

Exploring the Equine Industry— Part One

THE HORSE INDUSTRY in the United States consists of more than 12 million horses that are primarily used for companionship, racing, riding, and breeding. Whether you own ponies, light horses, or draft horses, it is important to have the necessary equipment, supplies, and facilities to care for them properly.



Objectives:



1. Define basic equine terms.
2. Discuss the use of horses and their impact on the economy.
3. Identify and discuss the necessary equipment, supplies, and facilities for proper care of equine.

Key Terms:



bridle

colt

draft horse

filly

foal

gelding

hand

light horse

mare

pony

saddle

stallion

stud horse

tack

Equine Terminology

Horses are also called equine. Horses, ponies, donkeys, and mules are all members of the horse family. Based on size, there are three classes of horses: light horses, ponies, and draft horses. The height and weight of a horse determine its class. The height of a horse is the distance from the ground to the highest point of the withers. There is a unique measurement for

horses called a hand. A **hand** is 4 inches, or 10.2 centimeters. A **light horse** is used for riding or racing, stands 14.2 to 17 hands tall, and weighs between 900 and 1,400 pounds. A **pony** is a horse under 14.2 hands tall that weighs between 500 and 900 pounds. A **draft horse** is used for work, stands 14.2 to 17.2 hands tall, and weighs over 1,400 pounds.

Other terms are used to describe horses based on specific age or gender. A **filly** is a female Thoroughbred four years old or under or a female of any other kind of horse under three years old. A **stud horse** is a male kept for breeding. A horse of either gender that has not been weaned is called a **foal**. A male that has been castrated before reaching sexual maturity is called a **gelding**. A mature female is referred to as a **mare**. A mature male is referred to as a **stallion**. A male horse that is not mature is called a **colt**.

The Horse Industry's Impact on the Economy

It is estimated that there are more than 12 million horses in the United States. Years ago, draft horses, oxen, and cattle were important because they were used for work purposes. Today, riding horses are more common because tractors and other machinery have replaced horses in the fields. Horses have become primarily used for companionship, racing, riding, and breeding.

Racing horses is a very popular spectator sport. Billions of dollars are spent every year by horse owners trying to purchase the best racehorses. Spectators trying to win large purses, some over a million dollars, also spend money.

Horseback riding is popular with outdoor enthusiasts and is also used as therapy for healing certain injuries. Some large ranches still ride horses to monitor and round up cattle.

Horse breeders constantly work to improve bloodlines. They have thousands of shows every



FIGURE 1. Competitive horse racing is one of the world's oldest sports. (Courtesy, USDA)



FIGURE 2. Horseback riding is entertainment and sometimes therapeutic. (Courtesy, USDA)

year, from small local events to large national events. Breeding farms breed mares to sell the offspring for racing or shows.

Horses are also used as companion animals. They make good pets and can give owners a strong sense of accomplishment through training.

Equipment, Supplies, and Facilities for Proper Care of Equine

You will need housing, feed, feeding equipment, grooming equipment, saddles, and bridles for your horses. Your time and dedication are also necessary for proper care of horses.

Housing for horses must protect the animals from sun, wind, excessive cold, and other weather. Horse barns should have stalls that are at least 10 by 12 feet. They should also have enough room for your feed and equipment. It is important to keep stalls secure, clean, and dry. Besides housing, horses need access to open spaces where they can get daily exercise.

Feed and feeding equipment are important to your horses. You will need hay and grain to feed to your animals. Minerals and vitamins should also be fed for proper growth and development. When feeding hay and grain, use hayracks, pails, or other equipment that stays above the ground. Watering buckets or automatic waterers are also needed. Do not use equipment that allows horses to drink too much water at one time.

Since horses need to be groomed often, it is a good idea to buy high-quality grooming equipment. Equipment for horses is called **tack**. Some items you will need include a hoof pick, a mane and tail comb, a body brush, bathing supplies, and a halter.

A **saddle** is a padded leather seat placed on a horse for the rider to sit on. There are two types of saddles: Western and English. A saddle is not required for riding, but only very experienced riders should attempt bareback riding. A bridle is also needed to ride a horse. A **bridle** is a part of the harness placed on the horse's head for controlling and guiding the horse.

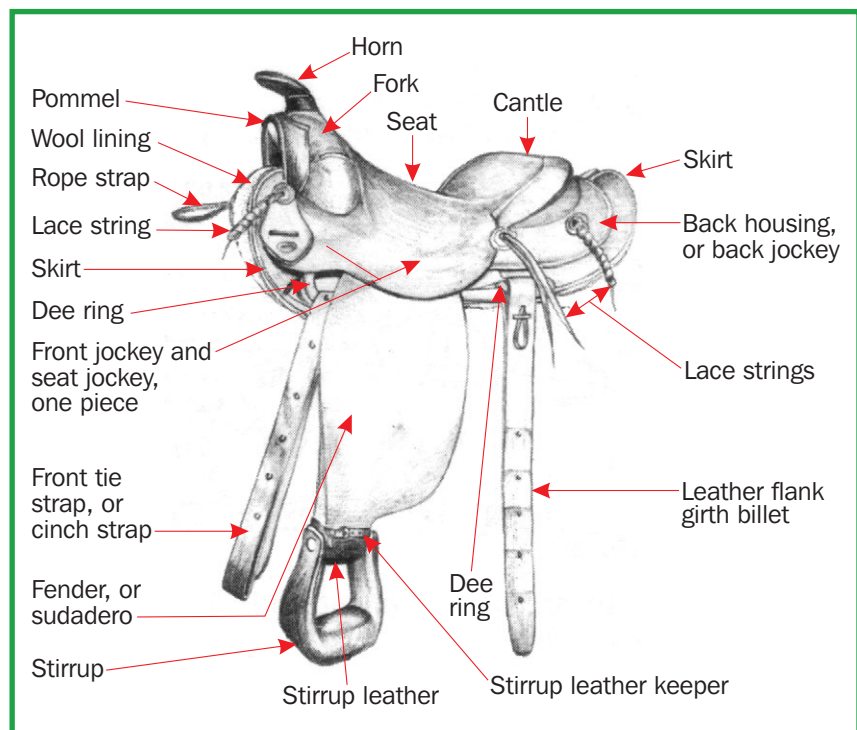


FIGURE 3. Parts of a saddle.

Summary:



Based on size, there are three classes of horses: light horses, ponies, and draft horses. A light horse is used for riding or racing, stands 14.2 to 17 hands tall, and weighs between 900 and 1,400 pounds. A pony is a horse under 14.2 hands tall that weighs between 500 and 900 pounds. A draft horse is used for work, stands 14.2 to 17.2 hands tall, and weighs over 1,400 pounds. Horses are primarily used for companionship, racing, riding, and breeding. The proper equipment, supplies, and facilities are important in providing proper care for horses.

Checking Your Knowledge:



1. Name the three classes of horses.
2. How many inches are in a hand?
3. Approximately how many horses are there in the United States?
4. What are the four primary uses for horses?
5. Horse stalls should be at least how big?

Expanding Your Knowledge:



Visit a local horse farm. View the equipment, supplies, and facilities necessary to provide the proper care of horses.

Web Links:



Horses and Horse Information

<http://www.horses-and-horse-information.com/>

American Quarter Horse Association

<http://www.aqha.com/>

Horse Care, Riding, and Training

<http://www.equisearch.com/>

Agricultural Career Profiles

<http://www.myaert.com/career-profiles>