Evaluation of Equine Owner and Manager Awareness of Nutrient Management and Conservation Techniques on Small Farms.

With over 9 million horses in the United States, horses and related domestic equines have a large presence over the landscape. Florida ranks 3rd behind Texas and California in terms of the number of horses in the state. There are various outreach programs geared towards small farms. This study was undertaken to better understand the current level of knowledge and awareness of the equestrian community. A survey was presented to 156 people who either owned and/or managed a barn. The respondents owned an average of 9.38 horses per person on an average of 18.4 acres of pasture. These were primarily pleasure riders/drivers with 52% also involved in some other type of agriculture. Many of the respondents (63%) did not think soil erosion was an issue on their farms. 24% of the people surveyed had never heard of any federal, state, County, or University related conservation/outreach programs, and another 49% had heard of at least one agency/organization but had never spoken to anyone from any of these agencies/organizations. Over ¾ of the respondents had never done any soil testing of their pasture nor applied any fertilizers. However, over half do practice rotational grazing, and just over half (54%) compost their manure. Of the respondents who don't compost, 90% were aware of what composting is. We hope this survey will help guide efforts to present more information to equestrians relating to nutrient management and conservation techniques.

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