Perceived Importance and Involvement of Practices and Skills Essential to 4-H Horse and Pony Volunteers as Described by Key Volunteers in the Indiana 4-H Horse and Pony Program

Stenger, Amy M.  M.S. Ed., Purdue University,  Perceived Importance and Involvement of Practices and Skills Essential to 4-H Horse and Pony Volunteers as Described by Key Volunteers in the Indiana 4-H Horse and Pony Program.  Major Professor:  Dr. Colleen Brady

PURPOSE

The purposes and objectives of this study were to; 1) determine the importance key volunteers place on practices identified as essential by nationwide state specialists, and 2) to determine the level of involvement of these volunteers in those practices identified as essential by nationwide state specialists.

ABSTRACT

The purposes and objectives of this study were to; 1) determine the importance key volunteers place on practices identified as essential by nationwide state specialists, and 2) to determine the level of involvement of these volunteers in those practices identified as essential by nationwide state specialists.

The target population of the survey was key 4-H horse and pony volunteers (n=91) was identified by sending an email request to county extension educators, asking them to identify one key horse and pony volunteer in their county. The survey consisted of questions in each of six topic areas that were selected by conducting a web-based survey of state extension specialists across the country, and asking them to rank the importance of a set of subject matter based statements. The six topic areas were:

- Safety Knowledge and Skills
- Knowledge and Skills of Common Training Techniques
- Horse Health Knowledge
- Knowledge and Skills of Tack and Equipment
- Horse Industry Knowledge and Skills
- Horse Care Knowledge and Skills

Volunteers agreed that the categories identified by the specialists were of above average in importance. The study found that:

- Safety knowledge and skills is ranked as most important and the category in which volunteers are most involved in education.
- Horse care knowledge and skills was the category ranked as least important and also the category in which key volunteers are least involved.
- Horse health knowledge was of above average importance, yet volunteers are seldom involved in educating 4-H’ers on these practices.
- Horse care knowledge and skills were of average to above average importance, and volunteers are sometimes involved in these practices.
- Horse industry knowledge and skills are of average to above average importance, and volunteers are sometimes involved in educating 4-H’ers on these practices.
Key volunteers perceive knowledge and skills of common training techniques as having average importance and are sometimes to most of the time involved in educating 4-H’ers on these practices. Volunteers and state specialists were in agreement that the six project skill areas identified by this study were important for horse and pony leaders. This information is important in developing a set of competencies for effective horse and pony leaders. It is striking that there are several categories where the ranking of the importance, and the ranking of the involvement in teaching, are inversely related. Further research needs to be done to determine why there is this difference. This presentation will offer some ideas as to why this difference exists, and some suggestions that professional staff can use immediately to begin to address this differential.