

Analysis of wastage in the Standardbred industry from pregnancy confirmation to 5 years of age – a pilot study.

“Wastage” in the horse industry has been used to describe losses that occur at all stages of development of horses, including mares failing to conceive, abortion, foal deaths, deaths in weanlings and yearlings and in young horses prior to training, and injuries associated with training, competing and racing. Such losses can be described as having both a financial as well as an emotional impact. The purpose of our study is to use information from a large Standardbred stud on the outcome of pregnancies in approximately 400 mares beginning at the time of a 14 day positive scan through to 5 years of age. From the records available, we will obtain information on losses during pregnancy between day 14 and 36 and day 36 and term, as well as losses at birth due to still birth, and deaths in the first week of life, and during the first year. The information to this point is readily accessed from the stud and veterinary records from the 2002/2003 season. Although more difficult to obtain, we then hope to show whether yearlings have been or are at trainers, have died (accidentally or planned), sold, injured, castrated etc. Similarly, for the 2 to 5 year old horses, we hope to ascertain the outcome for each of the original pregnancies investigated. The amount of detail will depend on owners’ records and accessibility, but the specific mare selection should facilitate this.

Potential benefits from identifying when and in what form the losses occur include

- (i) providing direction for future research
- (ii) providing information for future changes in management, and
- (iii) providing an insight into the economic effect of these losses.

It is anticipated that the study will show the feasibility of obtaining this information on a larger scale and is therefore regarded as a pilot study. Sarah Jane Vincent, a veterinary science student at Massey University, will retrieve, collate and analyse the data collected during the 10 week summer recess.

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