

2007 Regional Horse Owner Program Evaluation Summary

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In 2007, the University of Minnesota Horse Team offered five Regional Horse Owner Programs around the state. Each program offered specific topics identified for that region by a committee of local horse experts and enthusiasts. Speakers for these programs include University of Minnesota faculty and staff as well as local veterinarians and horse professionals. The objective of these programs was to increase knowledge of horse owners and improve the quality of care for horses and their habitat in Minnesota. Participants were charged a \$35 fee to attend. Fifty-five percent of participants indicated the program was very affordable based on the value of the program and materials provided compared to the cost of the program.

Topics presented at the 2006 Regional Horse Owner Programs included: pasture management, trail riding, first aid, dentistry, bits, horse behavior, horse selection, weanling and yearling nutrition, pre-purchase exams, trailer safety, vaccinations and deworming, hay, mare and foal care, hoof care, general nutrition, rehabilitation and complimentary therapies, care of elderly horses, research updates, body condition scoring, metabolic syndrome, saddle fitting, basic care, conformation effects on performance, winter care, when to call a vet, and National Animal Identification System update.

Programs were offered in Crookston, Foley, St. Paul, Rochester, and Cloquet. Five hundred and fifty-nine current or perspective horse owners participated in these programs. Attendance was as follows: Crookston (100), Foley (109), St. Paul (111), Rochester (124) and Cloquet (115). Attendance averaged 112 participants per location. At St. Paul Campus, numerous participants were turned away due to space limitations. Participants attended from 6 states (MN, WI, ND, SD, IA, and MO) and 50 MN Counties. See Figure 1 for Attendee Zip Code Frequency Map.

One hundred percent of participants stated that they were satisfied or very satisfied with the program. Eighty-five percent of participants indicated this program improved their ability to make more informed decisions regarding their horse farming operation. Fifty-eight percent of participants had visited the U of M Horse Website (www.extension.umn.edu/horse) and 28% receive the U of M Monthly electronic newsletter. Thirty-two percent of participants learned of the Programs through the website or newsletter.

On average, participants owned 4.5 horses (1,540 total horses) and 21 acres of pasture (7,888 total pasture acres). Fifty-seven percent of participants were in their 40's or 50's and 79% were female. We did expand our audience this year to include perspective horse owners (6%), equine managers (30%), and younger adults (11% teens and 10% twenties).

Thirty-one percent of participants had attended a U of M Regional Horse Owner Program in the past. Past participants indicated a change in behavior based on the information learned at previous programs. Behavior changes included; 14% improved their 1st aid skills, 13% improved hoof care, 12% made changes to their horses nutrition, 11% improved vaccination and deworming or now rotationally graze their pastures, and 9% improved fly and pest control or buy or grow better horse hay.

Comments on the evaluation included: *“Excellent speakers – great handouts”, “These programs are valuable and I look forward to them each year”, “Exceeded my expectations”, “Every horse owner should attend”, “This program addresses concerns many of us have through a variety of topics”, “I was so excited to learn so much”, “I am a first time horse owner, this was all excellent information with knowledgeable presenters”, “These programs are very informative and bring more awareness to our care of our horses”, and “We need more programs like this”.*

Two concerns listed on the evaluations were: *“repeat session so I can attend more”* and *“longer sessions”*. In the future, we plan to repeat sessions and offer more specific topics so there is adequate time for questions.

The U of M Horse Team is once again planning to offer Regional Programs in February and March of 2008 in Mankato, Morris, St. Paul (2 sessions), and Bemidji (or surrounding areas). Requests for future topics included: horse behavior, fly and pest control, tack fitting, trail riding, hoof care and lameness, poisonous plants, trailer safety, nutrition, breeding and foaling, and dentistry.

Figure 1. ATTENDEE ZIP CODE FREQUENCY MAP

