

December 20, 2017

Dear Dr. McCue,

Thanks for reaching out to the Welsh Pony and Cob Society of America for our input on this very important research project on the equine genome.

I am a veterinarian in private small animal/equine practice and have been breeding Welsh ponies for 35 years. I am also very active in the showing of my ponies in various disciplines such as hunter, dressage and driving and involved in the various associations (both local and nationally) that govern these activities including the United States Equestrian Federation, United States Dressage Federation, American Driving Society, and the Welsh Pony and Cob Society of America (I have been President for over 20 years). I am also a long time member of the American Association of Equine Practitioners.

While we think of the Welsh pony and Cob as very hardy and “easy- keepers”, these traits don’t come without its costs. Welsh are very prone to Equine Metabolic Syndrome and Equine Cushings disease (PPID). While we have known for years that these probably have a familial aspect, we don’t know exactly the genes responsible nor do we have a test for them. To be able to pinpoint the genes and breed accordingly to reduce these problems would save countless thousands of dollars spent on treatment and the horrendous pain that many of our Welsh suffer when afflicted, not to mention the many hours of time the owners and their veterinarians spend to treat these problems.

As a breed society having every foal’s DNA on record and what traits these genes carry would be a tremendous asset. Parental verification of each foal would help to insure the purity of our stud books. For all equines it could help breeders make wiser choices in breeding to avoid genetic traits that are lethal or potentially lethal such as HYPP, HERDA, SCID, and overo lethal white syndrome

While horses in this country are not raised for food, the equine industry has a multi-billion impact on the economy. From racing to the Olympics to the back yard pet, our equine friends are important to us in many ways including psychologically. Research to provide us with the tools to breed a better performing healthier animal are important to the entire equine industry. Colic, lameness, and parasite control are just a few of the problems that still need better answers.

And last but not least, continuing to include horses in the genome research follows along with the current “One Health Initiative”.

Thanks again for allowing us to give our input.

Sincerely,

Ruth Wilburn, D.V.M.