

# Crib-biting health survey – preliminary results for study participants



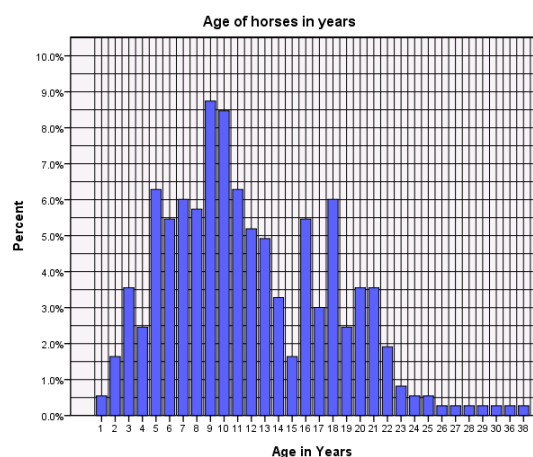
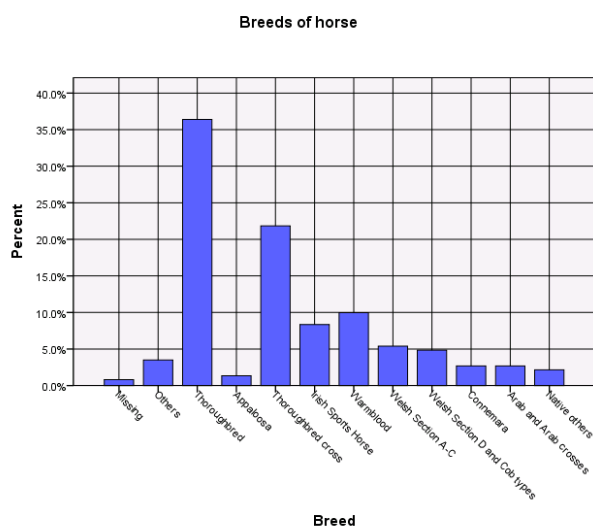
*We are very grateful to everyone who participated in this study. We collected a large amount of data and due to such a good response rate, it has taken some time to get the data analysed. Below is a summary of the initial data analysis – more in depth analysis of the management factors is ongoing at present and we will contact you again at the start of 2012 with the final study findings. If you have any queries or questions in the meantime, please do not hesitate to contact the study team at: [cribbing@liv.ac.uk](mailto:cribbing@liv.ac.uk).*

## How many completed questionnaires did we receive?

Completed surveys on 371 horses were returned from 550 questionnaires that were posted out – this was an excellent response rate of 67% (which is much higher than many similar surveys).

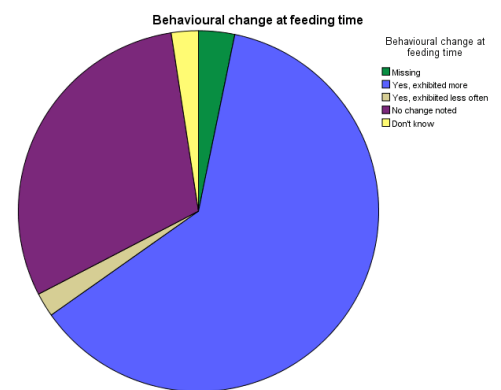
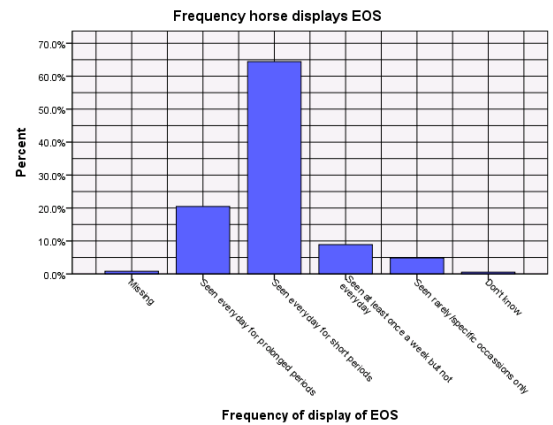
## What breeds were represented?

As you can see from the graphs below, Thoroughbred (36%) and Thoroughbred crosses (22%) were the most frequent breeds in this study and 15.5% of the thoroughbreds had come from a racing background. Most of the horses were geldings, accounting for 68% of the study population (252 horses); 30% were mares or fillies and 2% were stallions or colts. The age of horses ranged from under a year to 38 years. Most (81%) were horses (14.3hh and above) and 14% were ponies (under 14.2hh). The most common activities performed by horses under study were general riding (228 horses; 61%) and dressage (133 horses; 35%).



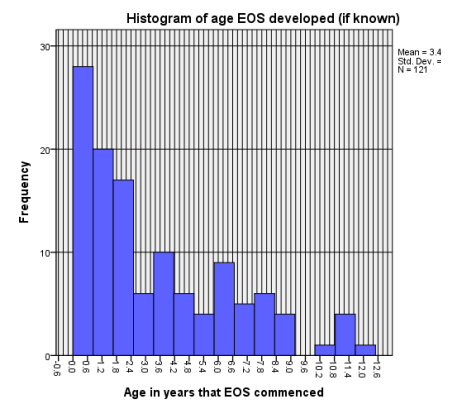
## General crib-biting and windsucking patterns

Most (64%) of you reported that your horse(s) displayed crib-biting or windsucking behaviour (equine oral stereotypic behaviour; EOS) daily and for short periods. 76 (20%) horses were reported to crib bite with greater severity (daily and for prolonged periods). 351 (94%) and 290 (78%) horses displayed oral stereotypies in the stable and field respectively. Other locations or scenarios when this behaviour was seen included being tied up (34; 9%) and during transport (50; 13.5%). A number of horses (143) also performed other stereotypic behaviours such as wood chewing, box walking, weaving and a few other more bizarre behaviours (17%, 9%, 7%, 3% of the study population respectively). Most (62%) of you believed that displays of oral stereotypy increased at feeding time and that these behaviours were most commonly seen during or after concentrate feeds (156 horses, 42%). 142 (39%) of horses were also seen to increase displays of stereotypy before, during or after feeds.



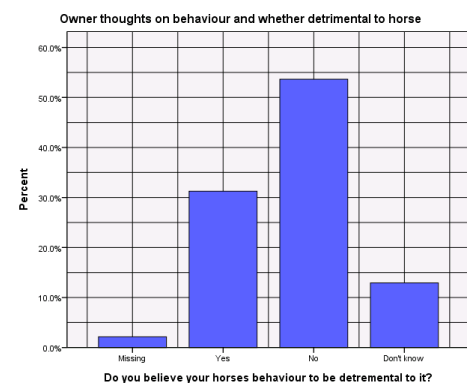
## When did this behaviour start?

121 horses had owners who knew the age at which the behaviour started. This ranged from one month of age to 12 years. The average age crib-biting / windsucking started at was 3.4 years and 43% of the study population commenced EOS behaviour at two years of age or under (10% of the 121 horses started displaying the behaviour at six months of age). Almost 20% of horses started showing the behaviour after six years of age.

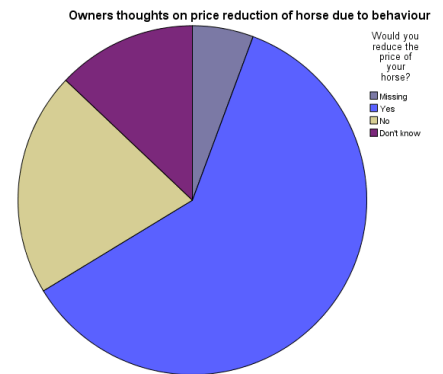


## Effects of crib-biting / windsucking on health, performance and value

Some of you (31%) felt that crib-biting and windsucking behaviour was detrimental to your horses health and 53% (73) of respondents whose horse had suffered from colic previously believed that their horses behaviour made it more prone to suffering colic. The most common source of information where owners sought behavioural advice from was their vet (almost 60%).

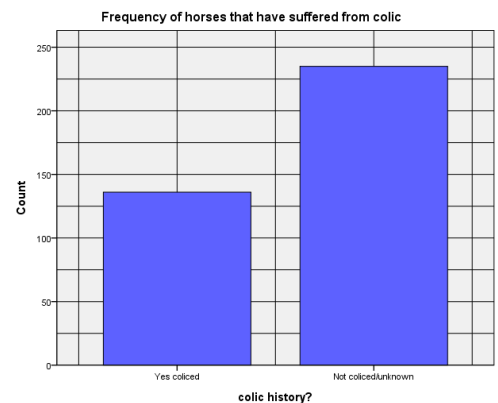


Very few of you (27; 7%) believed that this behaviour affected your horse's performance. 94 owners (25%) stated that their horse's oral stereotypy affected the price they were willing to pay for it. However, a greater number of owners (60%) would reduce the price of their horse should they sell it. Of these 225 owners, 169 stated a percentage reduction that they were willing to apply to their horse due to its behavioural traits; 96% of these owners would reduce the price of their horse from between 10-50%. The most frequent percentage reductions in horse price was 10%, (22% of respondents), 20% (21 % of respondents), 25% (16% of respondents) and 50% (13% of respondents).



### Colic and crib-biting / windsucking behaviour

136 horses (36%) had experienced at least one colic episode that you were aware of. A total of 816 episodes of colic had occurred the 371 horses in this study during ownership. Of these colic episodes, 426 (52%) required veterinary attention (veterinary care with and without medication or surgery). For all horses who had been in respondent's care for at least 12 months (n=334), 70 horses had a total of 137 colic episodes during this time. Of these horses, 37% had suffered 2 or more episodes of colic within this time.



One of the most important findings from this initial analysis was the link between risk of colic and the severity of crib-biting / windsucking signs. Horses that exhibit crib-biting behaviour daily and for prolonged periods of time were 5 times more likely to have a history of a previous episode of colic compared to horses in which this behaviour was not seen on a daily basis (i.e. a few times a week or only on rare/specific occasions). Horses who displayed crib-biting behaviour daily but for short periods of time were almost 3 times more likely to have had an episode of colic compared to the same baseline group. ***This finding has not previously been reported and provides important information that may help us to understand why some horses that crib-bite or windsuck seem to be particularly prone to colic.***

### Ongoing analysis of data

We have a lot of management data e.g. feed types that are currently being analysed. In particular we wish to see if there is any link between certain diets and severity of behaviour and whether certain types of management reduce the effects of this behaviour on horse's health. We will keep you posted.....