History of the Horse

Equine Science & Technology
History of the Horse

Class  *Mammalia*: Mammals, or warm-blooded, hairy animals that produce their young alive and suckle them for a variable period on a secretion from the mammary glands.

Order  *Perissodactyla*: Nonruminant hooved mammals, usually with an odd number of toes. The third digit is the largest and in line with the axis of the limb. This order includes the horse, the tapir, and the rhinoceros.
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**Family Equidae**: The members of the horse family may be distinguished from the other existing perrisodactyla (rhinoceros and tapir) by their comparatively more slender and agile build.

**Genus Equus**: This includes horses, asses, and zebras.
Species *caballus*: The horse is distinguished from asses and zebras by the longer hair of the mane and tail, by the presence of the “chestnut” on the inside of the legs and by other less constant characters, such as large size, larger hooves, more arched neck, smaller head, and shorter ears. One predecessor of the modern horse was the *Eohippus* which was very small and had four toes on each front foot.
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Origin and Domestication of the donkey

- Donkeys were first domesticated in Egypt, where they served people from earliest times.
- The donkey (*Equus asinus*) is commonly used in America in the production of mules.
- A **mule** is the infertile offspring resulting from the mating of a horse and a donkey.
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The first role of the horse with human was as a source of food.

- During the Paleolithic Age horses were hunted.
- Earliest records date back to some 25,000 years ago.
- Toward the end of the New Stone Age it is believed that mares were milked for human food – a practice still followed in certain parts of the world.
- The use of horses for meat persists in many parts of the world, including France, Belgium, and Switzerland.
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Horses in the military

- 1500 B.C. Pharaoh pursued the Israelites to the Red Sea using chariots and horses.
- Horses were used both as cavalry and to draw vehicles.
- During the glamorous days of the knights-in-armor, horses of size, strength, and endurance were essential.
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Horses used in sport

- As early as 1450 B.C. the Greeks introduced the horse in the Olympic games, in both chariot and horse races.
- Most of the chariots were low, two-wheeled, narrow-track vehicles.
- Also still used in horse racing, horse jumping, and rodeo.
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*Horses used for agriculture*

- Their use in pulling loads and tilling the soil is a comparatively recent development.
- There is no evidence to indicate that the horse was used in Europe to draw the plow prior to the 10th century.
- Oxen remained the common plow animal in England until the end of the 18th century.
The horse’s origin and domestication are clouded in more obscurity than its evolutionary development.

- The early use of horses transformed travel, warfare, economics, culture, social organizations, political boundaries, and languages.
- The wild Mustang is believed to be related to the horses brought back by the Spanish conquistadors (explorers who used horses).
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There are two recent theories of thought relative to the time and place of the first domestication of horses.

- The first theory of thought based on archaeological discovery reported in 1991, places the earliest domestication and use of the horse at 4000 B.C. in the Ukrainian steppes (a treeless, level prairie).

- The second theory of thought credits the Scythian nomads of Central Asia as being the first to domesticate and use horses in the 7th century B.C.
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*Historical trends of human utilization of horses.*

- Columbus first brought horses to the West Indies on his second voyage in 1493.
- 500 years ago in North America, horses once roamed and were returned with the Spanish.
- Cortez brought Spanish horses with him to the New World in 1519 when he landed in Mexico.
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*Historical trends of human utilization of horses.*

- Horses were first brought directly to what is now the Unites States by de Soto in the year 1539.
- Later, animals of both light and draft horse breeding were introduced from Europe by the colonists.
- George Washington maintained an extensive horse and mule-breeding establishment at Mount Vernon.
- In 1861, the Pony Express carried mail from St. Joseph, Missouri to Placerville, California.
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Historical trends of human utilization of horses.

- The top three leading horse countries in the world by rank are: China, United States, and Mexico.
- The development of manufacturing and commerce was responsible for both the rise and fall of the horse industry of the United States.
- Early growth of the American industry created a large need for horses to transport raw manufactured goods.
- With the invention of the tractor and the truck, the horse was replaced.
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*Historical trends of human utilization of horses.*

- There are currently 5 to 10 million horses in the U.S.
- In the past 100 years the number of horses in the U.S. has dropped.
- The horse industry provides goods and services valued at 25.3 billion dollars.
- The industry directly provides 338,500 full time jobs.
- Currently, one of the major uses of horses in the United States is ranching.
How many horses are there in Utah alone?
75,000 horses in Utah according to USDA in 1998.