Wisconsin Livestock

Before tractors and trucks, Wisconsin farmers depended on the horse to provide power for plowing, harvesting, and hauling. Today horses are still found on farms but they are mainly used for recreation, not work. There are 120,000 horses in Wisconsin.

Horses come in many sizes, shapes, and colors. **Draft** horses are the largest. They can be six feet tall at their shoulders and weigh more than 2,000 pounds. **Draft** horses can pull heavy loads and are often seen pulling fancy wagons. Clydesdales and Belgians are two breeds of **draft** horses.

The average horse stands about five feet tall at the shoulders. People ride or drive these horses for enjoyment. These horses may participate in sporting events such as racing or may be kept for breeding or pleasure riding. Some horses in Wisconsin still work providing power for their owners.

Baby horses are called foals. A male horse that can father foals is called a stallion and an adult female horse is called a mare. Horses are full grown by age 5 and often live to be 20 to 30 years old.

Horses are a growing part of Wisconsin agriculture.

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No horsing around...can you answer these questions about horses?

1. Horses in Wisconsin today are mainly used for:
   - A. Work
   - B. Recreation
   - C. Racing

2. Horses that can weigh more than 2000 pounds are called:
   - A. Draft
   - B. Pleasure
   - C. Ponies

3. The average horse is:
   - A. 6 Ft. Tall
   - B. 2 Ft. Tall
   - C. About 5 Ft. Tall

4. A young horse is called a:
   - A. Mare
   - B. Foal
   - C. Stallion

5. A horse could live to be:
   - A. 22 years old
   - B. 38 years old
   - C. 50 years old

6. There are nearly _____ horses in Wisconsin.
   - A. 50,000
   - B. 60,000
   - C. 120,000
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Early French explorers discovered that Wisconsin offered many resources. Our forests provided lumber and the forest animals provided food and furs. First, the French traded with the Indians for the furs they wanted. Later, the French began to trap the animals themselves. The furs were used to make hats and clothes.

Trapping fur bearing animals didn’t always provide good furs. Animals in the wild had to hunt for food, fight with other animals, and search for shelter. If animals didn’t find the proper food and shelter, they were not healthy and neither were their furs. Also, there was a concern that trapping would endanger the number of fur bearing animals in the wild.

To solve these problems, farmers began raising mink and fox on farms. On the farm, the animals receive the proper food and shelter and are protected from predators. This guarantees that there will be plenty of high quality furs and that the wild animal population will not be endangered.

Wisconsin produces more mink than any other state. Wisconsin is a good place to raise fur animals because our dairy, poultry and livestock farms provide the meat and milk byproducts that the mink and fox are fed.

Review questions...

1. What valuable resources did the French discover in Wisconsin?

2. What things can affect how healthy a wild animal is?

3. Wisconsin fur farmers give their animals proper ________, and ________

   and protect them from ________.

4. Why is Wisconsin a good place to raise mink and fox?
Some Wisconsin farms are raising a new type of livestock — fish. The raising of fish is called **aquaculture**. Wisconsin farmers raise trout, bass, northern pike, muskies, and bait fish.

More trout are raised here than any other fish. Rainbow, brook, and brown are the most common types. The 65+ fish farms in Wisconsin sell over 500,000 pounds of trout each year.

To raise fish, the farmer places fish eggs in an **incubator** where running fresh water provides oxygen. The area where the incubators are kept is called the **hatchery**. The young fish with their yolk sacs, hatch from the eggs in about 15 days. The small fish, or sac fry, live off their yolk sac at this time.

Once the yolk sac has disappeared, the young fish float to the top of the water and the farmer begins feeding them fish meal every hour during the day.

When the fish grow to be 3 inches long, they are called **fingerlings**. Now, the farmer moves the fingerlings from the hatchery into ponds or cement tanks called raceways. Here the fish are fed 4 times per day and they grow very quickly.

When the fish reach 6 inches in length they are called stockers and can now be put in lakes and streams to grow and become sport fish. Fish being raised for food are kept on the farm until they reach 11 to 12 inches in length. Then they are sold to restaurants, stores, and processors to be used as food.

Wisconsin ranks 8th in trout production.

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**Be part of a “think tank” and tackle these questions.**

1. How is raising fish similar to raising other livestock?

2. How is raising fish different than raising other livestock?

3. Why would health care for fish be more difficult?

4. Fish will be a main source of fresh meat as we continue exploring space. Give reasons why that would be?
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Wisconsin farmers have imported or reestablished other types of livestock in our state. Match the descriptions below to the picture of the animal. Research to find out what continent each animal is native to and how that animal is used in their native culture.

A. Ostrich

1. This strong, willing and calm animal is used for packing, golf caddies, driving, fiber production, and guarding livestock.

2. This bird is a cousin to the ostrich. It is raised for its red meat and for oil which is used for medicinal purposes.

3. This is the largest land mammal in North America. Once used for food, tools, clothing and other products, today’s animals provide us with a rich, red meat.

4. Raised for their meat, genetic development, scent collection and trophy stock, this animal converts pasture into lean meat.

5. This large member of the deer family is raised for breeding stock and their antlers. Tourists also enjoy watching these animals which are often hard to see in the wild.

B. Llama

6. This is the world’s largest bird. Originally raised for their feathers, these birds now provide a low-fat red meat and leather.

7. Wisconsin is a top producer of this game bird which is raised for meat production or for release and subsequent hunting.