

Equine Mortality in the United States, 2015

As part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Animal Health Monitoring System's (NAHMS) Equine 2015 study, data were collected regarding equine health and management practices from a representative sample of operations with 5 or more equids in 28 States within 4 regions (see map below). The 28 States represented 71.8 percent of all equids in the United States and 72.1 percent of all U.S. farms with equids. The 28-State target population represented 71.6 percent of all equids on farms with 5 or more equids and 70.9 percent of farms with 5 or more equids in the United States.

More detailed information on the study design and sampling methodology is available in NAHMS Equine 2015 tabular summary reports at <http://www.aphis.usda.gov/nahms>.

NAHMS Equine 2015 participating States, by region



As part of the Equine 2015 study, participants were asked to provide information on the number of deaths (including euthanasia) among resident equids¹ of different age groups and the underlying causes of these deaths. Cause of death was reported by the owner/operator and not necessarily confirmed by a veterinarian or laboratory testing.

¹ For this study, a resident equid was defined as an equid that spent or was expected to spend more time on the operation than on any other operation.

Foal deaths

About one-half of foal deaths in the first month of life occurred within the first 2 days of life (table 1).

Table 1. Percentage of foals that died in the first 30 days of life in the last 12 months, by age at death

Age at death (days)	Percent foals*
2 or less	3.3
3 to 30	2.5
Total	5.8

*As a percentage of live births.

Equine deaths

The overall mortality rate was 1.4 percent. The highest mortality rates were found in resident equids less than 6 months of age and 20 years of age or more (table 2).

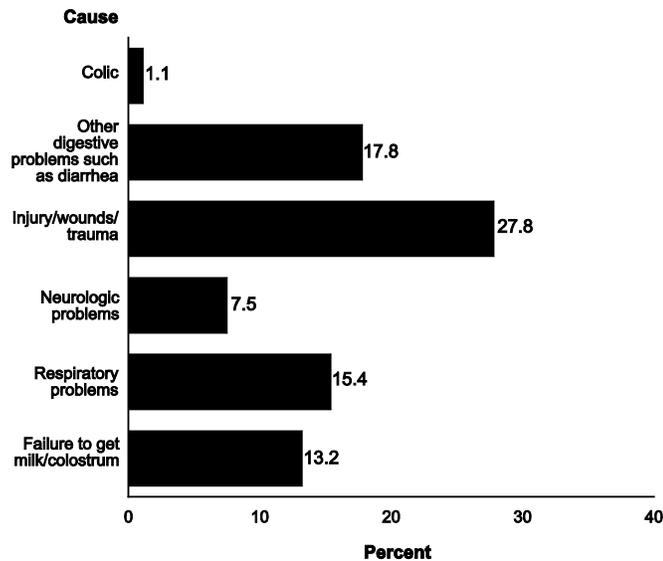
Table 2. Percentage of resident equids that died or were euthanized in the last 12 months, by age at death

Age at death (days)	Percent resident equids*
<6 months	2.8
6 months to less than 1 year	1.2
1 year to less than 5 years	0.5
5 years to less than 20 years	0.8
20 years or older	3.1

*As a percentage of age class inventory on May 1, 2015.

For equids less than 1 year of age, injury/wounds/trauma, digestive problems other than colic such as diarrhea, respiratory problems, and failure to get milk/colostrum were common conditions leading to death (figure 1). Injury/wounds/trauma is a potentially preventable cause of death, and lowering the number of deaths in this category would decrease the overall death loss among this age group.

Figure 1. For equids less than 1 year of age, percentage of resident equine deaths (including euthanasia), by selected cause(s) of death



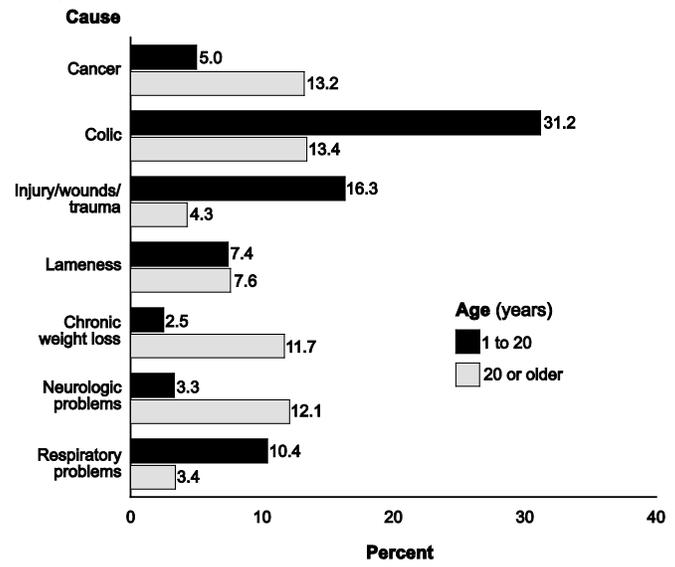
For equids 1 year to less than 20 years of age, commonly reported causes of death were colic, injury/wounds/trauma, and respiratory problems (figure 2). For resident equids 20 years of age or older, common causes of death were colic, neurologic problems, cancer, and chronic weight loss. For this age group, “other” accounted for 26.6 percent of deaths, and old age was the most common specified condition in the “other” category.

Conclusion

The overall annual mortality rate for equids based on the 2015 study was 1.4 percent. The highest annual mortality rates by age group were equids less than 6 months of age (2.8 percent) and equids over 20 years of age (3.1 percent).

Causes of death varied by age group, with injury, wounds, and trauma being a common cause of death in equids less than 1 year of age. Colic was a common cause of death in equids 1 year to 20 years of age, and old age was the most common cause of death in equids more than 20 years of age.

Figure 2. For equids 1 year to less than 20 years old and 20 years or older, percentage of equid deaths (including euthanasia), by selected cause(s) of death



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