

November 2005

Michigan Equine Survey is Underway!



At the 2005 Michigan State University/ Michigan Equine Industry Meeting, the Michigan horse industry emphatically agreed on the need for a new Michigan equine survey that emphasizes the economic impact and land usage of horses in Michigan. This unified voice led to MSU researchers being awarded \$42,500 from the Animal Industry Initiative Coalition(AIIC), Michigan's animal agriculture research, teaching and Extension initiative at MSU, to begin building the frame work for the survey.

This granting effort was supported by many horse industry groups including the Michigan Horse Council, Michigan Equine Practitioners Association and Michigan Equine Partnership. Other letters of support came from township and county planners and parks officials, who expressed a need for current information on the size and needs of the equine industry that is affected by their decisions. An extensive equine survey has not been conducted in Michigan since 1996.

Mary Rossano, MSU epidemiologist and a leading researcher on the survey, says the survey will be used to estimate the number of horses, ponies, donkeys and mules in Michigan, where they are located, their ages and representative breeds. The survey will also help identify what purposes people use horses for and how horse properties are zoned.

Information collected from the survey will be useful in determining the equine industry's contribution to the state's economy. This information can then be presented to local and state government officials who make decisions and policies on zoning and land use, trail access, tax laws and other issues affecting horse owners.

Currently, USDA scientists are constructing a frame work for the survey. They will be using mailing lists provided by many partnering Michigan equine organizations. Horse industry representatives will be working with MSU researchers to develop survey questions that will be the most beneficial for determining economic impact and aid in land use issues that affect the Michigan equine industry. Questionnaires will be mailed to more than 4,000 people involved in the state's horse industry next spring.

While the survey is well underway, additional funding needs to be secured for the survey development, delivery and subsequent publications of important information. The Michigan Horse Council (MHC) and organizational members have rallied behind the survey efforts by pledging over \$5,000 in financial support. President of the MHC Janet Washington says, "A comprehensive inventory of the equine industry will provide information the Michigan Horse Council needs to prioritize its program and advocacy efforts, as well as to accurately articulate the significant economic impact of the industry on local communities and the state as a whole."

The Michigan Equine Partnership (MEP) is working with MSU researchers in dialogue with state legislators for support of the survey efforts. Val Vail-Shirey, executive director of the MEP states, "Michigan Equine Partnership believes that it is important for all equine interest to work together to successfully engage and complete an equine survey for the state of Michigan. The equine industry is a large agri-tourism benefit to Michigan, yet it has been many years since a survey has been conducted. The value of securing accurate industry economic data is important not only to the industry but to Michigan and its communities."



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