

# **Understanding the Impact of Horse Shows and Competitions in Kentucky**

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## **Introduction**

While most think of Thoroughbred racing when they think about Kentucky's horse industry, few understand the incredible scope of the non-racing industry and the numerous industries that surround and support it. The objective of this publication is to help readers gain an understanding of Kentucky's non-racing horse industry, and in this case, specifically that of competitive shows and competitions. In November 2008, a survey was mailed to managers of horse shows held between 2005 and 2008, with assistance from the Kentucky Equine Education Project (K.E.E.P.). This survey provided useful insight into this piece of Kentucky's horse industry and allowed university researchers to develop an understanding of the potential impacts on the state's economy.

To give some feel for how large the study was, a total of 351 surveys were mailed (some contact information for 2005 managers was not available). At least one horse show was held in 80 of Kentucky's 120 counties during those four years, suggesting a wide range of geographical impacts. Responses were received by managers in 40 of those 80 counties (50%), and the overall response rate was 112/351 (32%). It is important to consider the scope of this study and the numerous types of shows and competitions that were considered.

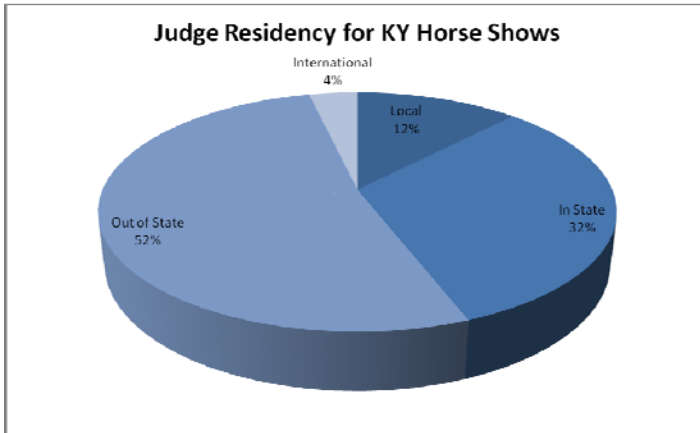
This survey was received by show managers representing different breed and color associations as well as different disciplines. Breed associations represented include Appaloosas, Arabians, Half-Arabians, Miniature Horses, Morabs, Morgans, Mules, Paints, Paso Finos, Quarter Horses, Racking Horses, Rocky Mountain Horses, Saddlebreds, Tennessee Walkers, and Thoroughbreds, while color associations represented include Buckskins, Palominos, and Pintos. Disciplines represented include barrel racing, dressage, driving, endurance, eventing, gaited, horse pulls, hunter/jumper, reining, rodeo, steeplechase, and walking/racking. Information pertaining to the size of the show (measured by number of competitors, number of horses, length of the show, number of judges), the quality of the show (measured by recognition status, residency of judges), whether prize money is distributed, whether it is a benefit or charity show, what sort of paid staff were used, what services were purchased or rented, and whether vendors (local or otherwise) were available on site all provide indications of the impact that a horse show has on its community. These results are summarized below.

## **Size, Quality, and Length of Shows**

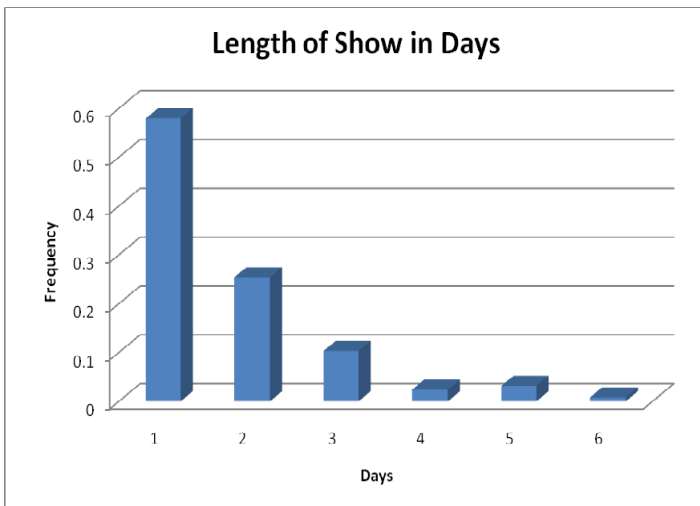
There are many ways to describe the size of a show. Two of the most common are by the numbers of competitors and horses involved. Over 81% of the responding shows involved more than 50 competitors, and almost half involved more than 100. Similarly, about 75% of the responding shows involved more than 50 horses and nearly half involved more than 100. These figures are important because they indicate the number of people who will be relying on local services for themselves and their equids during the show.

Another way to describe shows is by whether they are recognized or not. While it depends on the breed, color, or discipline association, in general, a recognized show must use judges who have been certified by the appropriate governing body, and in some cases, only registered horses can be shown. Recognized shows are perceived to be of higher quality, which means that there is a greater likelihood that competitors will travel further distances for the show. Consequently,

communities can expect a greater economic benefit from these shows. In the sample, 57% of the shows were rated. 43% were restricted-breed shows, while 59% were open (some organizations offer both breed and open classes in the same show). Moreover, 62% of the shows in the sample were targeted to youth competitors (18 and under).



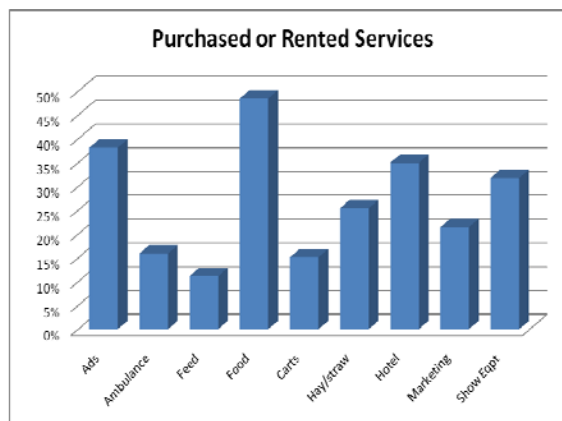
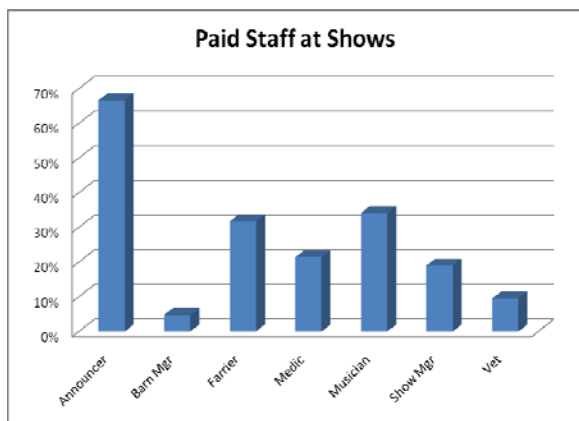
The residency of judges for horse shows is another indicator of the quality of a show. Show managers attempt to get out-of-state judges, and in rare events go international; this can be one indicator of the prestige of a show. The figure to the left shows that over half of the shows surveyed used out of state judges. Local judges were used in only 12% of shows.



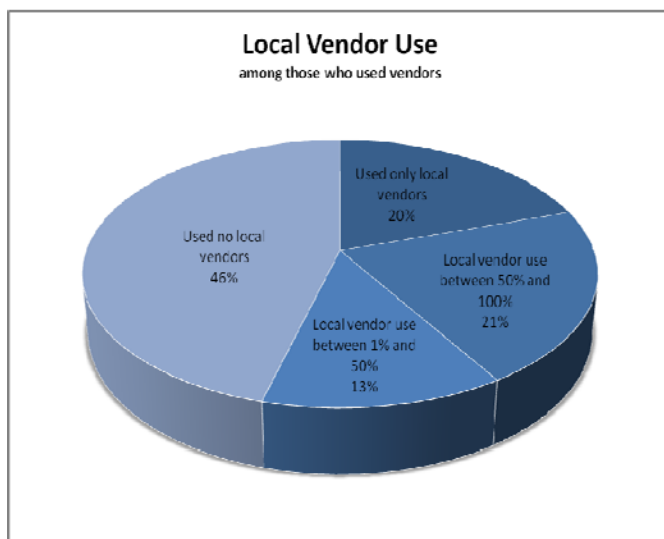
Finally, the length of a show is an important factor when considering its likely impact because it indicates the duration that competitors may rely on the local community for peripheral services. Longer shows require longer stays, which increases the amount of money spent in the local community on meals, lodging, transportation and others services. About 42% of the shows in the survey lasted more than one day, with several lasting even longer. The chart to the left depicts the size of show by the number of days of competition.

### **Paid Staff and Vendors**

In addition to the money spent by participants, there are also significant costs in putting on a show. A horse show requires a very large crew, and it is well known that most of this crew consists of volunteers. However, many shows also hire staff for pay, which creates additional impacts. Around 67% of the shows in the sample paid an announcer to work the show. Additionally, show managers, farriers, medics, and musicians were also commonly hired crew members. Businesses in the local community may also play a role in the horse show. In fact, shows often purchase or rent services from local vendors. In the sample, food service was the most common service that was paid for (48%), followed by advertising (38%), hotel services (35%), and show equipment (32%). The charts below show common staff and services utilized by horse show managers.



The need for these types of services creates an opportunity for vendors to showcase their products and/or services to show participants and visitors. This represents another opportunity



for local businesses to benefit from the horse show in their communities, and many of the horse show managers indicated that they used local services where they were available.

According to the survey, 68% of the shows in the sample had an area where vendors could set up displays. Of those shows with vendors, 20% used only local vendors, 21% had more than half local vendors, 13% used less than half local vendors, and 46% of the shows used no local vendors at all (see chart to the left).

### Fees, prize money, and charity involvement

While not always the major motivation, clearly there are impacts and incentives that result from entry fees and prize money for participants. Nearly 100% of the shows charged entry fees; these fees consisted of gate fees, per class or per horse fees, or some combination thereof. Furthermore, 81% of the shows in the sample distributed some sort of prize money; these monies were funded by sponsors (85%), entry fees (72%), and other sources (36%). For those surveys which listed a total amount of prize monies distributed, the average was \$10,398.68, with a median of \$3,987.50. Also, note that this does not include ribbons, trophies, buckles, or saddles, which are often given as prizes.

Another interesting result was that 34% of the shows in the survey donated some amount of money to a charity or was some other sort of benefit show. On average, these shows donated \$7,086.83 to charity, with a median of \$1,626.50 and a maximum of \$42,000. This is a positive impact that is often overlooked by many outsiders.

## **Summary**

The non-racing horse industry is often overlooked when considering economic impacts of the equine industry, but in reality, this is very large segment of the industry that provides a wide range of economic benefits to the state through breeding, nutrition, boarding, training, and health services, as well as through peripheral services such as meal lodging, and transportation services. This particular study outlined additional impacts coming from the shows themselves, many of which accrue directly to the local communities hosting the shows. While putting a dollar amount on this impact requires further examination and research, which is currently in progress, it is clear that the impact is quite significant, and explains why many communities have worked to create inviting venues to attract these types of shows and competitions.

## **Acknowledgments**

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