

Introduction to the Veterinary Profession

VETS30030 / VETS90122



Module 4 - Non-production species

Horses

The Equine Industry in Australia

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Overview

- Importance of the horse industry to Australia
- Veterinarian's role in the horse industry
- Breeds commonly found in Australia
- Equine terminology
- Horse racing in Australia
- Equine sports
- Other uses for horses
- Equine breeding industry
- Challenges to the equine industry



Importance in Australia

- Contribution to the economy
 - \$6.3 billion annually to GDP (\$3.9 billion TB racing)
- 1.2 million horses
 - 400,000 feral horses and donkeys



Industry Sectors

- **Breeding**
- **Racing:** Thoroughbred, Harness (Standardbred), associated gambling, sales
- **Other equestrian sports and competitions**
- **Recreation:** non-monetary value
- **Businesses:** riding schools, trail riding businesses, stock work, police and army horses, horsemeat, trade and quarantine
- **Employment:** trainers, farriers, vets, stable hands, racing stewards
 - Supported industries (feed suppliers, hay growers, pharmaceutical companies, bookmakers, truck drivers, tack makers, clothing industry etc.)

Veterinarian's Role



- Equine Veterinarians Australia
- Specialists, GP equine vets, government/industry (eg racing regulatory bodies), researchers, mixed practitioners
- Source of information for the public- current hot topics include Hendra, welfare in racing
- Huge array of misinformation about horses (lay practitioners, Facebook experts etc)



Thoroughbred

- Selectively bred to race
 - Genetic differences compared to ponies
- Artificial insemination prohibited
- Key breeding areas- Hunter Valley of NSW, Victoria, SE Queensland
- Many go on to have successful careers in other disciplines after racing
 - 12 years



Standardbred

- Trotters and Pacers- harness racing
- Significant industry in Australia
- Some are used for pleasure riding after racing
- Commonly used as embryo recipients for ET



Australian Stock Horse

- Developed in Australia for working livestock
 - Derived from thoroughbred bloodlines with the addition of arabians, quarter horses and other breeds
- Used for a wide variety of disciplines- stock work, showing, campdrafting, pony club, polocrosse, polo
- ‘The breed for every need’



Quarter Horse



- Bred in America for sprint racing (Quarter mile)
- Now used for cattle work (cutting, campdrafting, cow horse), rodeo, western performance, reining, showing, pleasure
- Very popular breed worldwide



Warmblood



- Descriptor for several breeds/types that fit the category of middle weight horses used for performance
- Derived from crossing 'hot blood' horses (TB, Arabians) with 'cold blood' horses (draught breeds)
- Originated in Europe
- Used for Dressage, Eventing, Show Jumping, Showing
- Very popular breed worldwide



Arabian

- One of the oldest breeds of horse in the world
- Distinctive head shape, tail carriage
- Endurance riding, showing and pleasure riding



Other Breeds

- Ponies (Welsh Mountain, Australian Riding, Shetland, Miniature)
- Draught Breeds (Clydesdale, Shire, Percheron)
- Others (Waler, Appaloosa, Gypsy Cob, Icelandic Horses...)



Terminology

- **Stallion**- Entire male horse over 4 years old
- **Colt**- Entire male horse younger than 4 years old
- **Gelding**- Castrated horse
- **Mare**- Female horse over 4 years old
- **Filly**- Female horse younger than 4 years old
- **Rig**- Cryptorchid
- **Yearling**- a horse in its second year
- **Weanling**- a foal after it has been weaned before it becomes a yearling (usually around 6 months)

- Horses birthday: August 1st
- All horses officially change their age on this date
- Except STB's: September 1st



Australian Racing Industry



- Biggest equine industry in Australia
- Flat racing- gallop around a track (usually turf, sand or synthetic)
- Jumps racing- obstacles (jumps) added in at regular intervals
 - Victoria only State
- Racing is the second most popular spectator sport in Australia
- Huge revenue from gambling
- Regulatory bodies in each state- eg Racing Victoria, Racing Queensland
- Strict regulations governing the integrity of the sport



Thoroughbreds- Breeding

- Stud farms range small boutique farms with only a few mares, to large corporate holdings with hundreds of horses
- Live cover
 - Arrowfield; Snitzel \$220,000 cover charge
- Shuttle stallions
- Australian genetics are famous all over the world
- Breeding season- September to January



Thoroughbreds- Weaning

- Approximately 6 months
- Identified with freeze brands
- Parentage verified with a hair DNA test
- Identified with a microchip
 - Must have all of this done before they are brought in to work as a yearling/2yo
- Weanling sales



Thoroughbreds- Yearlings

- Yearling sales are a very important part of the horse breeding calendar
- Several big sales around the country
- Survey radiographs prior to sale to detect any lesions (OCD or similar)
 - Available to potential purchasers
- Horses that are not sold as yearlings may be retained on farm to race
- Most horses are broken in and put in to pre-training before they turn 2yo



Thoroughbreds- Racehorses

- Incentive schemes to encourage 2yo racing (QTIS and similar)
- Most horses are syndicated
- Generally horses are 'worked' every morning for fitness and education, and may be raced every fortnight or even less frequently
- Melbourne Cup: \$6 million
- Everest: \$13 million



Thoroughbreds- Off the Track

- Age limit of racing: 12yo
- Broodmares
- Breeding stallions
- Off the track Thoroughbred initiative



**THE IDEAL
EQUESTRIAN
ATHLETE**



Harness Racing

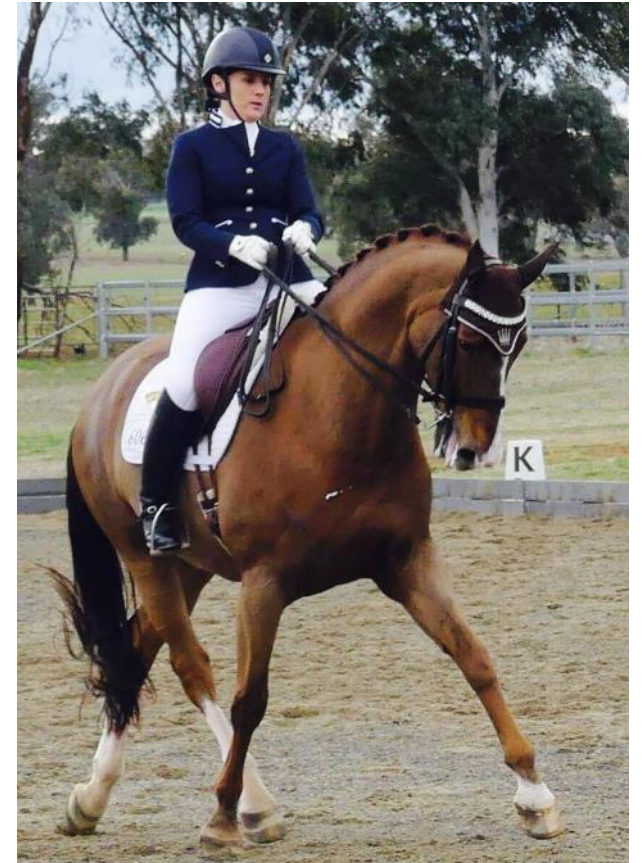


- Pacers- legs move laterally (ie move right front and right hind together)
- Trotters- legs move diagonally (ie move right front and left hind together)
- Horses pull a small cart or 'gig'
- Inter Dominion: \$500,000



Dressage

- Rider must demonstrate complete control through a series of manoeuvres in an arena
- Scored by a judge as a percentage
- Has roots in training horses for war in the middle ages
- Mostly Warmblood horses
- FEI regulating body



Show Jumping

- Series of jumps in allotted period of time
- Scored based on number of jumps cleared and time taken
- Penalties given for refusing or knocking over a jump
- International competition



Cross Country

- Horses must clear a series of obstacles on a large outdoor course within the allotted period of time
 - Badminton: 7km in 11min
- Penalties are given for exceeding the time
- Requires high levels of fitness to clear the course in time
- International competition





Dressage-day 1



Jumping-day 3



Cross country-day 2

Showing

- Shows are held in most towns across the country.
- Royal shows tend to be held in large cities
- Horses are judged on conformation, appearance, behaviour etc
- Ridden or led classes
- Different breed classes



Endurance

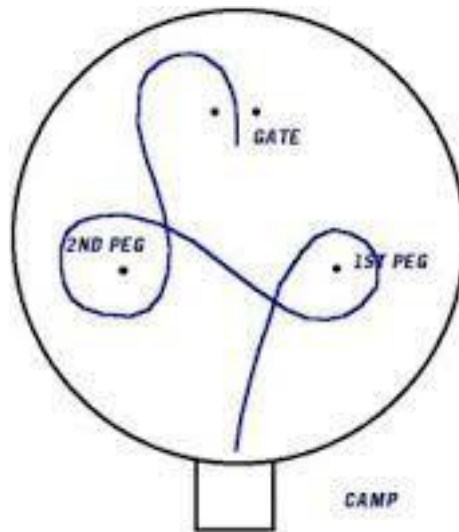
- US cavalry tested horses over 5 day rides for stamina
- 80-400km
- Prizemoney prohibited





Camp-drafting

- Unique Australian sport involving using horses to cut out cattle in a small yard before manoeuvring the beast around a course
- Increasing in popularity in recent years- now held in every Australian state



Rodeo

- Originated on the ranches of North America
- Timed events- calf roping, steer wrestling, barrel racing, team roping
- Roughstock events- saddle bronc, bareback, bull riding
- Codes of practice for welfare of animals



Cutting

- Originated in North America but gaining popularity in Australia
- Riders select one head of cattle from a mob and cut it out
- Judged based on ability of the horse and rider
- Futurity: \$700,000 over 13d event



Polo vs. Polocrosse



Other Equine Uses

- Western sports- reining, western pleasure, team penning
- Pony club
- Adult riding clubs
- Trail riding
- Agricultural use
- Police force
- Horse meat (internationally)
- Many, many more!

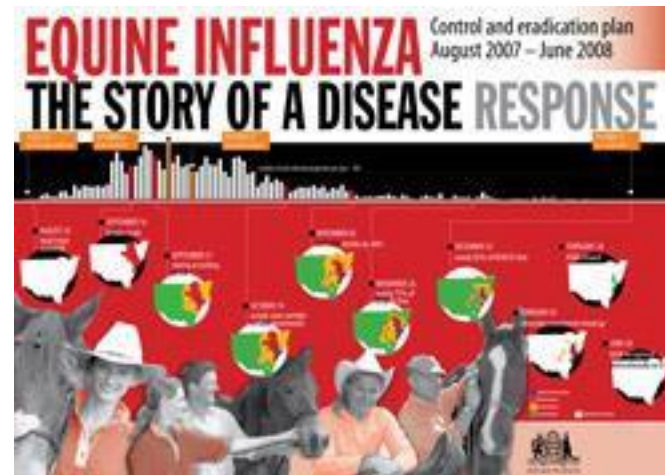


Challenges- Welfare



Other Challenges

- Reduced land for equine pursuits- urban sprawl, national parks
- Risk of exotic disease (Equine Influenza outbreak 2007; Hendra virus)
- The dentistry debate- lay equine dentists vs equine veterinarians



Summary

- **Breeding**
- **Horse breeds**
- **Racing:** Thoroughbred, Harness
- **Other equestrian sports and competitions**
- **Role of the veterinarian**

