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Demographics of the U.S. Equine Population, 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/naahms>.

NAHMS Equine 2015 participating States, by region

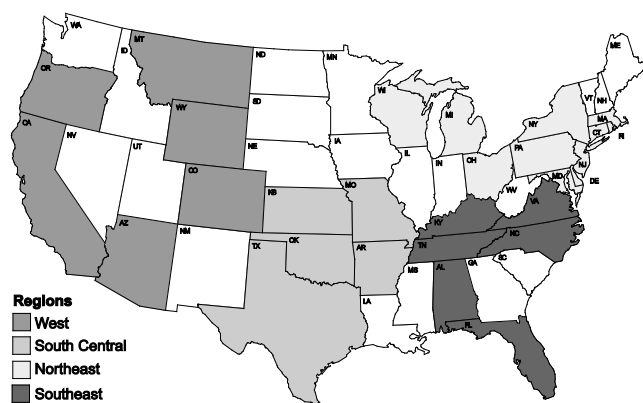


Table 1. Percentage of operations and percentage of resident equids, by size of operation

Size of operation (number of equids)	Percent operations	Percent resident equids
Small (5 to 9)*	67.3	32.1
Medium (10 to 19)	21.6	26.0
Large (20 or more)	11.1	41.9
Total	100.0	100.0

*Operations that had five or more equids per the National Agricultural Statistics Service list frame (primarily comprised of equine information from the 2012 Census of Agriculture) but fewer than five equids on May 1, 2015, were included in this category.

Primary function of operation

As part of the Equine 2015 study, operators were asked to identify the primary function of their operation: 39.5 percent identified their primary function as farm/ranch, and 38.8 percent identified their primary function as residence with equids for personal use.

Overall, 48.2 and 39.8 percent of small operations reported a primary function of residence with equids for personal use or farm/ranch, respectively). As operation size increased, the percentages of operations with a primary function of boarding/training or breeding farm increased, while the percentage of operations with a primary function of residence with equids for personal use decreased (table 2).

Operation size

Operations participating in the Equine 2015 study were categorized as small (5 to 9 equids), medium (10 to 19), and large (20 or more). Although small operations accounted for only 32.1 percent of resident equids¹ in the United States, they made up 67.3 percent of all operations. In comparison, large operations represented 41.9 percent of all resident equids but just 11.1 percent of all operations (table 1).

¹For 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.

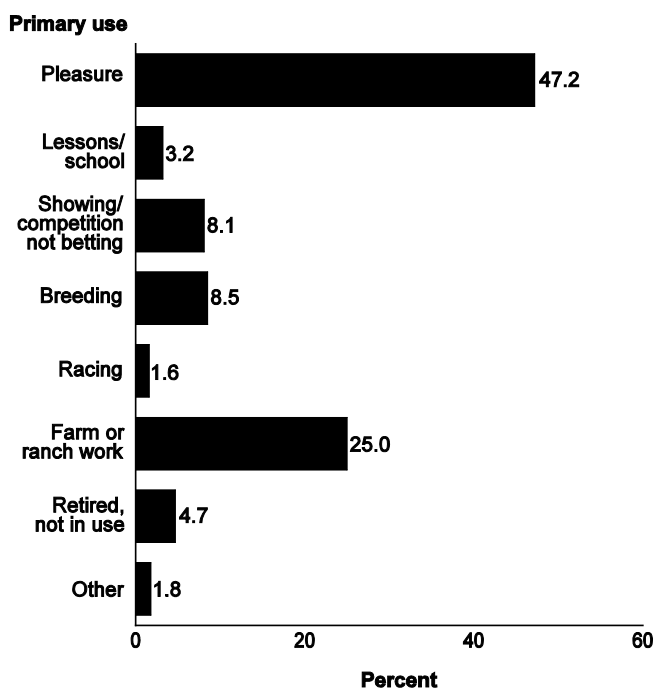
Table 2. Percentage of operations by primary function and by size of operation

Primary function	Percent Operations Size of Operation (number of equids)			All operations
	Small (5–9)	Medium (10–19)	Large (20 or more)	
Boarding/ training	4.5	13.7	30.1	9.3
Breeding farm	4.7	11.0	18.5	7.6
Farm/ ranch	39.8	44.7	27.6	39.5
Residence with equids for personal use	48.2	24.0	10.4	38.8
Riding stable	1.0	3.5	7.5	2.2
Other	1.9	3.0	5.8	2.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Primary use of equids

Operators were also asked to identify the primary use of equids on their operations. The highest percentage of operations (47.2 percent) used equids for pleasure, followed by farm/ranch work (25.0 percent). Similar percentages of operations indicated a primary use of equids of breeding or showing/competition (8.5 and 8.1 percent, respectively) [figure 1].

Figure 1. Percentage of operations by primary use of equids



Type of equid

Most operations (93.8 percent) had full-size horses (including draft horses, but excluding miniature horses). Over 90 percent of operations in each region had full-size horses. A higher percentage of operations in the South Central and Southeast regions (23.7 and 18.8 percent, respectively) had donkeys or burros compared with operations in the West and Northeast regions (9.2 and 8.9 percent, respectively) [table 3].

Table 3. Percentage of operations by type of resident equid(s) present on May 1, 2015, and by region

Type of equid	Percent Operations Region				All operations
	West	South Central	North-east	South-east	
Donkeys/ burros	9.2	23.7	8.9	18.8	16.3
Mules	9.0	6.9	6.6	8.9	7.7
Ponies	9.6	9.6	29.5	18.2	16.1
Miniature horses	7.3	12.2	18.9	12.4	12.7
Horses*	98.8	90.9	94.8	92.4	93.8
Other	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.3	0.1

*Domestic equids generally more than 14.2 hands (58 inches) high at the shoulder (near the last hairs of the mane). An equid less than 14.2 hands high may also be considered a horse if its breed registry defines it as such (other than miniature horse). Excludes miniature horses, but includes draft horses.

Horse breeds

Overall, Quarter horses represented the highest percentage of resident horses by breed (42.1 percent). Quarter horses also represented the majority of horses in the West and South Central regions (55.5 and 61.8 percent, respectively). The highest percentage of draft horses was found in the Northeast region (15.2 percent), and the highest percentage of Tennessee Walkers was found in the Southeast region (15.1 percent) [table 4].

Table 4. Percentage of resident horses as of May 1, 2015, by breed(s) and by region

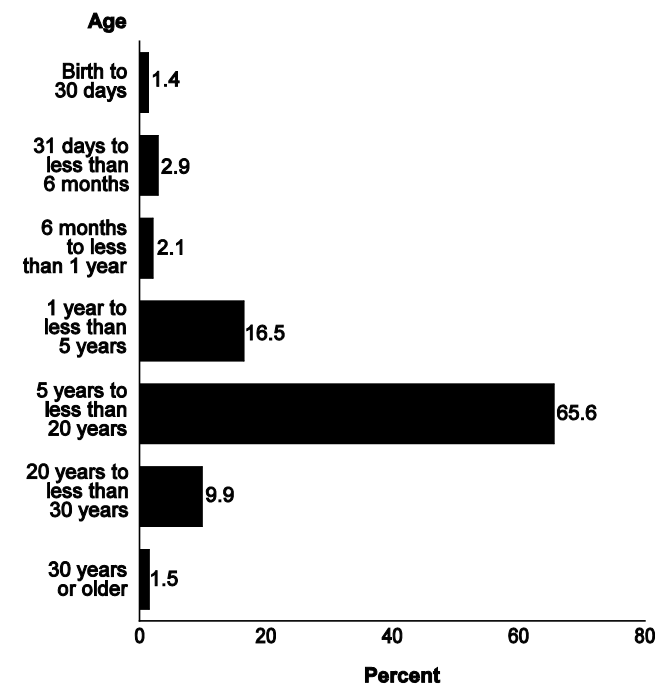
Percent Resident Horses					
Breed	Region				All operations
	West	South Central	North-east	South-east	
Appaloosa	1.8	1.6	2.5	2.0	1.9
Arabian	4.2	2.3	3.9	5.9	3.9
Draft	2.2	1.1	15.2	2.5	4.7
Miniature horse	2.3	5.0	6.3	7.1	5.1
Morgan	1.5	1.0	2.9	0.6	1.4
Mustang	2.0	1.1	0.5	0.4	1.0
Paint	7.4	8.0	6.4	4.8	6.8
Quarter horse	55.5	61.8	21.7	21.4	42.1
Saddlebred	0.9	2.8	1.8	4.3	2.5
Standard-bred	1.1	1.4	10.7	2.9	3.7
Tennessee Walker	1.1	0.7	2.1	15.1	4.5
Thoroughbred	4.2	2.4	10.1	13.7	7.1
Warmblood	2.1	1.6	5.2	4.4	3.2
Grade	4.5	5.1	4.0	2.5	4.1
Other*	9.3	4.2	6.7	12.3	7.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

*Included Paso Fino, Friesian, Irish Gypsy, Fox Trotter, Rocky Mountain horse, Icelandic, and mixed breeds.

Age distribution

The highest percentage of resident equids (65.6 percent) were 5 years to less than 20 years of age. Overall, 11.4 percent of resident equids were 20 years or older (figure 2).

Figure 2. Percentage of resident equids on May 1, 2015, by age



Conclusion

The majority of equine operations had fewer than 10 equids and had a primary function of farm/ranch or residence with equids for personal use. The vast majority of equids were full-size horses, with the most common breed being Quarter horse. The majority of equids were 5 years to less than 20 years of age.

Demographics of the equine population and the type of operation allow the industry to keep abreast of trends within the industry and allows service providers to better plan for industry needs.

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