

Idaho Equine Knowledge Assessment

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Educators presenting at equine education events

Introduction

Horses play an important role in Idaho's agricultural, recreational, and youth communities. The 2020 Idaho Equine Census reported 156,591 horses statewide, highlighting the size of the industry.

Despite this presence, equine-focused Extension programming in Idaho has historically been limited. To better understand educational needs, Extension educators conducted an assessment to evaluate horse owner knowledge and identify priority topics for future programming.

Objectives

- Assess current equine knowledge levels among Idaho horse owners and parents of youth in Horse 4-H programs.
- Identify knowledge gaps related to horse health, nutrition, and management.
- Use survey results to guide development of Extension equine education programs for Idaho communities.

Methods

A **25-question assessment** was developed using Qualtrics to evaluate knowledge of key horse management topics including:

- Equine health and vaccination schedules
- Nutrition and feeding practices
- Hoof and dental care
- Training and safe horse handling

The assessment targeted two primary groups:

- Adult horse owners (18+)
- Parents of youth participating in Horse 4-H programs

These groups were divided by self-reported experience level, while survey invitations were distributed through:

- University of Idaho Extension email lists
- Social media platforms
- 4-H club leaders
- In-person equine events

The assessment was available May–September 2025.

A total of 140 responses were analyzed.

Responses were scored to determine knowledge levels by participant group, and open-ended responses were coded to identify educational themes and program needs.

Results Key Findings

- Parents of 4-H members and new owners had the lowest scores, indicating significant knowledge gaps.
- Even experienced owners scored just above 50%, suggesting opportunities for continuing education.
- Respondents showed stronger knowledge in hoof and dental care.

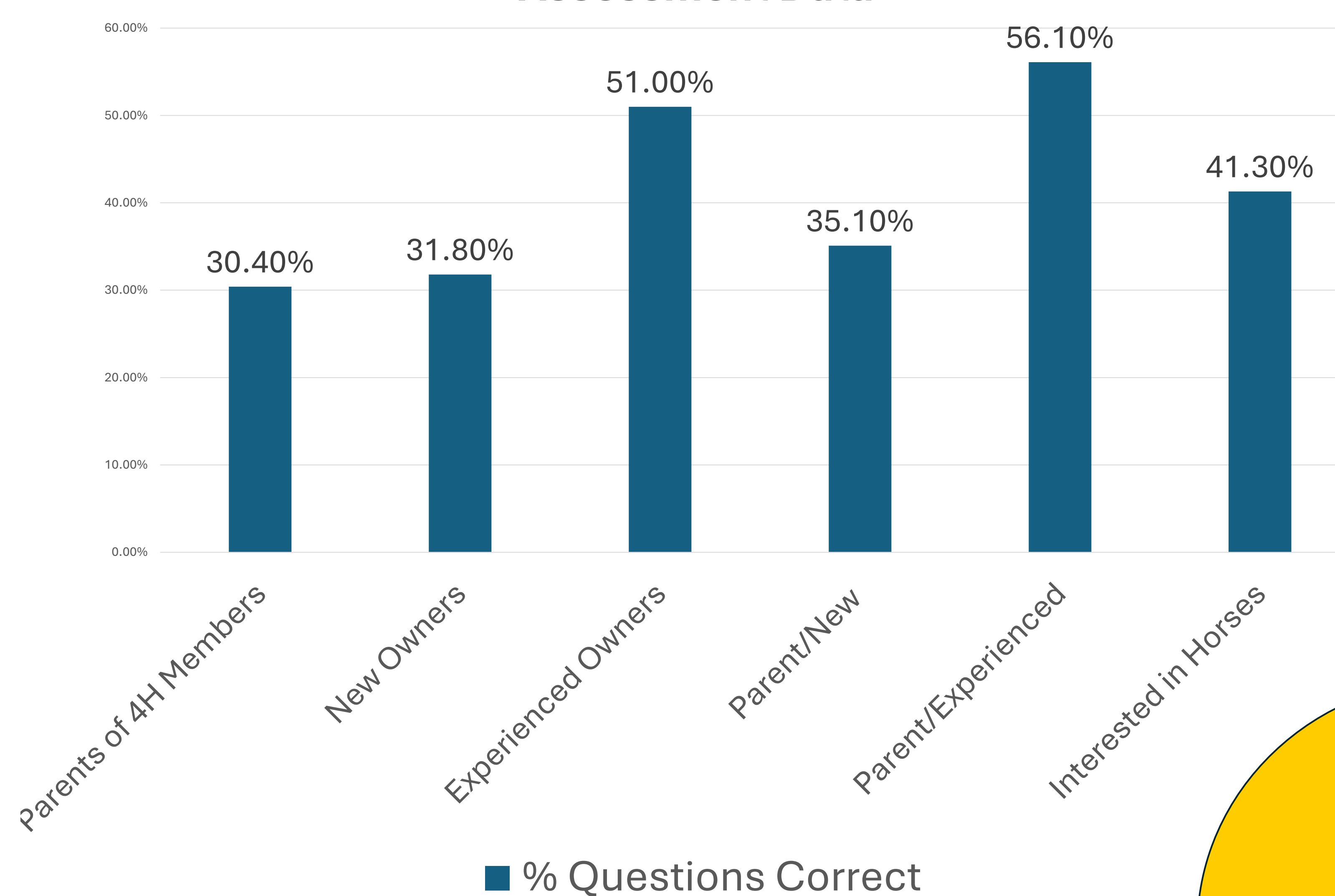
The most frequently missed topics were:

- Equine health care
- Horse-specific nutrition
- Safe horse handling and behavior

Open-ended responses also highlighted strong interest in learning about:

- Horse first aid
- Feeding programs
- Lameness and conformation
- Performance horse longevity

Assessment Data



Reported Program Impact

100%
Participants
gained new
knowledge

100%
Program
Satisfaction

Up to
\$1,000
Economic
Benefit



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Summary/Conclusions

Assessment results identified knowledge gaps in equine health, nutrition, and handling among Idaho horse owners and 4-H families, particularly among new owners and parents of youth participants. These findings highlight the need for research-based equine education in Idaho. In response, University of Idaho Extension has begun offering equine education courses for community members and 4-H families, focusing on horse health, nutrition, safe handling, and management practices through hands-on workshops and clinics.