

Composition of the U.S. Equine Population

The National Animal Health Monitoring System's (NAHMS) Equine '98 Study was designed to meet the equine industry's informational needs. This USDA project was NAHMS' first national study to examine health and management of equids in the United States.

The National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) selected a statistically valid sample from their list and area sampling frames so that data from NAHMS Equine '98 Study participants could be expanded to reflect all operations with equids in the 28 participating states.¹

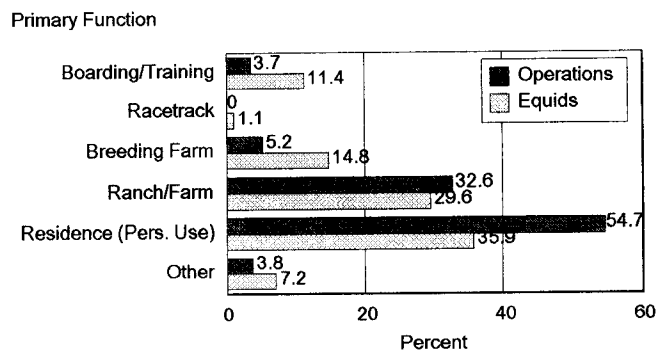
Data were collected on equine health and management practices via personal interview from a representative sample of equine operations in these states. These operations represented about three-fourths of the equine population and three-fourths of operations with equids in the U.S. For this study, equid was defined as horses, miniature horses, ponies, mules, donkeys, and burros. Overall 2,904 operations with one or more equids participated in the first Equine '98 Study's interviews from March 16 through April 10, 1998. More detailed information on the study and the sampling methodology is available in NAHMS Equine '98 tabular summary reports.

Equine '98 provided estimates for all domestic equids, including visitors and residents (those animals expected to spend more time at the operation than at any other operation throughout the year). Resident equids accounted for the majority (97.5 percent) of all equids on operations other than racetracks.

In 1996, the American Horse Council (AHC) commissioned a study that concentrated on the economic impact of the horse industry in the U.S.² While both the AHC and NAHMS studies provided interesting and beneficial information, cautions should be taken in comparing study results because of differences in study designs which reflect their purposes. The AHC survey sampled horse owners whether or not horses were physically present, whereas the Equine '98 Study sampled operations with equids present regardless of equid ownership.

Equine '98 information described both the primary *function* of operations with equids and the primary *use* of the equids on those operations. The primary function of more than one-half (54.7 percent) of operations with equids was residential with equids maintained for personal use (Figure 1). These operations accounted for roughly one-third of the equids (35.9 percent). The primary function of nearly one-third of operations (32.6 percent) was farming or ranching. Racetracks accounted for 1.1 percent of the equids and less than 0.1 percent of the operations.

Figure 1
Percent of Operations* (and Percent of All Equid on those Operations) by Primary Function of the Operation, 1997



*With equids present on January 1, 1998.

#3763

¹ Alabama, California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, Washington, Wisconsin, and Wyoming.

² The Economic Impact of the Horse Industry in the United States. The American Horse Council Foundation, Washington, DC. December 1996.

Examples of the functions of operations in the Other category were outfitters, carriage horses, and school horses.

Equids were primarily used for pleasure on two-thirds (66.8 percent) of operations (Figure 2). Just over 15 percent of operations used equids primarily for farm/ranch work. Most smaller operations (80.0 percent of those operations with one or two equids) maintained their animals primarily for pleasure.

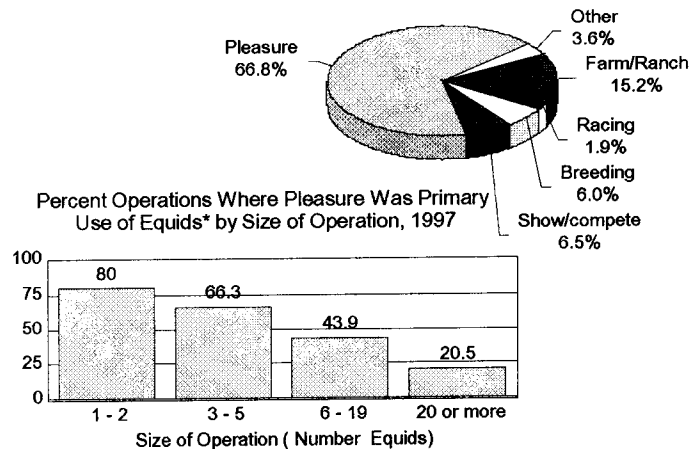
Overall, the Equine '98 Study showed that 44.9 percent of operations in these 28 states had only one or two equids. These small operations accounted for 14.5 percent of the total equids, while the 21.4 percent of operations with six or more animals maintained 60.4 percent of the equids.

The largest percentage of horses on operations other than racetracks were Quarter Horses (39.5 percent, Figure 3), followed by Thoroughbreds (10.2 percent) and Arabians (7.8 percent). The Western and Southern regions had higher percentages of horses that were Quarter Horses, while the Northeast region had the lowest percentage. Percentages for Thoroughbreds were also higher in the Western (10.1 percent of horses) and Southern (14.2 percent of horses) regions than the other regions. The Central and Northeast horse populations had higher percentages of Draft breed horses (12.0 percent and 10.6 percent, respectively) than the other regions. About 10 percent of the horses in the Northeast, Western, and Central regions were Arabians, while the Southern region population was only 4.5 percent Arabian. Standardbreds were most common among horses in the Northeast region (9.9 percent), followed by the Central region (5.6 percent).

Nearly 90 percent of the equine population were horses, over 5 percent were ponies, and fewer than 3.0 percent each were miniature horses, mules, and donkeys or burros.

Most equids were 18 months or older (89.7 percent of horses, 88.1 percent of miniature horses, and 92.1

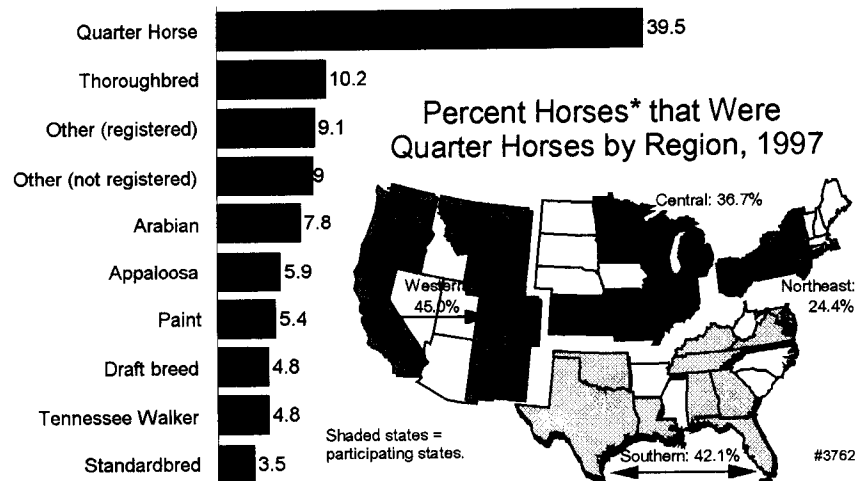
Figure 2
Percent of Operations by Primary Use of Equids*, 1997



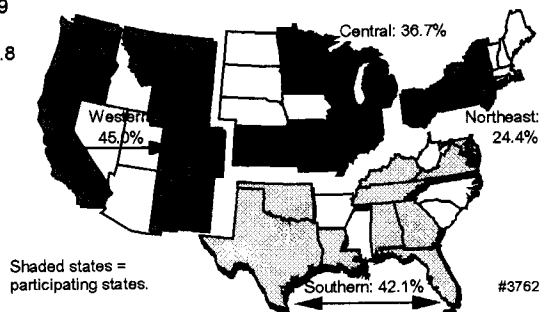
* Present on January 1, 1998.

#3810

Figure 3
Percent of Horses* by Breed, 1997



Percent Horses* that Were Quarter Horses by Region, 1997



#3762

*For operations other than racetracks that had horses present on January 1, 1998. Percent of horses includes horse foals but excludes miniature horses.

percent of ponies). Just over 7 percent of resident equids (not including racetracks) were 20 or more years of age; ponies had the highest percentage in the 20 years or older age group with 15.2 percent.

For more information on the Equine '98 Study, contact:

Centers for Epidemiology and Animal Health
 USDA:APHIS:VS, attn. NAHMS
 2150 Centre Ave., Bldg. B, MS 2E7
 Fort Collins, CO 80526-8117
 (970) 494-7000

E-mail: NAHMSweb@aphis.usda.gov
<http://www.aphis.usda.gov/vs/ceah/cahm>

N285.898