

# The Equine Pain Face

With Karina Bech Glerup

The facial expressions that can indicate your horse is in pain

## Highlights:

- Certain facial expressions can indicate a horse is in pain.
- You can use these features to score a 'pain face' as a simple yes/no
- The intensity of the expression can help you determine the intensity of pain.
- Learning to recognise the equine pain face in horses can help you identify chronic or low grade pain earlier.
- It is relatively easy and feasible for everyone to learn. In a study, after a 20 minute lesson, participants were able to successfully score a pain face (yes/no) and the pain intensity as 'low', 'medium' and 'high' with, on average, 82% accuracy.

## Five key areas to watch out for:

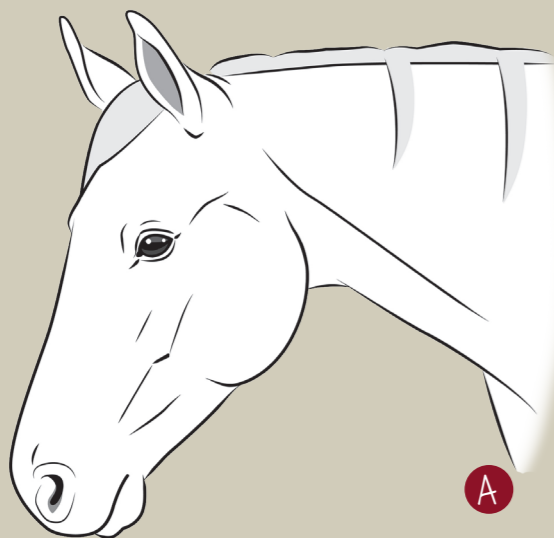
- ears,
- eyes,
- nostrils,
- muzzle and
- facial muscles.

Behaviourally, some horses may become less social when they are in pain, whereas others may seek contact with a person they trust.

## Did you know?

Research in the 'Equine Pain Face' area is ongoing and, in future, we will have a facial recognition app to do the work for us!

## 'Relaxed Face'



Read the study titled: *An Equine Pain Face* by Karina B Glerup, Björn Forkman, Casper Lindegaard and Pia Andersen it is open access and available online: <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/vaa.12212/pdf>.

Illustrations by Andrea Klintbjer ©Karina Bech Glerup



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## 'Pain Face'

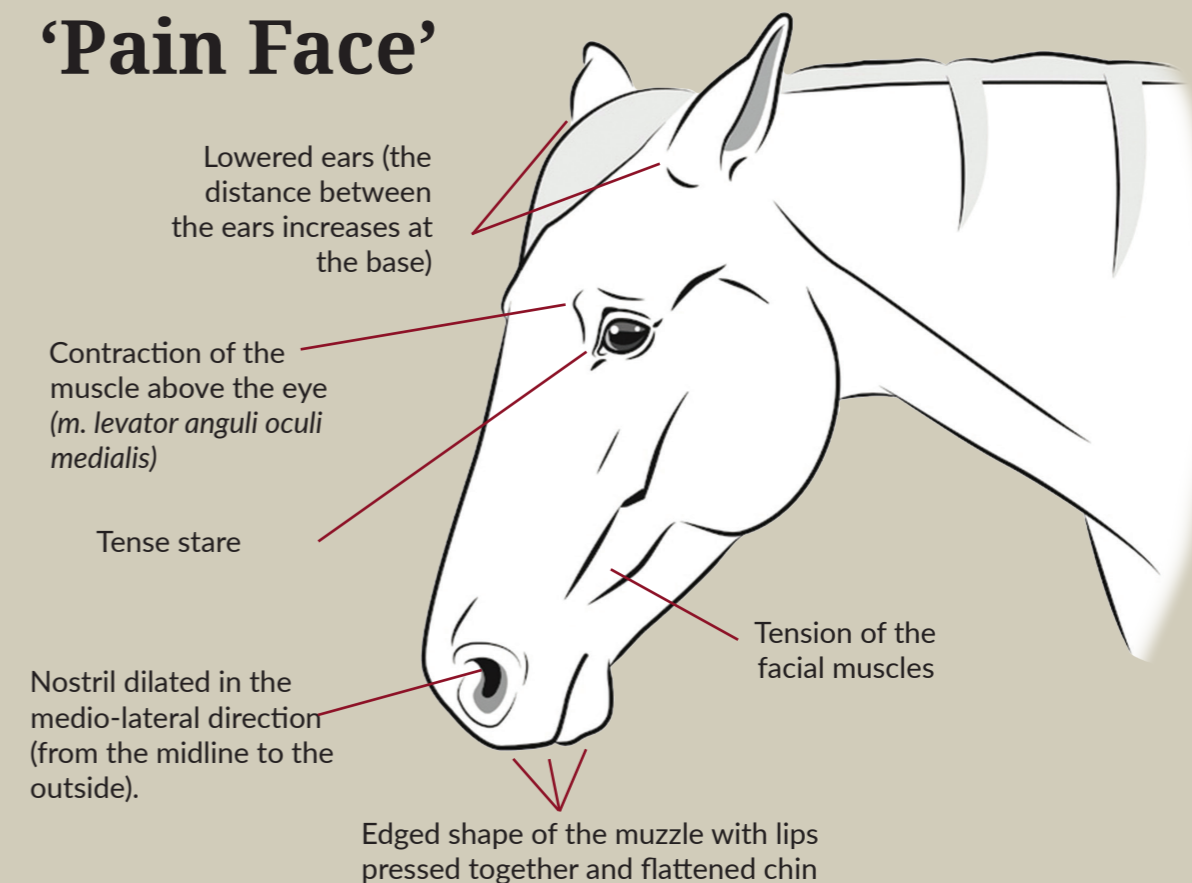
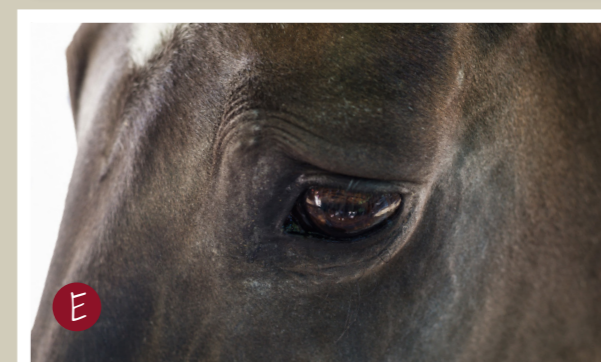
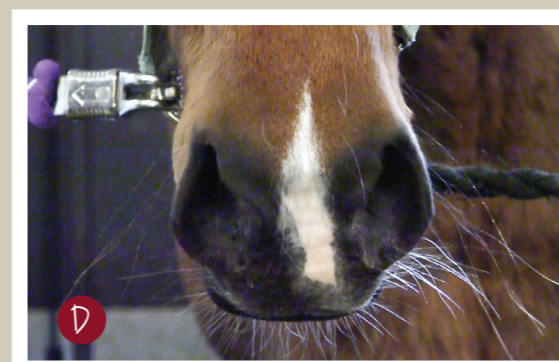
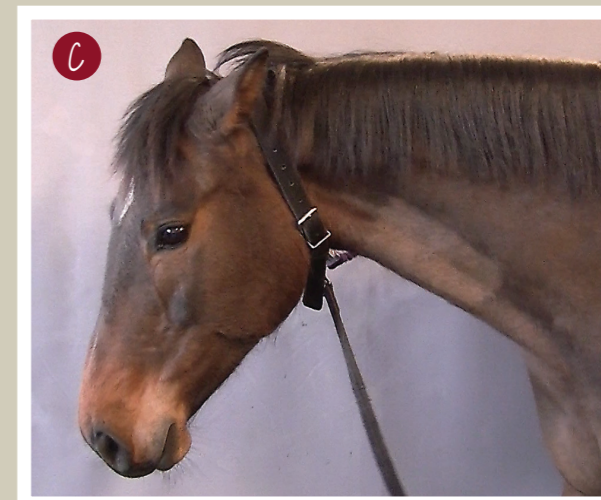


IMAGE C: Can you spot the facial expressions of pain described in the illustration? This horse is in pain.

IMAGE D: The nostril dilated in the medio-lateral direction (from the midline to the outside) is one of the facial expressions of pain.

IMAGE E: 'Worried eyes'. Can you spot the contraction of the levator anguli oculi muscle above the eye and the tense stare? This horse is in pain.

Photos courtesy Karina Bech Glerup.



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