

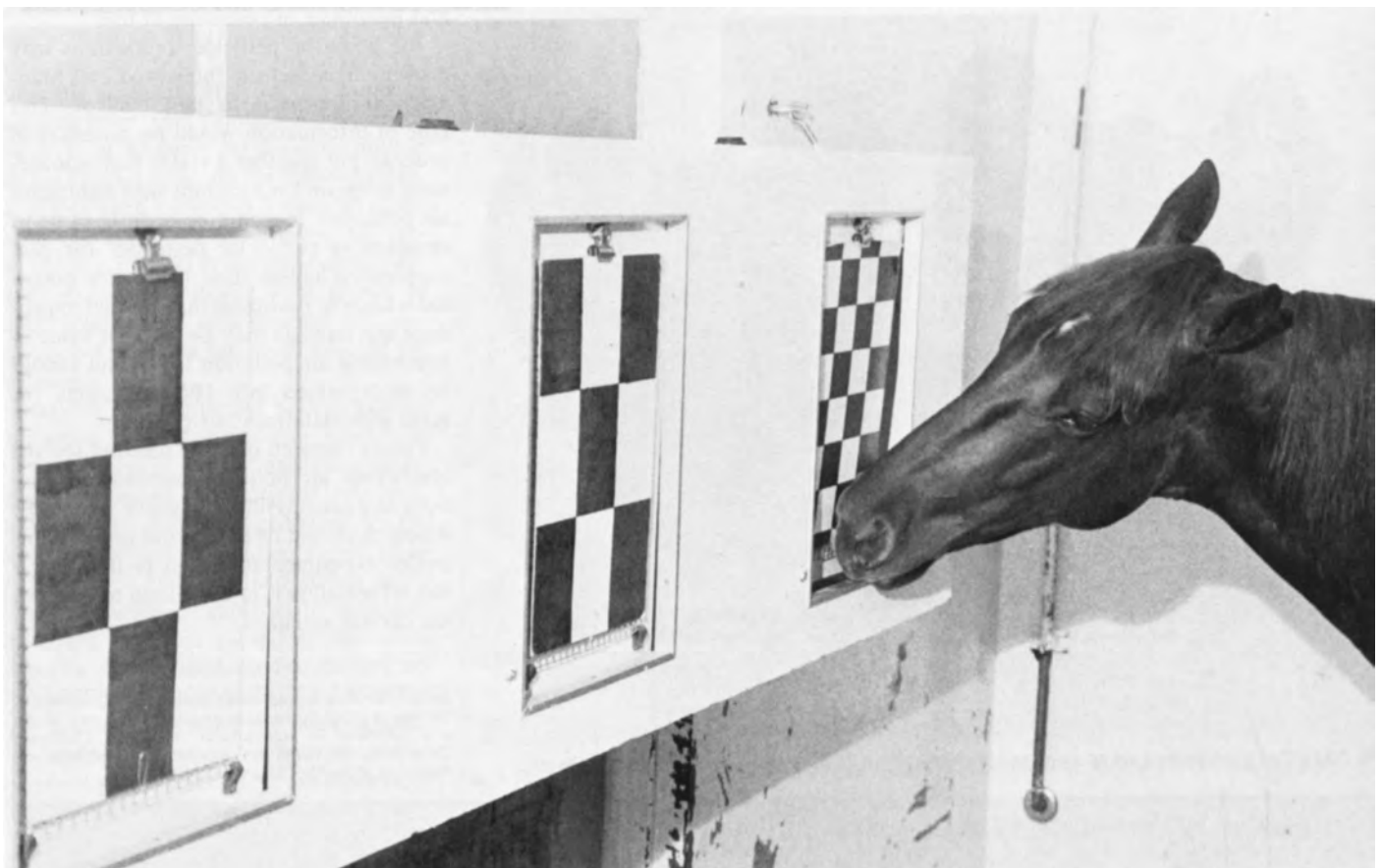

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Horse Learning Ability Tested

Fred, a yearling Quarter Horse at the University of California, Davis, has learned to recognize symbols and select those that will reward him with access to food. He's part of a study that will rank the learning ability of horses by breed and age, and determine the relationship of learning

ability to aggressiveness and emotional stability.

Using 20 Quarter Horses and Thoroughbreds, UC animal behaviorist Ed Price and student Douglas Mader have established a testing program that has potential for determining the trainability of young horses.

Mader exposed the horses to symbols attached to the doors of feed boxes. When a horse selected the correct symbol, it was rewarded by access to feed behind the door.

The process is called "discrimination learning." To pass the test, a horse had to make the right choice at least 80 percent of the time for three consecutive days.

In the first test, Mader found that the Quarter Horses took an average of 5.4 days to meet the learning criterion, while Thoroughbreds took an average of 8.4 days. The difference between breeds was reduced on a repeat test involving more difficult discrimination.