

A very slight majority of horse owners purchase bedding for their horses. Of those who purchased bedding, straw appears to be the number one choice, with shavings/sawdust second. Only 1.2% of the respondents indicated using peat moss.

Water, probably the most significant factor in this survey relating to feed, pasture management and health of the horse, has been addressed by many throughout this survey, evidencing that there is a water shortage. However, when asked directly whether or not they thought there was a water shortage, 71.8% reported that they did not think so. This contradiction may be because respondents have enough water to sustain their horses but not enough for effective pastureland maintenance and crop development. The summer months appear to be the heaviest affected months of the year.

### **Environmental Issues**

Environmental issues are becoming more and more the norm for environmental groups and individuals. Many stakeholders have taken it upon themselves to develop and maintain some type of program to protect their horses and the environment. Using an open-ended question, participants were asked to elaborate on what they perceived the environmental issues to be in the horse industry. The following table highlights the themes identified.

#### **ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES AND CONCERNS**

(Frequency of percentage by selection, n=1,009)

	<b># Respondents</b>	<b>% Respondents</b>
Drought (lack of moisture, land erosion)	279	27.6
Water (quality/quantity of water, contamination)	200	19.8
Feed (availability, quality and growth)	131	12.9
Pasture management	128	12.7
Pollution	108	10.7
Open public land access	33	3.3
ATV, bikers, hikers, quads	32	3.2
Urban users	29	2.9
Health conditions	28	2.8
Oil industry	18	1.8
Access to public facilities/land	11	1.1
Greenhouse effect	6	.6
Breeding	4	.4
Migration of wild fowl	<u>2</u>	<u>.2</u>
	1,009	100.0

Table 38. Environmental Issues and Concerns

The most often remarked-upon issue, as reported previously, was that of water and/or drought [this portion of the question has been broken down into two components as respondents listed drought and water as two different issues, i.e., lack of water vs. water quality]. Respondents reported that arid

conditions and water availability issues are an ever-growing concern, not only because of the shortage of good clean quality water, but through the lack of moisture to produce hay, grain crops and natural and/or seeded grasses. It should be noted that 15 respondents mentioned drought and in the same context, the extent of damage dust was causing their horses. Health related issues such as intestinal problems and coughing were cited as two of the most problematic areas due to arid conditions and polluted water.

Moisture also has a huge impact on feed. Without the moisture, hay crops are poor, cereal and forage crops are poor, pastureland is becoming non-existent and to rent/lease or purchase pastureland is becoming too costly and difficult. Of the 131 respondents reporting that feed was an issue, 28 mentioned that they had to supplement the feeding regime as hay was in short demand or not available at all. They also observed that they could not afford to purchase hay, and that pastureland and/or grass lands did not have enough grass to sustain their herd through the fall and winter months. Many respondents commented that they had to supplement their feed with grain or a feed supplement of one kind or the other.

Respondents also indicated that the quality of pastureland was important but was not being addressed by a number of horse owners who do not utilize appropriate manure control methods, thus, are unable to control weeds. Fifty-three of the 128 respondents who mentioned pasture land as an environmental concern addressed the issue of manure (disposal, composting and pollution). Of these 53 respondents, 28 felt that a total pasture maintenance program should be implemented throughout Alberta, possibly under the jurisdiction of Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. It should address such issues as overgrazing, overstocking, weed control, rotation, fertilization, harrowing and a general educational program that would apply to small herds, business operations, and breeders. Many respondents cited overgrazing and overstocking on small acreages as another issue. In order to sustain existing pasturelands, horse owners, boarders, and breeders will have to take the initiative to implement and maintain strong pasture management practices.

The issues and concerns of horse owners within this survey are similar throughout the entire province. The vast majority of respondents reported that more attention should be paid to environmental issues ranging from how to maintain a herd through drought conditions, to pasture management, to feed related problems (i.e., lack of feed, poor quality of feed, cost of feed), to diseases and pollution.