

National Animal Health Monitoring System (NAHMS)

Equine 2026 Study – Abbreviated Interviewer’s Manual

Background:

NAHMS is a statistical unit within the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), an agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. NAHMS primary purpose is to design and conduct studies in collaboration with agricultural animal industry to benefit animal health. Participation in any NAHMS study is 100% voluntary and confidential. The NAHMS Equine 2026 study focuses on equine health and management practices used on equine operations. Information collected will allow NAHMS to evaluate the health and management of equids in the U.S. at the national and regional levels.

Study Objectives:

- Describe trends in equine care, health management and disease occurrence over time based on data from 1998, 2005, 2015 and 2026.
- Describe biosecurity and health management strategies related to the control of important equine infectious diseases on farms.
- Describe use of equine veterinary services and equine owner perceptions about availability of veterinary services for equids.
- Describe issues surrounding equids that are at-risk (an equid that has an increased possibility of experiencing neglect, abuse or poor welfare), and/or in transition (transitioning from one home, vocation, opportunity or owner to the next).
- Describe owner preparedness for emergencies and natural disasters affecting equids.
- Describe biosecurity and health management strategies related to the control of important equine infectious diseases at equine events and estimate the prevalence of equine respiratory disease pathogens from environmental samples at equine events.

Study Details:

- Equine owners may complete the survey on their own (paper or web) or may complete it with enumerator assistance in a telephone or in-person interview.
- Interviews are estimated to take an average of 65 minutes to complete.
- Survey administration begins August 1, 2026. Phone calls will start in September 2026.
- All questionnaire information will be treated as confidential in accordance with the Confidential Information Protection and Statistical Efficiency Act (CIPSEA).

RESOURCES

NAHMS recommends having the questionnaire (GEHMQ), product reference sheet, flyer, full interviewer’s manual, and this ABBREVIATED MANUAL available for reference during the interview.

The first 3 items listed above as well as other study promotional materials are available on the NAHMS website:

<https://www.aphis.usda.gov/livestock-poultry-disease/nahms/equine>



Definitions:

These terms are used throughout the General Equine Health and Management Questionnaire (GEHMQ) survey. Please see the full interviewer's manual for additional definitions.

Equines or Equids: The GEHMQ primarily uses the term equines and indicates that the term refers to horses, miniature horses, ponies, donkeys, burros, and mules. For the purposes of this study, equines and equids can be used interchangeably. Both terms may be used to refer to a wild or domestic animal that belongs to the family Equidae.

The kinds of equines listed in the GEHMQ instructions are the most common and thus these kinds are also used as categories for questions in the inventory section (Section A Item 2). If respondents indicate that they have other kinds of equines, please encourage them to report them as “other resident equines” in that question. Please help ensure that they also “specify” what those resident equines are with terms they feel adequately describe them. Some examples of equines that respondents may consider to be “other” include hinnies, zebras, and offspring from zebra-donkey crosses known as zdonks.

Resident equines: For the purpose of this study, a resident equine is one that has spent or is expected to spend more time at this operation than at any other operation throughout the year regardless of ownership. In other words, this operation may be considered the animals’ “home base”.

Reasons to Participate:

The best data for guiding equine health and management come from equine owners themselves. By participating, respondents contribute to nationally representative information that benefits both their own operations and the broader equine industry.

Results from the study will generate reports and information sheets that:

- Help owners compare their management practices with others across the industry.
- Provide national, regional, and operation-size summaries on key management and health issues.

This study will strengthen understanding of equine health and management nationwide and gives industry groups, extension services, and veterinary organizations the information needed to guide education efforts, research and development, and improve equine health and welfare across the United States.

Study Focus:

The target population is equine operations with 5 or more equines. However, any respondent with at least 1 equine is eligible to complete the questionnaire. The study includes all 50 states. Many questions refer to **resident equines**, but some refer to **new residents** and **non-residents**. Most questions refer to the time period from August 1, 2025, through July 31, 2026; however, some questions refer to a different time frame while others do not specify a time frame.

When asking questions, be sure to emphasize which group of equines and the time frame being referenced so that these are clear to the respondent
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Screeners Question:

Question 3 at start of survey – Screener for any resident equines on August 1, 2026.

This question should be answered by all respondents.

If the respondent had any resident equines on August 1, 2026, mark “Yes” as the response to Question 3 at the start of the survey and continue the survey.

Note: The resident equines *do not* need to be present on the operation on August 1, 2026. Example: The operation has 6 horses that are considered **resident equines** because they spend the majority of their time at this operation during the year. However, all 6 horses are away from the operation to attend a horse show on August 1. These equines are still considered **resident equines**. Mark “Yes” for Question 3 and continue the survey. (Please see definition of resident equines above in Definitions section.)

If the respondent did not have any resident equines on August 1, 2026, mark “No” for Question 3 and skip to Section H, the Office Use section on page 20.

Please complete section H (Office Use section) for all operations. The information provided here helps NAHMS account for the study sample, describe response rates, and assist with future study planning.

