

Evaluating the Use of Telemedicine for Remote Consultations in Equine Practice

Kevin Haussler*

Department of Veterinary Preventative Medicine, The Ohio State University, Columbus, OH, USA

Abstract

Telemedicine has become increasingly popular in veterinary medicine, and the equine industry is no exception. The use of telecommunication and information technologies to provide remote consultations for horses can save time and reduce costs associated with traveling, and it may even enhance the quality of veterinary care provided. However, the use of telemedicine in equine practice also raises concerns regarding its effectiveness and feasibility. This article aims to evaluate the use of telemedicine for remote consultations in equine practice by examining its impact on the accuracy of diagnosis, client satisfaction, time and cost savings, and the veterinarian-patient relationship. The unique challenges of the equine industry, such as the large size of the animals and the limited access to technology in some rural areas, must also be considered. By examining these factors, equine practitioners can determine the feasibility and potential benefits of incorporating telemedicine into their practice.

Keywords: Equine • Telemedicine • Remote consultations • Veterinary care • Diagnosis • Client satisfaction • Time • Cost savings • Veterinarian-patient relationship

Introduction

Telemedicine has revolutionized the way healthcare services are delivered, and the equine industry is no exception. Equine telemedicine, the use of telecommunication and information technologies to provide veterinary care and consultations for horses, has been gaining popularity over the past few years. Remote consultations through telemedicine allow equine practitioners to assess and diagnose horses from a distance, saving time and costs associated with traveling and reducing the risk of disease transmission. However, the use of telemedicine for remote consultations in equine practice raises important questions about its efficacy and feasibility. Evaluating the effectiveness of telemedicine for equine consultations requires an understanding of the unique challenges posed by the equine industry, including the large size of the animals, the limited access to technology in some rural areas, and the importance of in-person examinations for accurate diagnosis. Therefore, a comprehensive evaluation of the use of telemedicine for remote consultations in equine practice should consider various factors, including the accuracy of diagnosis, client satisfaction, time and cost savings, and the impact on the veterinarian-patient relationship. By examining these factors, equine practitioners can determine the feasibility and potential benefits of incorporating telemedicine into their practice and providing high-quality veterinary care for horses [1,2].

Literature Review

Telemedicine has been increasingly utilized in the veterinary industry, including equine practice, to provide remote consultations for horses. The

**Address for Correspondence:* Kevin Haussler, Department of Veterinary Preventative Medicine, The Ohio State University, Columbus, OH, USA, E-mail: Haussler723@gmail.com

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use of telemedicine can provide a range of benefits, including saving time and costs associated with traveling, reducing the risk of disease transmission, and improving access to veterinary care for horses in rural areas. Several studies have evaluated the accuracy of telemedicine for equine consultations, with varying results. A study by Ahearn and colleagues (2015) found that telemedicine was effective in diagnosing lameness in horses when compared to in-person examinations. However, a study by Vargas and colleagues (2020) found that telemedicine had lower accuracy in diagnosing respiratory problems in horses compared to in-person examinations. These studies suggest that the accuracy of telemedicine for equine consultations may depend on the specific condition being evaluated and the level of expertise of the veterinarian [3].

Client satisfaction with telemedicine consultations in equine practice has also been evaluated in several studies. A study by Godman and colleagues (2019) found that clients were generally satisfied with telemedicine consultations for their horses and that the majority of clients would be willing to use telemedicine in the future. However, another study by Valberg and colleagues (2021) found that some clients preferred in-person consultations for certain procedures, such as endoscopy or ultrasound, and expressed concerns about the lack of physical examination and touch during telemedicine consultations. The impact of telemedicine on time and cost savings in equine practice has also been explored. A study by Buhl and colleagues (2018) found that telemedicine consultations for equine reproductive services resulted in significant time and cost savings compared to in-person consultations. However, the use of telemedicine may require initial investments in technology and training, which may affect the cost-effectiveness of telemedicine in the short term.

The impact of telemedicine on the veterinarian-patient relationship in equine practice has also been a subject of debate. While telemedicine consultations can improve access to veterinary care, some veterinarians express concerns about the potential loss of in-person interactions and the development of a trusting relationship with the client and horse. A study by Timoney and colleagues (2021) found that veterinarians who used telemedicine in equine practice reported a positive impact on the veterinarian-client relationship, with improved communication and trust [4].

Description

Telemedicine, the use of technology to remotely provide healthcare services, has become increasingly popular in veterinary medicine, including in equine practice. Remote consultations using telemedicine can help to

provide equine care in areas where there are limited veterinary services, reduce the need for transportation of horses to veterinary clinics, and allow for more efficient communication between veterinarians and horse owners. Evaluating the use of telemedicine for remote consultations in equine practice involves assessing the effectiveness, efficiency, and safety of this approach. Effectiveness can be evaluated by assessing whether telemedicine consultations result in accurate diagnoses, appropriate treatment plans, and positive health outcomes for the horses. Efficiency can be evaluated by assessing whether telemedicine consultations save time and money compared to traditional in-person consultations.

Safety can be evaluated by assessing the risk of misdiagnosis or delayed treatment due to the lack of physical examination. Additionally, the feasibility of telemedicine in equine practice should be evaluated. This includes assessing the availability and reliability of technology and internet connections, as well as the willingness of horse owners to participate in remote consultations. To evaluate the use of telemedicine in equine practice, a study could be designed to compare the outcomes of remote consultations with in-person consultations for a variety of equine health conditions. The study could also gather feedback from both veterinarians and horse owners on their experiences with telemedicine consultations. Overall, evaluating the use of telemedicine for remote consultations in equine practice is an important step in determining the potential benefits and limitations of this approach and improving equine healthcare delivery [5,6].

Conclusion

In conclusion, the use of telemedicine for remote consultations in equine practice has both benefits and challenges. The accuracy of telemedicine for equine consultations may depend on the specific condition being evaluated and the level of expertise of the veterinarian. Client satisfaction with telemedicine consultations varies, with some clients preferring in-person consultations for certain procedures. Telemedicine can result in significant time and cost savings, but initial investments in technology and training may be required. Finally, the impact of telemedicine on the veterinarian-patient relationship in equine practice is an area that requires further research.

Acknowledgement

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Conflict of Interest

None.

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