

South Carolina Department of Agriculture . . .

Hugh E. Weathers
Commissioner

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
January 19, 2006

SC Equine Count in Census

COLUMBIA, SC – Hugh Weathers, Commissioner of Agriculture, announces the preliminary results of the first comprehensive equine survey in 25 years.

According to the census, 84,300 equine resided in South Carolina as of December 31, 2004. Based upon survey results, this represents an increase of 28 percent from the last survey inventory of 66,000 in 1979. Quarter Horses (27,400) accounted for the largest portion (32.5 %) of the total inventory followed by Paints/Pintos (7,500 - 8.9%), Tennessee Walkers (7,400 - 8.8%) and Thoroughbreds (7,100 - 8.4%). Ponies totaled 3,600, Donkeys 3,400, Grade Horses 3,300, Appaloosas 3,200 Arabians 3,000, Miniature Horses 2,600, and Saddlebreds 2,000. The estimated value of the state's 84,300 equine was \$332 million.

Total expenses of \$402 million were incurred in 2004 by places with resident equine, equine owners who boarded their animals, and individuals with equine expenses but no equine owned or boarded on December 31, 2004. Total sales of equine in 2004 registered \$30 million and an additional \$46 million in income was received from boarding fees, breeding fees, training, lessons, etc. With 2004 equine expenses and income measured at \$478 million, equine owners are extremely important to the South Carolina economy.

In addition to the dollars generated by the equine industry, owners and animals improve our quality of life in many other ways. Some examples are equine assisted therapy in the treatment of sexual abuse victims, law enforcement, equine rescue and rehabilitation, guard animals for other livestock such as cattle and goats, and teaching responsibility and work ethic to youth. One survey respondent was undoubtedly representative of many equine owners by the following comment: "We have one 20+ year old horse whose primary job is a 1,000 pound lawn ornament. It's just an old horse that no one but our family wanted and we love her very much."

The top ten counties based on equine inventory at the time of the survey were: 1) **Aiken-6,500**, 2) Anderson-6,000, 3) Spartanburg-4,600, 4) Greenville-4,600, 5) Lexington-4,400, 6) Kershaw-3,900, 7) York-3,700, 8) Laurens-3,400, 9) Horry-3,000, and 10) Pickens-2,700.

The South Carolina Department of Agriculture was the primary sponsor of the census which was conducted by the South Carolina Agricultural Statistics office of NASS, USDA. The South Carolina Horsemen's Council and the South Carolina Farm Bureau also provided assistance. Data was collected on inventory by breed, inventory by primary use, value of equine sold, number of workers employed in the industry, and expenses for labor, supplies, equipment, land and buildings.

For more information about South Carolina's equine industry, call Mary Ellen Tobias, Equine Marketing Specialist, 803-734-2349. For additional state and county level statistics visit <http://www.nass.usda.gov/sc>. At the site, click on **2004 Equine Survey Results**.