
British Horse Industry Confederation

BHIC Briefing – Size and Scope of the Equine Sector

Introduction

The equestrian industry is diverse and gathering accurate information has been challenging. However the industry has been concentrating effort in this area over the last 10 years and we can now draw on several sources of increasingly reliable data:

1. The National Equestrian Survey that the British Equestrian Trade Association (BETA) conducts every 4-5 years to profile the size and shape of primarily the horse riding part of the industry. This was last published in 2005/06 and an update is due shortly.
2. The British Horseracing Authority's Economic Impact of British Racing completed by Deloitte in September 2009.
3. The National Equine Database (NED), launched in November 2008
4. The PhD being undertaken by Georgina Crossman "Comparative Analysis of the Equine Sectors of several European countries"
5. Sport England Active People Survey
6. www.befred.org - BEF's researching equines database
7. www.bhs.org.uk Equine Stats section

The equestrian industry, combining horse racing, leisure and competitive riding makes a multi billion pound contribution to the British economy. Primarily rural based, but with significant pockets of urban activity, our diverse industry includes large scale commercial activities such as racing, equestrian events of international standing and companies marketing iconic brands. At the other end of the scale however it also encompasses thousands of small businesses and millions of individual participants whose impact is expenditure of taxed income for this leisure activity.

Horse Riding

The popularity of riding and keeping horses continues to grow with over 7% of the population riding per annum. We estimate that there are 4.3 million riders in Great Britain, with over 2 million of these riding at least once a month. This makes riding a horse more popular than any of cricket, rugby or fishing. The largest group of riders are aged between 25 – 44, closely followed by those aged under 16 with the split between urban and rural riders themselves being 50:50 although the activity is overwhelmingly rural based. A quarter of horse riders earn less than £10,000 per year – so horse riding impacts on all sectors of the community.

Economic Value of the equestrian sector: Excluding racing, the total expenditure within the equestrian industry is approx £4.3 billion pa. This includes direct spend on keeping horses, riding lessons plus the value of indirect expenditure on associated products by and for rider. These figures do not include the expenditure in areas such as equestrian events, for which the leading British three day events alone handle, combined, in excess of £6million in turnover annually. Much of this expenditure is of taxed income for this leisure activity, but excluding indirect rider expenditure, paid help, capital expenditure and transportation and the value of riding lessons total expenditure within this part of the equestrian industry would be around £2.6 billion pa

Employment: There are an estimated 19,000 businesses active in the equestrian sector offering services to the sector, including riding schools (1800 licences by local authorities), farriers (2400 registered), livery yards and trainers. These businesses provide over 28,000 full time jobs.

Within the equestrian trade (retailers, manufacturers and wholesalers of equestrian supplies) there are nearly 5000 businesses providing over 20,000 direct full time jobs. A significant proportion of businesses are rural based. In all, over a quarter of a million people are either directly or indirectly employed in the equestrian sector.

Land use: Over 500,000 hectares are dedicated to maintaining and producing horses.

Horseracing

One of Britain's most prestigious sports, racing is the second most popular spectator sport in the country after football, with around 6m racegoers a year. There are approximately 1,500 race meetings held annually at Britain's 60 racecourses, with over 90,000 runners competing in some 9,000 races.

Horses involved: There are over 15,000 horses in training and over 18,000 registered individual owners, with thousands more involved in partnerships and ownership clubs.

Economic impact: The economic impact of racing is at least £3.7billion a year. This includes around £1 billion of expenditure by the core racing industry (trainers, breeders, and related costs), £200m off course expenditure of taxed income by race goers and over £2 billion of secondary business to business and consumer expenditure.

Their activity generates around £325m in taxation revenue for Government, and at least £10 billion is bet on races each year, with bookmakers generating a gross win in excess £1billion in profit from the sport. In addition £700m of capital investment (covering racecourses as well as trainer's facilities, sales houses etc) has been made in the sport in the 5 years to 2008.

Employment: Racing provides 20,000 direct full time jobs and supports a further 70,000 indirect full-time jobs.

Combined totals for Horseracing and Riding

Economic impact: There is a direct, core expenditure of at least £5billion. Including secondary expenditure brings the total economic impact to over £7billion. In terms of total revenue, this positions equestrianism above forestry and much closer to farming than is the common perception. Sector output, being direct income generation from horse businesses, would be around £3.5 billion.

Employment: The equestrian sector is the largest sporting employer in the country. The core industry employment by racing and riding combined is around 70 000 FTE. Including indirect employment the total reaches between 220 – 270 000 people thus equalling, if not exceeding those employed by farming. Whilst revenues from many other rural industries have fallen, the equestrian industry has continued to grow and develop, and play an increasingly significant role in the social and economic health both of rural society and the economy.

How many horses are there, how many are foaled every year and where are they?

Horse Population: It is estimated there are 1 million horses and ponies kept by over 550,000 horse owners or primary carers. There have been 1.36million passport records supplied to NED. Some of these will almost certainly be duplicates. This means that an owner, on average, owns 1.8 horses. This is a best estimate because not every horse has a passport, some horses with passports will have died but this information is not reliably provided to NED, and NED does not contain details of all horses resident in the UK with valid passports from other EU member states.

65% of owners own one equine
15% of owners own 2 equines
12% of owners own 3-5 equines
4% of owners own 6-10 equines
2.2% of owners own 11-20 equines
< 1% of owners own 21-30 equines
< 1% of owners own 30+ equines

There are 17 horses per 1000 people
There are 4.3 horses for every 1km²
49,000 horses with a birth date of 2008 were issued with passports in 2008
Equine owner density has a specific geographical distribution -see equine owner distribution map