

## Horses Making A Comeback In Keystone State

Horses, on the skids since the horseless carriage took over as the principal means of locomotion, have made a comeback in Pennsylvania.

Fact is horses have become so popular that they are big business — a multimillion dollar

business — in the Keystone State.

Horses — 85,000 of them — are valued at \$40 million. The feed they eat in a year costs \$13 million. Blacksmithing services amount to \$2.1 million. Veterinarians' charges account for \$1.8 million. Add other \$2.8 million for riding clothes, boots and bridles.

These are just a few of the items listed in the most comprehensive horse survey ever made in the United States. The survey is a joint effort by the State

Crop Reporting Service and the Penn State's Extension Service and was financed by funds from harness racing revenues.

Inability to get good figures on the horse industry and the increasing popularity of equines prompted the survey, according to James P. Gallagher, livestock extension specialist at Penn State, and Elmer R. Nordberg, Crop Reporting statistician who directed the survey.

"When the family doctor switched from his horse and buggy to a car to make his house calls — around 1910 — the horse began going downhill in popularity, Nordberg said.

By 1959, Nordberg said, the trend changed. Riding became very popular for Pennsylvania's growing affluent society. More people wanted to own horses.

And the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, with which the Crop Reporting Service is affiliated, wanted to know how big an economic impact horses have on agriculture and agribusiness.

To get the answer, 10,000 questionnaires were mailed to horse and pony owners. About 4,800 were completed and returned.

Some were returned unanswered with comments such as "none of your business" and "you're too nosey."

Nordberg said a rumor that the state was going to tax horses and wanted to know who owned them cut down on the returns.

To assist in expanding survey information into statewide estimates, the Crop Reporting Service sent men into ten counties. They asked questions concerning horses, township by township, in Bedford, Berks, Cumberland, Jefferson, Lackawanna, Lawrence, Monroe, Tioga, Union and Westmoreland counties.

From the questionnaire re-

sults and the intensified work in the ten counties, the horse population was estimated to be 85,000 — nags, plugs, ponies, standardbreds and thoroughbreds.

The counties with the most horses were found to be Lancaster, 11,000 (7,000 work horses); Chester, 5,000; Mifflin and Washington, 3,000; York, 2,500; Bucks and Erie, 2,100; Adams, Crawford, Cumberland, Greene, Mercer and Montgomery, 2,000 each.

As was expected, the big majority of the horses are in the pleasure classification. Only 11,500 are estimated to be work horses and 90 percent of these are owned by Amish in Adams, Juniata, Lancaster, Lawrence, Lebanon, Mercer, Mifflin, Snyder and Union counties.

Standardbreds account for 14.2 percent of the 85,000 horses and are followed by quarter horses (14) and thoroughbreds (10.7). Others: Arabians (3.7), Appaloosa (3.1), American Saddle (3.1), Tennessee Walker (2.7), Morgan (1.5), Palomino (0.8). More than one-fifth of the

equines reported in the questionnaires were ponies and almost one-fifth were of mixed or unknown breeding.

A third of the horse owners indicated they lack facilities for stabling and keep their animals at farms or boarding stables. Fifty-eight percent keep their horses on farms — their own or someone's else's.

How much does it cost a year to keep a horse? On the average about \$250. Hay, grain and bedding add up to \$150. Of the incidentals, the biggest chunk, \$33, goes for tack and equipment. The blacksmith gets \$25, the vet \$25, clothes and boots \$14, and vitamins and health aids \$7.

Horse shows are the most popular activity for horse owners, followed by organized trail rides, 4-H Club activities and fox hunts.

The cost of transporting horses to races, shows, trail riding areas and other places costs a pretty penny — at least \$15 million.

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