, the horses will glorify, praise and glorify their Creator with them (Es Sujuti, 2009). Dumejri (2004) records several traditions with a similar meaning, and in some he states that he is writing the Arabian horse, which is distinguished above all other animals. In addition, this author

points out the prevalence of numerous stories and traditions among the people, about the value of horses, which are not credible or are traditions from the Judaic tradition (Dumejri, 2004). Ibn Juzeyy (1986) also pointed out the unreliability of these traditions. However, there is no doubt that these descriptions of the horse and its creation of images indicate to us the great respect and value that the horse had in the Muslim tradition, and its special status in relation to all other animals that benefit humans.

On the other hand, when reading these Muslim classic works, one realizes that the attitude of Muslims towards animals in general, primarily horses in this case, is not determined only by man's need for them, nor the good that is achieved through them, but above all by the effort to recognize and understand the right - (hakk), which animals, as creatures of God that point to Him, have in relation to men. "The divine wisdom that created human beings imposed on them the duty of giving everything that has a right its right" Chittick (2018) stated in a great text about the prudence of animals.

Animals are a special community and they have a special kind of relationship with God and knowledge about Him. Likewise, each animal species has its own vision and way of glorifying God (Tasbih), which corresponds to their knowledge of the Creator's dissimilarity to what is created (Ibn Arebi, 2018).

To show how horses glorify the Creator, Bursevi (2020) cites the words of the Prophet's companion Ibn Abbas: "When two armies meet, the horses say: Much Glorified, Pure, our Lord and Lord of angels and Spirith" (*Subbuhun, Kuddusun, Rabbuna ve Rabbul-melaikei ver-ruh*). Animals know why they were created, even though they are subordinate to man. He is in greater need of them than they are of him. Therefore, man, in a certain way, even though he is not aware of it, is subordinate to animals because he must necessarily take care of their needs, feed them, and all this effort is due to man's dependence on them (Ibn Arebi, 2018). In addition to this aspect of glorifying and glorifying God (Tasbih), which

is a characteristic of the horse, in the authentic traditions of the blessed Muhammad (peace and blessing be upon him), there is also a mention of the prayer that horses send to the Creator: “There is no such Arabian horse that is not allowed to offer two supplications. It says: My Allah, You have entrusted me to the one to whom You have entrusted me among the people, so make me the most dear to him of his family and his property.” (Es Sujuti, 2022).

The first to whom the horses were subordinated was the Prophet Ismail, peace be upon him. After he and the Prophet Ibrahim, peace be upon him, raised the foundations of the temple in Mecca, the Lord announced to him that he would give him a treasure that had not been given to anyone before him. After that, there was not a single horse left in the land of the Arabs that did not come to him and was subdued, so Ismail, peace be upon him, is mentioned as the first man who rode horses after they were untamable. (Ibn Džujej, 1986). Es Sujuti (2009) also states the opinion that Kabil, son of Adem, peace be upon him, was the first to ride a horse.

Dumejri (2004) in this context mentions the possibility, since horses were created before Adem, peace be upon him, and domesticated and ridden before, but in some period only wild horses remained until the period of Ismail, peace be upon him, which were then subjugated again. Bearing in mind that Ismail, peace be upon him, is considered to be the ancestor of the Arabs, these traditions can also refer primarily to Arab horses.

Finally, in the Muslim tradition, the different meanings are recorded that are indicated by seeing a horse in a dream. A submissive horse generally indicates good, a galloping horse indicates the quick fulfillment of a wish, and a horse's trot indicates balance. However, an unbridled and unruly horse indicate a careless man (Ibn Sirin, 2008).

## CONCLUSIONS

Although they were domesticated relatively late compared to other domestic animal species, horses

have left a striking mark throughout history, and still do today. Humanity has not had so many benefits from any other animal species as is the case with horses, with which man has built a close and strong relationship throughout history. The endowment of the speed, strength and endurance of this magnificent animal has made it indispensable as a companion to men in peace and in war. Nowadays, horses serve humanity as a source of quality animal protein, a strong workforce, a means of transport, and apart from that, they have a much more significant, above all noble role in rehabilitation programs for people with various physical, mental, emotional and socialization difficulties.

Apart from the presentation of the role and significance of horses in human life throughout history until today, the presentation is highlighted of the relationship of the Islamic religion to horses, which are the most valued domestic animals. In Islamic theology, taking care of the animal world is mandatory, primarily as an expression of doing deeds that bring us closer to God, where the well-being of horses is especially taken care of. Thanks to the arrival of the Ottomans in the Balkans, in the tradition of today's Muslims from these areas, a refined, noble attitude towards this animal has been preserved, which in all aspects is fully compatible with contemporary principles related to the well-being of horses.

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declared that there is no conflict of interest.

## CONTRIBUTIONS

Conception – MK, LŠ; Design – MK, LŠ; Supervision - PDŽ; Materials – VK, EŠ, ZD, PDŽ; Data Collection and/or Processing – MK, LŠ, VK, EŠ, ZD, PDŽ; Analysis and/or Interpretation – MK, LŠ, VK, EŠ, PDŽ; Literature Search – MK, LŠ, VK, EŠ, PDŽ; Writing Manuscript – MK, LŠ, VK; Critical Review – ZD, PDŽ

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## KONJ U SVJETLU VETERINARSKJE MEDICINE I MUSLIMANSKE TRADICIJE - KOMPARATIVNA STUDIJA

### SAŽETAK

Od svih životinja koje čovjeka prate gotovo kroz sve etape razvoja čovječanstva, konjima pripada naistaknutije mjesto. Izuzev prikaza uloge i značaja konja u životu čovjeka kroz historiju do danas, uzimajući za paradigmu bosanskog brdskog konja, istaknut je prikaz odnosa islamske religije prema konjima koji su najcjenjenija domaća životinja. U islamskoj teologiji skrb o animalnom svijetu je obavezna, ponajprije kao izraz činjenja djela koja približavaju Bogu pri čemu se za dobrobit konja posebno marilo.

**Ključne riječi:** Bosna i Hercegovina, bosanski brdski konj, Islam, mazga, mula