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Oldham County equine survey reveals extensive economic impact on region

Equine Council says study supports need for a horse park

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Contributing Writer

(January 2008) – As of Dec. 31, 2006, equine owners and related businesses contributed more than \$32.7 million to Oldham County and Kentucky economy through expenditures. Such data as this was revealed through the recently completed Oldham County Equine Survey.

“Horses contribute to our quality of life,” said Mary Lowry, executive director of the Oldham County Equine Council.

Ken Heppermann, owner of Equine Business Resources LLC in Goshen, Ky., compiled this survey for the Equine Council and Oldham Ahead as a way to determine the number of equines in Oldham County and to determine the equine industry’s economic impact on local economy.



Photo by Helen McKinney

**Mary Lowry and Doug Wampler
review the equine survey at the
Longfield Farm offices in Goshen, Ky.,
a portion of which is below.**

For some time, Lowry has been on a mission to create a greater awareness of Oldham County’s horse community. She conducts lessons, clinics and camps from her Skylight farm, Alta Vista, and helped institute the 18-member Equine Council in January 2007.

This survey is one of the few countywide equine economic impact studies completed in Kentucky and the United States. Surveys were mailed to 451 respondents, with a total of 122 positive responses. Follow-up phone calls and personal visits were made to operations that did not respond to the mailed survey in an effort to maximize response rates.

Six basic categories were covered: Breeding Farms, Race Horse Training Centers, Boarding Stables, 15 Head and Up, 5-14 Head, and 1-4 Head.

Breed	Number of Equine	%
Thoroughbred	2,073	65.1 %
Quarter Horse	281	8.3 %
American Saddlebred	178	5.3 %
Non-registered	142	4.5 %
Arabic	118	3.7 %
Other	111	3.3 %
Warmbloods	77	2.4 %
Tennessee Walking	66	2.1 %
Andalusian	53	1.7 %
Paint	50	1.6 %
Friesian	45	1.4 %
Appaloosa	33	1.1 %
Rocky Mountain	21	.7 %
Morgan	12	.4 %
Finn Friesian	9	.3 %
Total	3,186	

Top Ten Expense Categories	Dollars Spent (millions)	% of Total Expenses
Salaries and wages	\$ 7.79	24.0 %
Breeding fees	\$ 4.77	14.6 %
Veterinary	\$ 3.44	10.5 %
Feed and hay	\$ 2.47	7.6 %
Insurance	\$ 1.93	5.9 %
Training	\$ 1.66	5.1 %
Farrier	\$ 1.20	3.7 %
Vanning	\$ 1.06	3.2 %
Medicines and supplies	\$ 1.01	3.1 %
Boarding	\$.941	2.9 %

Results will be presented to state leaders in Frankfort in the future and shared with horse racing industry affiliates and the Kentucky Horse Council.

	Breeding Farms	Training Centers	Boarding Stables	15 Head & Up	5 - 14 Head	1 - 4 Head	Total
Total Wages Paid	\$2.41 Million	\$2.6 Million	\$881,000	\$1.81 Million	\$80,000	\$17,000	\$7.79 Million
- Employees -							
# of full time employees	80	124	40	70	2	1	317
Avg. hours per employee/ week	49	50	49	51	45	44	
# of part time employees	15	12	14.5	14	13	2	71
Avg pt hours per employee/ week	19.5	18	17	16	17.5	8	
Avg. wage per full time worker	\$23,600	\$17,600	\$14,900	\$19,200	\$5,700	\$5,600	
Avg. # of horses per employee	7.7	4.6	12.2	8.0	N/A	N/A	

Equine Category	Total Acres	Value Per Acre	Land & Capital (\$ Millions)	Equine Value (\$ Millions)	Total Value (\$ Millions)
Breeding Farms	2,327	\$19,400	\$45.1	\$13.1	\$58.2
Training Centers	958	\$25,282	\$24.2	\$10.0	\$34.2
Boarding Stables	1,321	\$14,959	\$19.7	\$4.3	\$24.0
15 Head & Up	3,064	\$9,780	\$26.9	\$10.5	\$37.4
5 - 14 Head	2,695	\$5,244	\$14.1	\$1.56	\$15.7
1 - 4 Head	3,564	\$5,032	\$18.0	\$0.93	\$18.9
Totals	13,929		\$148.0	\$40.4	\$188.4

A copy has been sent to State Sen. Ernie Harris, said Lowry. The equine industry

“impacts tourism and land use as well,” Lowry added. She played host to the Flying Cross Farm Horse Trials on Sept. 22-23. This was a large event that drew in 175 entries, 110 of which were from out of state.

The equine industry “is one of the defining industries in the county and the state,” said Doug Wampler, director of Oldham Ahead. He believes Oldham County is a “significant player” on a state and national level.

Wampler cited the 2002 Census of Agricultural that included an equine inventory and ranked Oldham County eighth in the state and 217th in the nation. He believes Oldham County can become a “model for other counties to better define how horses relate to each county.”

Many equine operations are dispersed throughout the county, and Lowry said that residents drive past these invisible businesses every day without fully “recognizing what we have in the county.” For this reason, many such businesses may not be counted in official statistical reports.

The equine industry is “not just about big farms or what you see on the road. It involves a lot of people,” said Betsy Lavin. Lavin and her husband, Doc, own the 700-acre Longfield Farm in Goshen, where a press conference was held on Dec. 6 to release the survey results.

“Many times people say horses are just a hobby,” said Wampler. “But that’s not so. It takes money to maintain them. The equine survey results provide Oldham County citizens and officials an appreciation as to the economic impact of the horse industry and community within Oldham County.”

Oldham County is unique in that it has breeding and training centers, trail riders, pony clubs and quarterhorses. “If you go into other counties, you don’t have that mix,” said Heppermann. Boarding and training centers are the most labor-intensive facilities, said Heppermann. “This is a very labor intensive industry.” Most people who work on the farms live in the county, said Lowry.

Wampler sees the county’s equine industry as “a good reason to pursue a horse park.” He said he hopes to move forward with horse park plans, since it would be “a huge coup for Kentucky.” With the 2010 World Equestrian Games not far off, a horse park in the county would provide another place for related events to take place – especially since the Kentucky Horse Park is already booked to capacity.

Now that the survey is completed, the next step is to work with Planning and Zoning to map out a visual tool that can be used, said Wampler. He pointed out that Shelby County has done an excellent job of plotting its equestrian locations into maps. The Oldham County Equine Council plans to work closely with equine businesses and the Oldham County Cooperative Extension Service in this endeavor, he said.

“By recognizing the contribution to the county, we can ensure the industry is preserved and strengthened for the future,” said Wampler.

• *For more information or to view an online directory, visit:*

www.oldhamequinecouncil.org. The Oldham County Equine Council will meet again at 6:30 p.m. on Jan. 16 at the Belknap Community Center, 12414 W. Hwy. 42, Goshen. For information about the Equine Council, call Mary Lowry at (502) 228-9539. For information about the upcoming meeting, call Traci Missun at the Extension Office at (502) 222-9453.