Horse Project

Concept document

version 2

Introduction

People and horses have been inextricably linked for centuries. Horses were not just a means of transportation, they were faithful helpers in agriculture and military affairs. But now they have been replaced by "horseless carriages", so interest in them is gradually fading away. But there are still people devoted to equestrianism and spending time with these noble, intelligent creatures. So the horsemen are the main characters of the Horse Project.

Classification

Genre	Simulator with RPG and sandbox elements, third-person view (with the ability to switch to the first-person view)
Platform	PC
Number of players	Singleplayer (but development of an MMO-version of the game is possible in the future)
Game world	Open world with a ranch, an equestrian club nearby, and diverse landscapes including forests, mountains, fields and sea coast
Setting	Modern world
Graphics style	3D, realism
Activities in the game	Horse riding, horse care, exploring the world, training horses, participating in competitions, passing quests , collecting items, trading, breeding (?), building (?), crafting (?)
Tech	Unreal Engine, Blender, Cascadeur, etc.

Main features (Unique selling points)

1. Horses in the game repeat the patterns of behavior inherent in reality, which gives the impression of a living, thinking creature.
2. Each horse is unique in its characteristics (skills, character, color, exterior, etc.)
3. The game is authentic, so the game mechanics repeat all the actions that people who work in the equestrian field perform.
4. The game has an educational element, since it uses equestrian terminology, authentic actions are performed, the player in the process of dialogues or studying the game wiki (?) can learn facts from zoology, veterinary medicine, history, etc.
5. The game has quite realistic graphics, which is not typical for other equestrian games.
6. The game lacks content that is unacceptable for minors, which makes the game friendly for players of almost any age.

Target audience

First of all, the game will be interesting for horse lovers and equestrian athletes, but it may also interest animal lovers and nature lovers in general. The game is designed for players of any gender and almost any age. But I would like to attract the attention of players who are not related to equestrianism with unusual game mechanics and nice visuals.

Brief description of the game

Plot tie

The main character inherits a small ranch with horses in a distant, little-known land. Once he was engaged in horse riding as a hobby, but since the hero did not sit in the saddle for a long time, he went to his longtime friend, an equestrian coach. She gives him riding lessons and teaches him how to properly care for horses. Then, having mastered the necessary skills, he goes to the ranch and takes care of his horses there.

The main process of the game (gameplay)

At the beginning of the game, the player finds himself in the equestrian club, where the equestrian coach is working. The player completes several quests, which are implicitly a tutorial. After completing the quest line with a trainer, the player is given complete freedom of choice. But still, the player is responsible for his horses, so he needs to look after them and earn resources for their maintenance.

Basic Mechanics

Horse Care

To keep a horse healthy, it needs a certain amount of care. So, in order for the horse to be in good condition, it needs to be fed, watered, cleaned and the cleanliness of its stall on time. All these actions are implemented as short animations. With insufficient care, the horse shows various negative effects from a decrease in its speed and endurance to the inability to mount it.

Riding

If the horse is healthy and equipped, then the player can mount it. The player can freely move around the map at any time convenient for him.

The horse is controlled using the keyboard. The player can speed up and slow down the horse, change gaits, make lateral movements (half-pass) and turns on the spot (pirouettes), rein back, jump over obstacles of various heights and make a sliding stop.

Each horse has a different degree of handling depending on its characteristics. First of all, it is determined by skills, including speed, endurance, flexibility, etc.

But horses also have their own character. For example, more temperamental horses will generally have more active animations, accelerating faster and slower decelerating, while calmer and cooler horses will do the opposite.

Horses can be afraid of unfamiliar objects and start to get nervous (and each horse has its own degree of skittishness), and if the player does not calm them down in time, they can even throw off the rider. But every time the player copes with this reaction of the horse, the level of trust between the rider and the horse

increases. And the higher the level of trust, the less likely it is to be frightened in the future. In addition, with an increase in the level of trust, new abilities appear in the horse. For example, the ability to call a horse to you from a distance, leave the horse unattached without the risk that it will go somewhere, ride without a saddle, etc.

Training

In order to improve the characteristics of the horse and teach it new tricks, it is necessary to train it. Each horse from birth has potential points that can be spent on skill leveling. However, they do not recover, so each horse has a training limit.

For learning, it is necessary to perform certain actions while riding and then praise them. For example, to train endurance you need to accelerate to speed, when there is a decrease in the level of stamina, spend it completely and then praise the horse. This consumes one point of potential. The consumption of potential points is limited to in-game days, i.e. no more than X potential points can be spent per in-game day.

Learning activities may include interaction with other objects, for example, passing a serpentine (a set of cones that go around from different sides) can improve the flexibility of the horse, and jumping over an obstacle can improve the power of the jump.

The learning process can take place not only during riding, but also from the ground. With the help of a lunge (a long rope) and a whip (which acts as a pointer), the player can drive the horse in a circle around him, exercising flexibility and discipline.

Training can be associated not only with increasing the level of skills, but also with learning various tricks. To learn special moves/tricks, you first need a certain level of skill, as well as performing certain actions with positive reinforcement in the form of praise or treats. Learning tricks takes place in the format of a mini-game (without interruption from the main gameplay, i.e. not in the form of a cutscene or a special game mode), usually with the use of special items or objects such as a lunge, whip, cavaletti (set of poles lying on the ground), etc.

Other interactions with the horse

In addition to all the interactions described above, the player can also:

- Lead the horse (for example, to move the horse from the stall to the pasture or just to build trust with it)

- Pet the horse to improve its mood

- Feed the horse not only the usual feed (hay, cereals), but also treats (apples, sugar, carrots), even while remaining on horseback to improve the horse's mood or reinforce the learned skill (this action can be used instead of praise to increase the effect of training, but also this causes greater consumption of potential points)

- Just watch the horses. Horses in the pasture due to complex AI are able to interact with each other and the environment (play, wallow, grooming, run, graze, etc.)

Horse Behavior

One of the key features of the project is the complex behavior of horses, which is shown even while riding.

In general, the behavior of a horse depends on innate characteristics expressed by scales (temperament, skittishness, sociability, obedience-stubbornness, etc.), the current degree of satisfaction of basic needs (nutrition, hygiene, exercise, communication) and events and stimuli from the outside world. In addition, horses can be in different emotional states and show them through facial expressions (mainly the position of the ears and the expression of the eyes) and behavior.

Even in a stall (small enclosed space) horses can express themselves. They can eat or drink from the feeder, lie down in the bedding, look out of the stall out of curiosity or because of some kind of stimuli (for example, if they heard a sound or saw an approaching player), let themselves be stroked by player and neigh to other horses

In the pasture, horses have more space and the ability to interact with other horses, so the behavior is more varied here. Horses can graze, run around and kick to maintain their exercise, groom each other, play, wallow in the mud, and so on.

During riding, as mentioned above, horses can be afraid of unfamiliar objects and this is noticable in movements, facial expressions, loud breathing and snorting. Soon this can cause disobedience to commands and attempts to leave or run away from a frightening object.

In addition, some horses can be stubborn in nature and will not obey the rider even in a common situation. For example, a stubborn horse may refuse to go forward and remain standing still. In this case, the player may have to repeat the command several times until the horse does the required action, and if the horse is rewarded for its obedience, then in the future it will be less stubborn.

Competitions

A player can participate in sports to earn resources or just for fun. They are held in the equestrian club. The following disciplines will be implemented in the game:

- Show jumping - competitions in which the player must overcome a series of obstacles in the arena in the shortest possible time and without penalty points. Penalty points are awarded for felling, disobedience of the horse and too long passage time.

- Dressage is a competition in which the player must complete the correct route by performing the required exercises at the correct gait. The more the player deviates from the requirements, the more points are deducted from him.

- Cross-country is a competition in which the player needs to overcome a series of obstacles on rough terrain in the shortest possible time.

- Western disciplines (?), including barrel racing, reining and cutting (competitions in which you need to corral calves)

- Driving (?) - competition involving carriages with draft horses.

- Showmanship(?) - competition in which the player must complete the exercises with horse in hand.

Quests

The game will have a number of non-player characters from whom you can take quests. These tasks are aimed at teaching the player some mechanics, or simply at earning resources. Most of the quests will come from the

trainer. But at the equestrian club and other places you can sometimes meet other characters. Tasks are divided into daily and main tasks.

Trading
There are several shops near the equestrian club. There are shops for feed, equipment and a horse market. The player in these locations can buy and sell items / horses.

Other possible features
In addition to the described above, it is possible to develop the following:

- More advanced storyline. At the moment, the plot is short and only needed to introduce the player to the gameplay, but its further development is possible. After all, the equestrian environment is unique in its own way, with long-standing traditions formed, and equestrianism itself has a long history. Equestrian clubs often have a cozy, special atmosphere that is well known to people involved in equestrian schools. Roughly speaking, equestrians can be identified as a separate subculture with its own traditions, philosophy, professional jargon and style.

- Breeding. The player will be able to crossbreed horses, while they will realistically inherit the characteristics of their parents (color, exterior, skills, character) and have a natural life cycle, i.e. foals will gradually grow into adult horses, age and die.

- Building. The player will be able to improve his ranch by adding new buildings or modifying old ones.

- Crafting. From various resources, the player will be able to make food, equipment, medicines, etc.

- Multiplayer. It is possible to implement an MMO version of the game in which players can do basically the same thing as in a single player game, but there will be an opportunity for cooperation and just fun with each other. They will be able to compete with each other, trade items and horses, build their own ranches and invite their friends to them, etc.

Similarities to other games

While the game is predominantly inspired by real-world experience and has many unique features, there are many interesting projects to draw on in development:

- Red Dead Redemption 2. This game is very detailed and the horses look more "alive" compared to horses in other games due to high-quality animations, an advanced locomotion system and behavioral reactions. But at the same time, there are some shortcomings in the behavior and animation of the horse, which should be taken into account when developing.

- Horse & Pony: My First Pony/Hast Och Ponny: Min Forsta Ponny. This game was originally designed for a younger audience, but at the same time it is quite authentic and informative. It uses real equestrian terminology and performs actions that are typical when caring for a horse in real life. In addition, the voice of the narrator (the uncle who owns the stable), who talks about horses in general and game mechanics, creates the impression of being in this unique equestrian atmosphere. The Horse Project strives for this level of authenticity and immersion.

- Rain World. This indie survival game has a very complex and well-developed ecosystem in which each creature has its own unique characteristics and complex behavior. At the same time, NPCs are able to

interact with each other and the player independently, creating the impression of living beings who, along with the player, are simply trying to survive in the "rain world". The Horse Project plans to create a similarly complex AI for horses, meaning that they will also have a unique character and the ability to independently interact with other horses, the player and the world around them.

System requirements (?)

Operating system	Windows 10 and higher, Linux, Mac
Processor	64-bit
RAM	???
Video Card	Direct-X 12 Compatible
Disk Space	???

Links

Site: https://horseproject.ru/

Vision statement: https://horseproject.ru/vision-statement/

Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/horseproj_game/

VK: http://vk.com/horseproj_game

Discord: https://discord.gg/4x7gA6hmUT