

Highlights of Equine '98 Study Results: Part II

The USDA's National Animal Health Monitoring System (NAHMS) designed the Equine '98 Study to provide both participants and the equine industry with information on the United States' equine population for education and research purposes.

From March 16 through April 10, 1998, the first data were collected on equine health and management practices via personal interviews from a representative sample of equine operations in 28 states.¹ These operations represented about three-fourths of the equine population and three-fourths of operations with equids in the U.S. For this study, equids were 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.

The following information was excerpted from the second tabular summary report, *Part II: Baseline Reference of 1998 Equine Health and Management*.

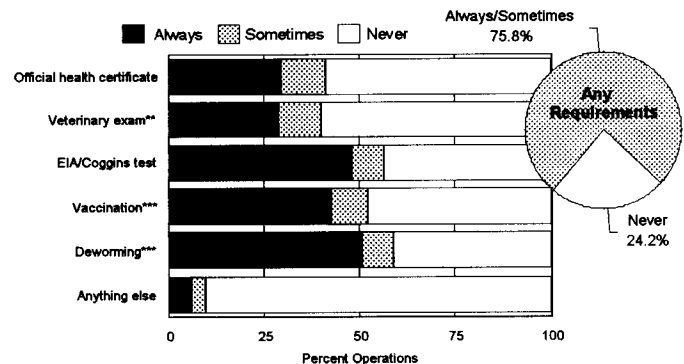
- ♦ Overall, 22.0 percent of operations added resident equine in 1997. (Resident equids were those animals for which the operation was a home base as opposed to visiting animals.) Percentages increased with the size of operation (number of equids).
- ♦ For operations that added equids, more than four out of five (88.6 percent) added new resident equids from within their state. Few (0.9 percent) operations brought in new additions from outside the U.S.
- ♦ For operations that added new resident equids, over one-half of these operations never required a health

certificate (58.8 percent) or veterinary examination (60.0 percent), while over one-half at least sometimes required a test for equine infectious anemia (EIA, 56.3 percent), vaccination (52.4 percent), or deworming (59.0 percent) within the previous year (Figure 1). Approximately one in four operations (24.2 percent) never had any health requirements for new additions.

- ♦ Approximately one-third (34.0 percent) of operations that added new equids routinely quarantined new arrivals. The operation average routine length of quarantine was 28.5 days.
- ♦ Overall, 54.6 percent of operations transported resident equids off the home operation and back by vehicle in 1997.
- ♦ Overall, 21.4 percent of operations had at least one resident equid permanently leave the operation, excluding deaths, while 13.4 percent of the resident equids permanently left their home operation.
- ♦ For those resident equids that permanently left their home operations, the largest percentage were sold to a

Figure 1

Percent of Operations* by Frequency of Health Requirements for New Additions, 1997



*For operations that added new resident equids to the resident inventory, (excluding births).

**Not official health certificate.

***Previous 12 months.

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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.

private party (55.0 percent). Over one-half (52.0 percent) of those resident equids that permanently left were sold for a business profit, while just over one-third (34.9 percent) left because the owners' situations changed.

- ◆ The largest percentage of operations identified resident equids with a unique individual animal identification based on photographs, sketches, or registration papers (43.1 percent). The largest percentage of equids with some form of unique identification was in the Western region (70.7 percent, see regions in Figure 2).

Operations where the primary use of equids was pleasure or farm/ranch were less likely to use unique individual identification than other types of operations.

- ◆ The largest percentage of operations (57.9 percent) considered veterinarians a *very* important source of equine nutrition/diet information. Farriers, feed or animal health supply store personnel, and horse magazines/reference books were each considered to be *very* important sources for such information on over 20 percent of operations. Other horse owners were *very* important sources of equine nutrition/diet information for 18.4 percent of operations.

- ◆ The largest percentage (86.6 percent) of operations fed small hay bales (less than 200 lbs.) Over one-half (54.2 percent of operations) fed grass hay from small bales, and 62.0 percent fed alfalfa or alfalfa and grass mix from small bales. (Types of hay fed were not mutually exclusive.) About 30 percent of operations fed large bales. Only 1.0 percent of operations fed no dried forage to equids on the operation.

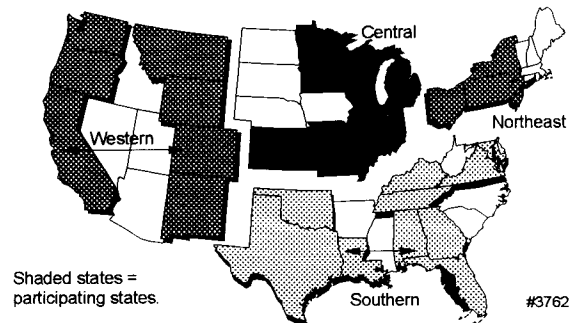
- ◆ Overall, 33.2 percent of operations that fed dried forage fed it once per day or less frequently, while 19.2 percent fed forage three times per day or more or provided continuous access.

- ◆ Averaged across operations, 86.8 percent of grain/concentrate fed to equids was purchased in bags from a retail source.

- ◆ Over one-third (38.2 percent) of operations fed a vitamin-mineral supplement/premix to equids, and 4.9 percent fed herbal supplements.

- ◆ Over 60 percent of operations in the Northeast, Western, and Central regions used well water as the primary source of water for resident equids in 1997.

Figure 2
States Participating in the Equine '98 Study
by Region



- ◆ The majority of operations (90.3 percent) used pasture (growing forage present) for 3 or more months for resident equids during 1997. Nearly three-fourths (72.7 percent) of operations that pastured equids for 3 or more months relied on pasture to provide at least 90 percent of the roughage, meaning that pasture did not provide this level of nutrition on over one-fourth of operations that pastured equids.

- ◆ Most operations (95.2 percent) used at least one method of keeping equids cool. Providing shade (87.0 percent of operations), a well ventilated barn (53.2 percent), and/or hosing the equid with cool water (23.9 percent) were the most commonly used methods.

- ◆ The most commonly used methods of keeping equids warm were increased feeding (66.0 percent of operations) and use of a barn (69.5 percent).

- ◆ Two-thirds (67.5 percent) of operations used bedding. The most commonly used bedding for equids in 1997 was straw or hay (45.4 percent of all operations) followed by wood shavings (30.9 percent).

- ◆ Overall, over one-third (36.4 percent) of operations usually or sometimes composted equine manure and/or bedding on the operation during 1997. The most frequently used method of manure and waste bedding disposal (including composted manure) was application to fields on the operation (66.5 percent of operations).

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

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