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## Effectiveness of Webinars as Educational Tools to Address Horse Industry Issues

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## Effectiveness of Webinars as Educational Tools to Address Horse Industry Issues

### Abstract

A series of six webinars was developed and presented as part of an eXtension HorseQuest/My Horse University online educational program funded by the USA Equestrian Trust. The webinars addressed topics consistent with the goal of improving equine health and management practices through dissemination to horse owners of relevant research findings on current horse industry issues. The webinars were presented and recorded and then archived to both eXtension.org/horses and myhorseuniversity.com. Data from a voluntary postwebinar survey showed that a viable tool was successfully created and used to disseminate current research-based information to the industry.

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## Introduction

Extension professionals are using the growing variety of online learning resources to explore innovative methods for providing new information to their clientele. A webinar or webcast is an interactive presentation that is typically delivered over the Internet and made available to specific audiences (Rich et al., 2011). Webinars are being used frequently in the field of extension because they allow educators to improve the learning process and participants to achieve more obtainable learning outcomes (Mohorovičić, Lasić-Lazić, & Strčić, 2011).

The objective of the study reported here was to develop and present to the public a series of six webinars focusing on research-based information on current horse industry issues as part of an online educational program. The webinars, funded by the USA Equestrian Trust (USAET), addressed

topics consistent with USAET's previously funded research projects, with the goal of improving equine health and management practices through dissemination of relevant research findings to horse owners.

Additionally, information was gathered on the benefits and usefulness of using webinars to educate and assist horse owners in making equine management decisions.

## Methods and Materials

### Webinars

In 2014, six webinars addressing USAET research projects were created and presented. Researchers who had been awarded USAET funding and other experts in the relevant topic areas were solicited as webinar speakers. The six webinars were Pasture Associated Laminitis Prevention Strategies, Lessons Learned from Recent Equine Herpesvirus-1 Outbreaks, Giving Your Horse the Best Chance During Disasters, Sales Fraud in the Horse Industry, Second Chances for Horses, and Manure Management Strategies.

The webinars were free to the public but required registration through My Horse University (<http://www.myhorseuniversity.com/>). They were promoted via social media, state and local Extension channels, and the E-Quine eXpert Newsletter list. Demographic information of registrants was collected through the webinar registration process. Webinars were presented through Adobe Connect. Each webinar involved a PowerPoint presentation, instant interactive polling, and a real-time chat box. Participants could ask questions, respond to speakers' questions during the webinar, and participate in a question/answer session at the webinar's conclusion. After the live session, the webinar was archived on and made available to the public via [extension.org/horses](http://extension.org/horses) and [myhorseuniversity.com](http://myhorseuniversity.com).

### Webinar Evaluation

Webinar participants were provided a link to an optional online survey at the end of each webinar and received an email reminder within 48 hr. The survey consisted of 14 questions and was designed to obtain feedback from the participants about any increase in knowledge of the topic, the usefulness of the webinar in making future management decisions, the likelihood of making a change after viewing the webinar, and the likelihood of recommending the webinar to others.

### Statistical Analysis

Data from all webinars were pooled and analyzed through the use of SSPS to determine the overall frequency of responses and cross tabulation of each question by webinar.

## Results and Discussion

The six webinars had a total of 558 preregistrants, 531 of whom were from 46 of the 50 states in the United States and 27 of whom were from 10 other countries—Brazil, Canada, France, Australia, Uruguay, England, Denmark, Scotland, Switzerland, and South Africa (Table 1). Of the 558

individuals who preregistered, 236 (approximately 42%) participated in the live webinars (Table 2).

**Table 1.**  
Numbers of Registrants for USAET Webinars

<b>Month presented (2014)</b>	<b>Webcast title</b>	<b>Total registrants</b>	<b>Registrants in the U.S.<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>Countries other than the U.S.<sup>b</sup></b>	<b>Registrants outside the U.S.</b>
March	Pasture Associated Laminitis Prevention Strategies	71	60	4	11
April	Lessons Learned from Recent Equine Herpesvirus -1 Outbreaks	102	98	4	4
September	Giving Your Horse the Best Chance During Disasters	131	129	2	2
October	Sales Fraud in the Horse Industry	69	63	4	6
November	Second Chances for Horses	54	52	1	2
December	Manure Management Strategies	131	129	2	2
<b>Total</b>		<b>558</b>	<b>531</b>	<b>10 total countries</b>	<b>27</b>

<sup>a</sup>Data collected as of August 2015; participants represented 46 of the 50 states in the United States. States that had participants in all six webinars are Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, New Mexico, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Wisconsin.

bCountries other than the U.S. that had participants in the webinars are Brazil, Canada, France, Australia, Uruguay, England, Denmark, Scotland, Switzerland, and South Africa.

**Table 2.**

Numbers of Registrants for, Attendees of, and Archived Views of USAET Webinars

Month presented (2014)	Webcast title	Registrants	Attendees	Archived views <sup>a</sup>
March	Pasture Associated Laminitis Prevention Strategies	71	30	971
April	Lessons Learned from Recent Equine Herpesvirus-1 Outbreaks	102	53	1,358
September	Giving Your Horse the Best Chance During Disasters	131	52	238
October	Sales Fraud in the Horse Industry	69	32	256
November	Second Chances for Horses	54	21	193
December	Manure Management Strategies	131	48	537
Total		558	236	3,553
aData collected as of August 1, 2015.				

Having a high number of "no shows" for a live webinar is not unique to the USAET webinars: Formiga, Stone, Heleba, McQueen, and Coe (2014) reported that 60% ( $n = 17,620$ ) of registrants attended the 91 live webinars that were the subject of their research. The webinars of Formiga et al. and USAET's webinars were archived after the live broadcast and recorded significant numbers of postwebinar viewings, averaging 1,099 postwebinar viewings per webinar for Formiga et al. and 592 postwebinar viewings per webinar for USAET. The most viewed USAET webinar was Lessons Learned from Recent Equine Herpesvirus-1 Outbreaks, which garnered over 1,300 archived views. Popularity of this webinar may be in response to equine herpesvirus disease outbreaks in spring 2014 and 2015.

A total of 63 registrants (11.29%) responded to the optional survey, and 55 of the 63 (87.3%)

stated that they were able to attend the live webinar. The survey evaluated the overall benefits and usefulness of each webinar. For the relevant survey questions, most respondents (98.1%) stated that their knowledge on the applicable topic changed from some extent to a very great extent, over half (67.9%) found the webinar to be very useful in helping them make informed management decisions, and most (88.9%) reported that they planned to make at least one change in their management practices after viewing the webinar. Survey responses indicated respondents' having plans to take particular actions, as indicated by the following comment excerpts: "better protect my rights as a horse buyer/owner," "protect other horses that may attend my events this summer," "improve my composting practices," and "make better decisions about adopting a horse." Satisfaction with the webinars is evident, as 81.5% (44 of 54 respondents) stated that they would be very likely to recommend the webinars to other individuals.

**Table 3.**

Survey Responses on the Benefits and Usefulness of the Webinars in Increasing Knowledge, Making Management Decisions, and Recommending Webinars to Others as a Source of Education

Item statement	No. of responses	Percentage
As a result of participating in this webcast, to what extent did your knowledge change on the topic? <sup>a</sup>		
No extent	1	1.9%
Some extent	11	20.4%
Moderate extent	21	38.9%
Great extent	14	25.9%
Very great extent	7	13.0%
No basis to judge	0	
Overall, how useful was this webcast in helping you make informed horse management decisions? <sup>b</sup>		
Very useful	36	67.9%
Somewhat useful	17	32.1%
Hardly ever useful	0	
Not useful at all	0	
I plan to make at least one change in my horse management practices based on this information. <sup>a</sup>		
Yes	48	88.9%
No	6	11.1%
How likely would you be to recommend this webcast to other people? <sup>a</sup>		

Very likely	44	81.5%
Somewhat likely	9	16.7%
Somewhat unlikely	1	1.9%
Not likely	0	
a54 respondents. b53 respondents.		

## Summary

Six webinars were developed, broadcast live, archived for public viewing, and then evaluated through an optional survey. Survey respondents increased their overall knowledge on the topic and plan to use the information when making management decisions. Most plan to make a change in management practices after viewing a webinar and are very likely to recommend the webinars to others. In conclusion, the webinars provided participants with relevant research-based information on current horse industry issues from industry expert speakers. Use of online interactive educational webinars is beneficial in providing participants information to improve horse health and management decisions.

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