

Investigating the respiratory health of horses and their owners

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The University of Adelaide is investigating the respiratory health of South Australia's horses and their owners to see if there is undiagnosed asthma-like disease in Australia's equine population.

In the Northern Hemisphere it is estimated that 10-20% of horses suffer from allergic respiratory disease similar to asthma in humans – but it's not known as a problem in Australia.

"Currently there is very little reported information about non-infectious [respiratory health](#) of horses in Australia," says Associate Professor Samantha Franklin, Equine Physiologist with the School of Animal and Veterinary Sciences at Roseworthy campus.

"Horses may develop respiratory disease as a result of exposure to dust and micro-organisms associated with the feed and bedding.

"People working with horses in the stable environment are also at increased risk of developing asthma due to exposure to these same factors."

Allergic respiratory disease in horses ranges in severity.

"It varies from having a minor effect on exercise tolerance and performance through to quite severe respiratory distress," Associate Professor Franklin says.

"In some cases respiratory disease may be a hidden factor impairing horse performance that isn't recognised, but could be treated."

The University of Adelaide study is starting with a survey of South Australian horse owners to assess the likely prevalence of respiratory disorders in both [horses](#) and their owners, and to identify possible risk factors.

More information: The survey is being co-ordinated by students Farrah Preston (Animal Science) and Chelsea Smart (Veterinary Science) and has been supported by Bonnetts Saddleworld. It can be accessed at [edu.surveygizmo.com/s3/1255893 ... s-in-South-Australia](http://edu.surveygizmo.com/s3/1255893...s-in-South-Australia)

Provided by University of Adelaide

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