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Characterization of the Prevalence And Management of Over-Conditioned Ponies  
And Horses In Maryland

Aubrey L. Jaqueth, Marie E. Iwaniuk, Amy O. Burk

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1 CHARACTERIZATION OF THE PREVALENCE AND MANAGEMENT OF OVER-  
2 CONDITIONED PONIES AND HORSES IN MARYLAND

3  
4 Aubrey L. Jaqueth, Marie E. Iwaniuk, Amy O. Burk\*  
5 The University of Maryland  
6 Department of Animal and Avian Sciences  
7 8127 Regents Drive  
8 College Park, MD 20742  
9

10 **Abstract**

11 It has been estimated in the U.S. and abroad that 20-51% of the equine population  
12 suffers from over-conditioning or obesity. The objective of this study was to evaluate the  
13 prevalence of over-conditioning in the equine population in Maryland, characterize  
14 weight control measures used, and to ascertain how control measures impact the  
15 operation. Over-conditioning was defined as a body condition score of 4 or 5 on a 5-point  
16 scale. All licensed horse operators in Maryland were invited to participate in an online  
17 survey. A total of 93 farm operators completed the survey with 238 ponies and 1,290  
18 horses represented. Nearly all operators (96%) indicated they managed at least one obese  
19 pony or horse and that 41% of their ponies (n=97) and 40% of their horses (n=512) were  
20 over-conditioned. Over-conditioned ponies had a higher incidence of laminitis and were  
21 more heavily managed. Dry lots were the most common management practice used for  
22 ponies even though they were time reported to be more consuming and required more  
23 maintenance than pasturing horses. Participants were most satisfied with using exercise  
24 for weight control followed by dry lots and least satisfied with using grazing muzzles and  
25 administering medication. Operators spent an average of  $\$434.18 \pm \$15.19$  more each  
26 year to manage their over-conditioned equids. In conclusion, a significant portion of  
27 Maryland's horses and ponies are over-conditioned with laminitis occurring more  
28 frequently in over-conditioned ponies. Additional or alternative measures to prevent

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