

## **Case study investigating the feasibility of implementing a track grazing system at Hartpury University for student livery horses.**

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*Publication date:*  
2024

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*Citation for published version (APA):*  
Charnock-Crawford, V., Smith, C., James, H., Rowlinson, H., & Cameron, L. (2024). *Case study investigating the feasibility of implementing a track grazing system at Hartpury University for student livery horses..* Poster session presented at 13th Alltech-Hartpury Student Conference, Gloucester, United Kingdom.





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**INTRODUCTION:**

Track systems are a new upcoming alternative grazing method involving placing a track around the perimeter of an area of land (Furtado, 2021)

**Benefits**

Cost-effective due to greater stocking density (Furtado *et al.*, 2022)  
3F's (Furtado *et al.*, 2022)

Encourages movement (Furtado, 2021)

Increased socialisation (Furtado *et al.*, 2022)

Encourages natural grazing patterns (Kenny, Burk, and Williams, 2019)

The international reputation of Hartpury Equine Yard allows for it to set the bar for improved welfare standards across the nation (Hartpury College, 2024). Current turnout options are limited (Hartpury College, 2024), causing decreased welfare, and so implementation of a track system alongside the new horse welfare charter have the potential to manifest improved changes in this area. Therefore, the aim was to determine if a track system would be feasible for liveryies at Hartpury Equine Yard.

**METHOD:**

2 questionnaires

Current methods of designing track systems



Opinions of potential student liveryies on the introduction of track livery options

Data analysed for descriptive statistics using Excel

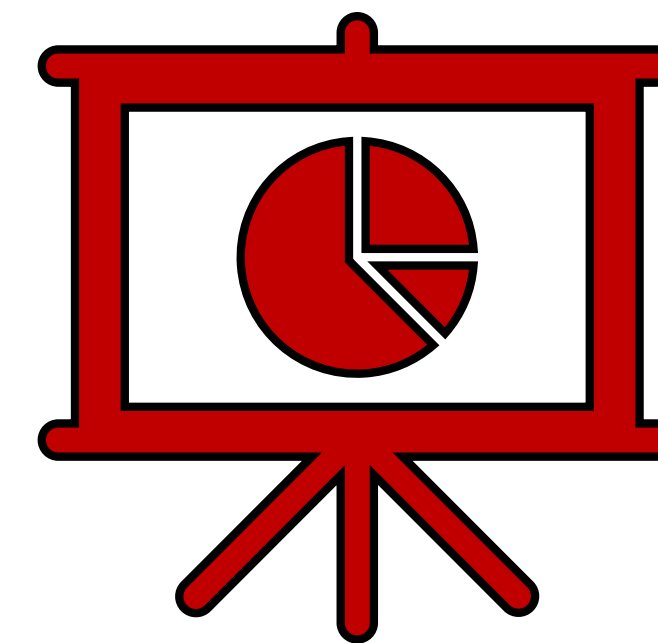
**RESULTS:**

**Owner questionnaire:**

- 23 responses
- Initial set-up cost=£100-£50,000
- 74% of horses in mixed-sex herds
- 74% of owners only allow barefoot horses

**Considerations:**

- Gradient of land
- Enrichment
- Shelter



**Student questionnaire:**

- 87 responses
- 64% happy for their horse to be turned out with 5+ horses
- 75% happy for their horse to be barefoot or have front shoes only
- 76% happy for their horse to be turned out in a mixed-sex herd
- 95% of students would still want their horse to have access to grass
- 77% of students would be happy for their horse to live out 24/7 with suitable shelter

**Deterrences:**

- Risk of injury (36%)
- Wide enough space (27%)
- Different feeding/forage requirements (13%)

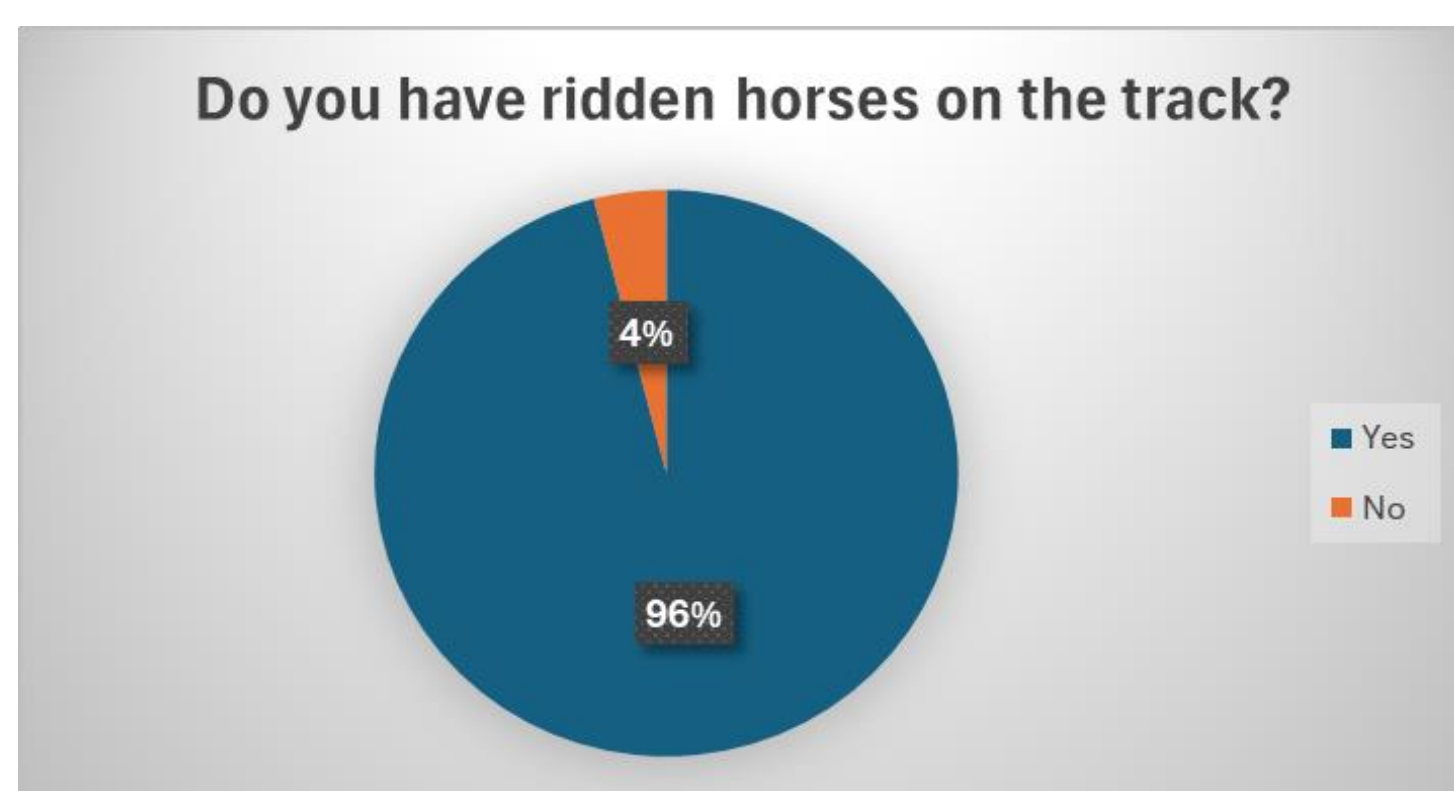


Figure 1: If owners have ridden horses on the track

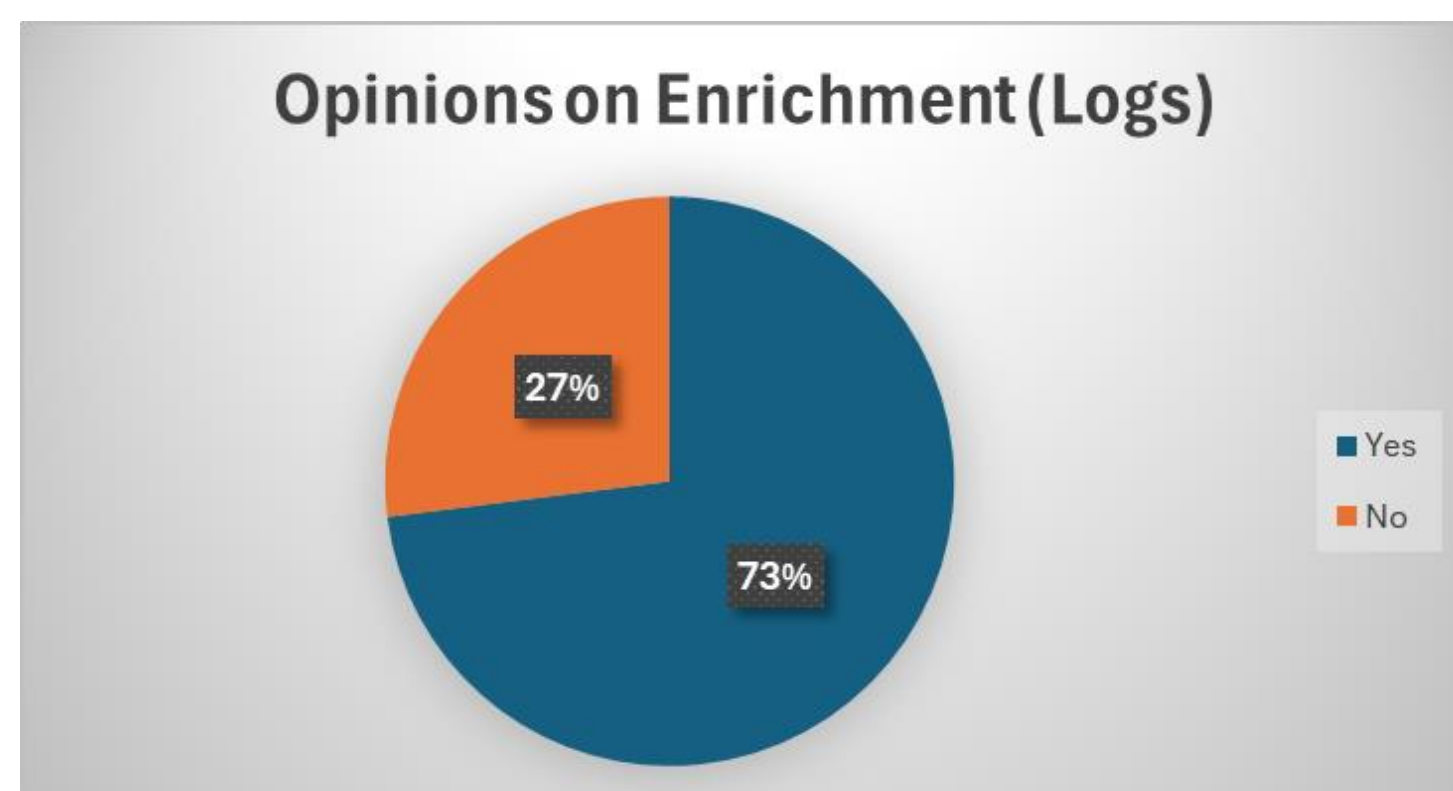


Figure 2: Responses showing whether students would be open for logs to be on the track

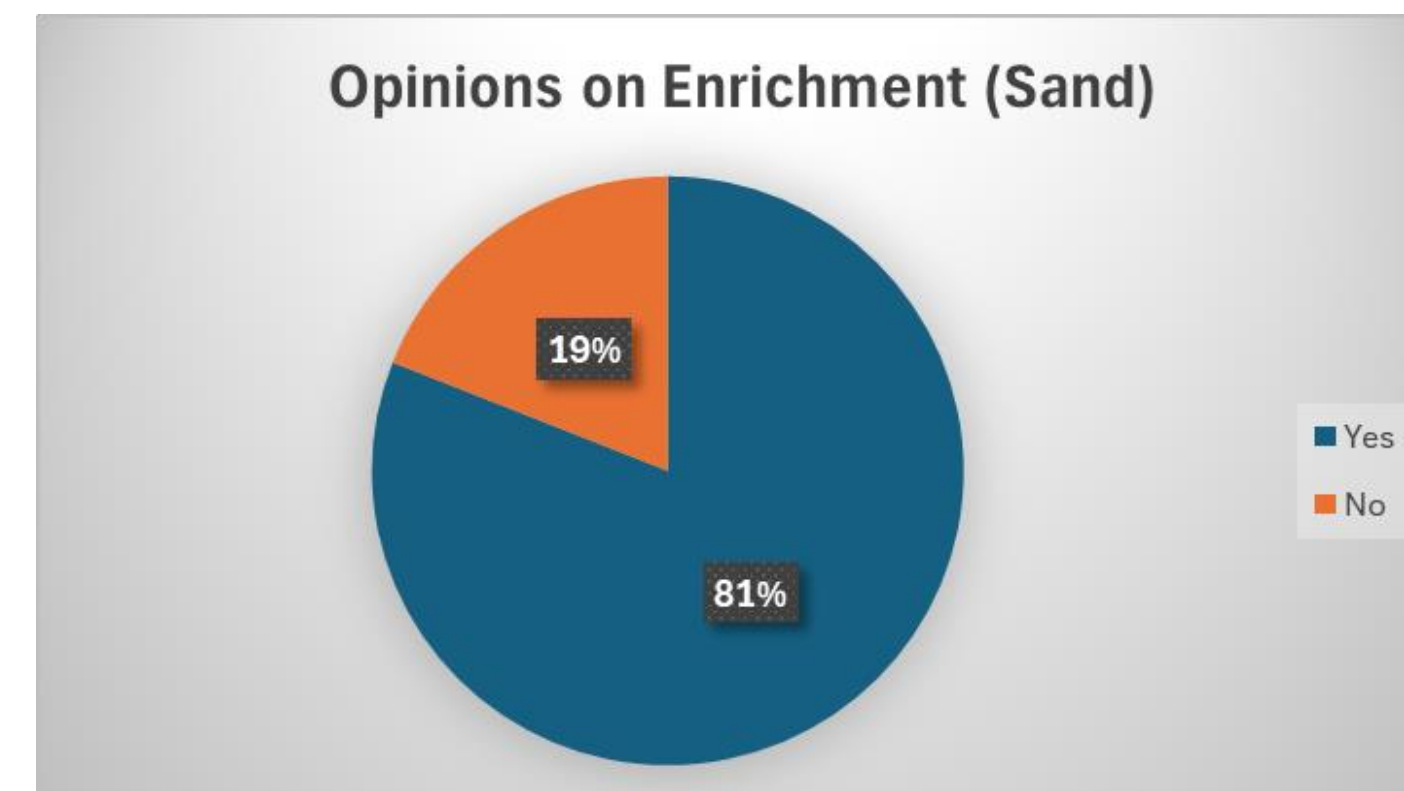


Figure 3: Responses showing whether students would be open for sand to be on the track

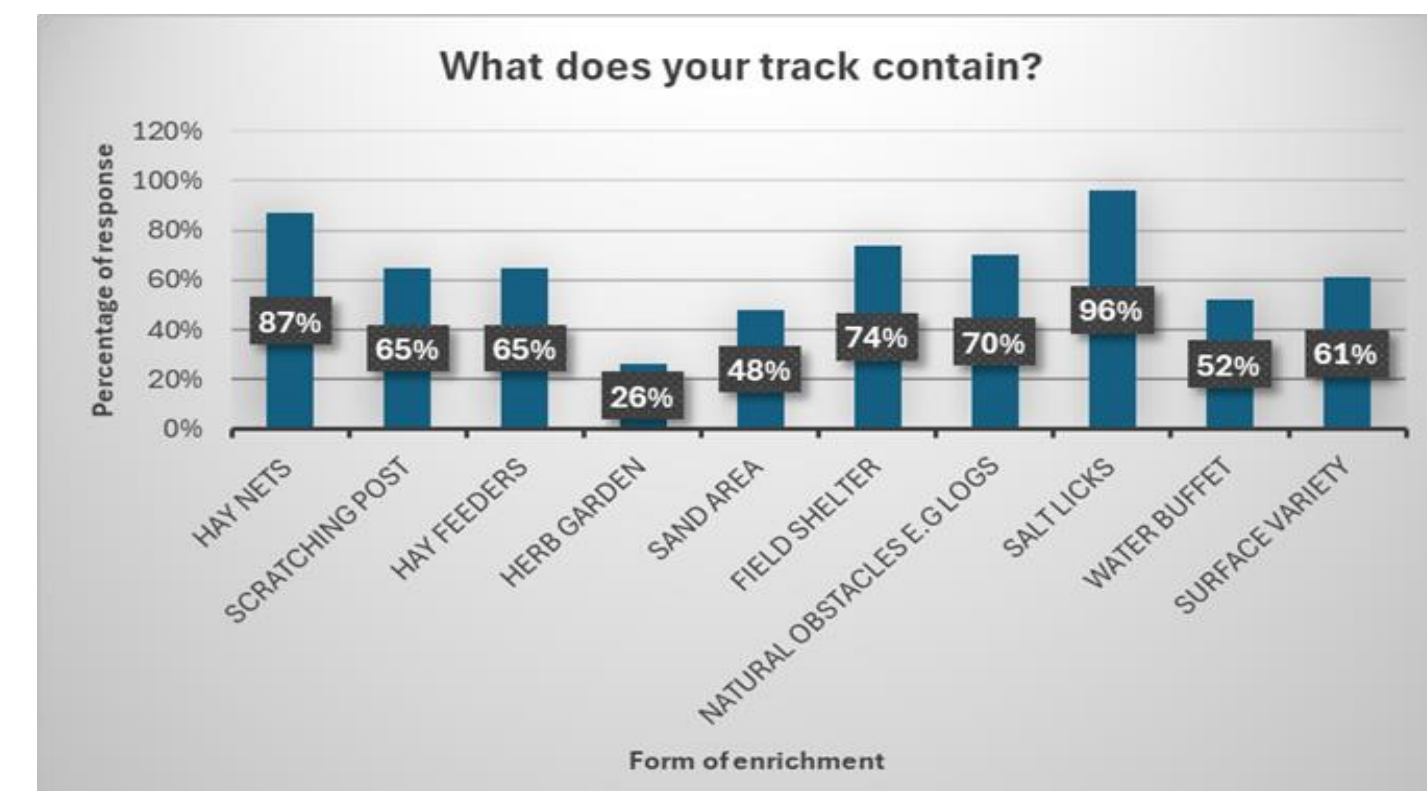


Figure 4: Enrichment track systems contain

**DISCUSSION:**

The results indicate it would be feasible to implement a track system at Hartpury as students would be willing to change their horses' management to go on the track, for example, go barefoot.

**General recommendations:**

- Cross-grazing with sheep
- Goes through wooded area due to natural shelter and good drainage

These recommendations will help overcome the limitations discussed in the results.

**Application to the industry:**

- Improve equine welfare
- Improve positive perception of Hartpury
- Could be used for research
- Could encourage other colleges/universities to implement track systems

**STANDARDS:**

Three standards of track systems were recommended.

**Bronze standard:**



- Electric tape with no surface changes; therefore, planning permission is not required.
- Enrichment includes salt licks, hay nets, and greedy feeders.
- Cost=£845.70

**Silver standard:**



- Everything in the bronze standard is included.
- No planning permission is needed as a static field shelter (if the track extends into Agriculture) and mud control mats would be added.
- Enrichment includes scratching posts and hay feeders
- Cost=£40,152.52

**Gold standard:**



- Everything in the silver standard is included.
- EquiCentral system would be included if the track extends into Agriculture.
- Planning permission would be required as a hard-standing and open barn, with a hay barn would be added if the track extends into Agriculture.
- Straw would be used as bedding in the open barn as straw is good for welfare due to encouraging more recumbent behaviour (Huo *et al.*, 2021).
- Enrichment includes a water buffet, a herb garden, logs, mineral licks, and a sand area.
- Cost=£68,981.11