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BACKGROUND
In many animals moderate pain induces only minor changes in their behaviour. Recent research has shown that facial expressions may be a sensitive indicator of pain in some species.

OBJECTIVE
The aim of this study was to investigate the possible existence of an equine pain face and to describe this in detail.

METHODS
Six horses were included in the study. They were subjected to two pain modalities twice – with and without an observer present. The horses wore a neck collar and were placed in a narrow space to reduce movement.

RESULTS
Both methods produced altered behaviour interpreted as pain, in all horses. Alterations in facial expressions were observed in all horses and facial expressions representative for baseline and pain expressions were condensed into explanatory illustrations (see below).

CONCLUSION
An equine pain face can be recognized in horses during induced moderate pain and may be a useful tool for recognizing pain in horses and thereby improving animal welfare.