

## Information Sources and Use of Veterinarians for Equine Health Care

Many equine owners and operators of equine facilities look to veterinarians to provide information they need to make decisions about health care.

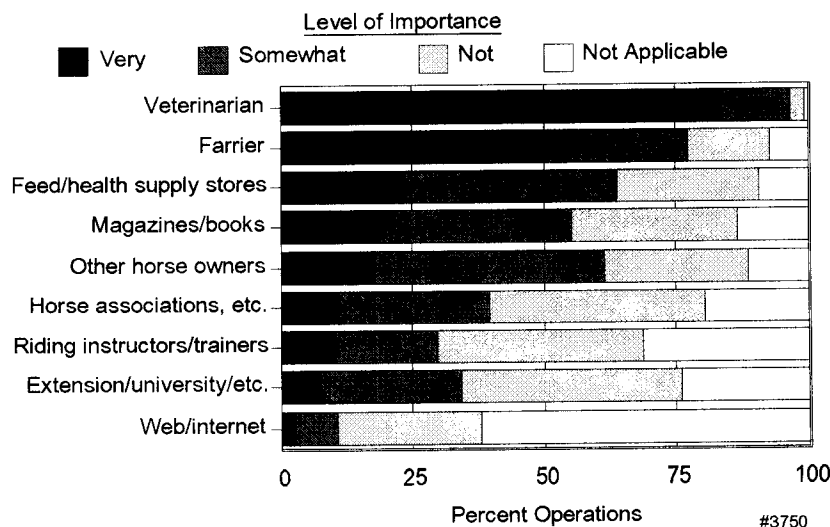
A study by the USDA's National Animal Health Monitoring System (NAHMS) asked equine owners or operators to rate the importance of various sources of information related to health care. From March 16 through April 10, 1998, the first Equine '98 data were collected on equine health and management practices via personal interviews from a representative sample of equine operations in 28 states<sup>1</sup>. These operations represented about three-fourths of the equine population and three-quarters 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 Equine '98 Study. More detailed information on the study and the sampling methodology is available in NAHMS Equine '98 tabular summary reports.

Veterinarians were rated *very* important as sources of information for equine health care decisions by 84.1 percent of operations and *somewhat* important on another 12.6 percent of operations (Figure 1). Other health care information sources that were rated as *very* important were farriers (49.2 percent of operations) and feed or veterinary supply store personnel (23.2 percent).

A total of 61.5 percent rated other horse owners as either a *very or somewhat* important source of information with which to make health care decisions. Other top sources were horse magazines and reference books (a total of 55.2 percent of operations), horse association meetings and newsletters (39.7 percent), and Extension agents and university or other

Figure 1  
**Percent of Operations by Importance of Information Sources for Equine Health Care Decisions, 1997**



<sup>1</sup> 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.

instructors, such as 4-H or vocational agriculture (34.4 percent).

Only 11.0 percent of operations rated the World Wide Web/Internet as a *very or somewhat* important source, while 61.9 percent indicated they did not have access to the Web/Internet or that it was not applicable as a source of equine health information.

Veterinarians were not only relied on for health care information but also for services they provided for equids. Nearly 74 percent of equine operations used the services of a veterinarian at least once for resident equids in 1997. Previous NAHMS studies showed some veterinary use for dairy animals on over 98 percent of dairy operations in 1995 and 55.5

percent of beef cow-calf operations consulted a veterinarian for special services in 1996.

Nearly one-half of all equine operations (49.9 percent) used a veterinarian for individual animal diagnoses or treatments (Figure 2). Over 40 percent used a veterinarian for vaccination consultation or services, to provide drugs or vaccines, and to provide diagnostic services via individual or herd tests.

Larger operations were more likely than smaller operations to have used services of a veterinarian at least once during 1997. Nearly 86 percent of those operations with 20 or more equids used a veterinarian for individual animal diagnosis or treatment, while 36.1 percent of operations with one or two equids used a veterinarian for such services (Figure 3). A larger percentage of operations with 20 or more equids used veterinarians for each type of service, which may be because larger operations have more animals at risk of requiring health care or a reflection of the primary purposes of equids on those operations.

While Equine '98 results show that owners and operators of equine facilities rely on veterinarians to provide health care information, results also show potential for growth in providing veterinary services for herd consultations in nutrition for larger operations and in nearly all service areas for the smallest equine

Figure 2

**Percent of Operations that Used a Veterinarian at Least Once for Resident Equids for the Following Services, 1997**

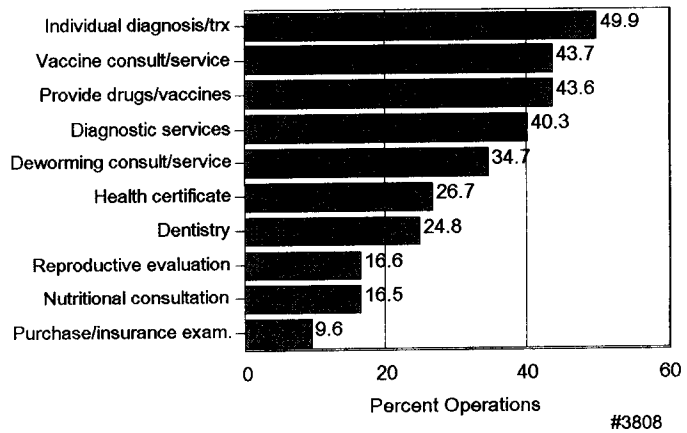
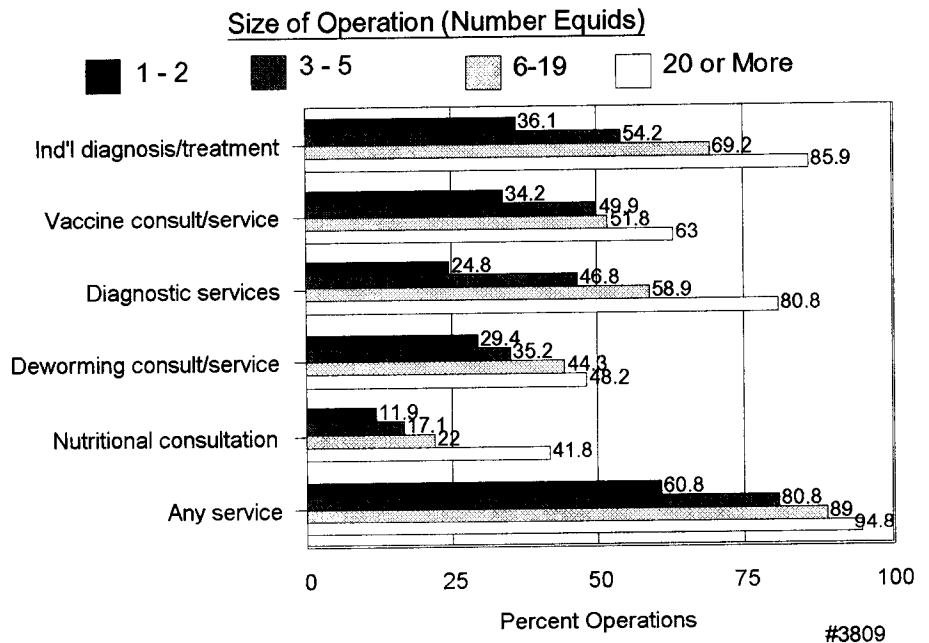


Figure 3

**Percent of Operations that Used a Veterinarian at Least Once for Resident Equids for the Following Services by Size of Operation, 1997**



operations. Nearly four out of 10 operations with one or two equids did not use any services of a veterinarian during the year.

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

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