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**Organization of horse-ride tourism in Lublin region  
in the aspect of expectations of people taking advantage  
of that leisure form**

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Organizacja turystyki konnej na Lubelszczyźnie w aspekcie oczekiwań osób  
korzystających z tej formy wypoczynku

**Summary.** The study was aimed at comparing the offers of equestrian centres in selected areas of Lublin region, with expectations of people taking advantage of horse riding. The analysis included 23 stables of leisure horses which work in protected areas. Information was collected using two types of questionnaires consisting of twenty similar questions (for centre's owners and for potential tourists). The answers were expressed in percentage. Analogous issues in both polls were compared. It was found that the offer of horse-ride tourism covers the expectations of the people concerned. The greatest discrepancy referred to: the low level of ecological knowledge of leisure organizers, partly improper selection of leisure horses, as well as the lack of additional attractions and qualified guides during several-days' excursions.

**Key words:** horses, active leisure, eco-tourism

INTRODUCTION

Different eco-tourism branches have instantly developed during several latest years [Kamieniecka 1997, Niezgoda 2004]. The tendency also refers to typically agricultural Polish areas which as yet have been less exploited by tourists. Organizing the leisure agritouristic farms on these areas allows self-promoting and creating new job opportunities [Dębniowska and Suchta 1995, Strzembicki 1994, Wojciechowska 2003].

Lublin region is one of the most interesting picturesque areas with well-developed rural tourism grounds [Turski 2000]. There are up to 69 areas of protected nature that are an additional attraction for tourists: the largest Roztoczański National Park and many

Landscape Parks (LP) with the most interesting Kazimierski LP, Kozłowiecki LP, Poleski LP and Lasy Janowskie LP [Lasy Lubelszczyzny 2006].

In each park, places for horse-riding are set along numerous tourist trails [Turski 2000]. This aspect is particularly important due to the tourists' preferences reaching a dozen and more per cents compared to other kinds of tourism [Majewski 2003]. It results in the fact that maintaining horses in agritourist farm and holiday resorts becomes more and more popular and sometimes it is a general attraction for people or the only special offer.

A diversity of landscape in Lublin region, beauty of the nature, and specific microclimate along with highly-developed tourist infrastructure, make a perfect background attracting large number of tourists, including those interested in horse-riding [Turski 2000]. Great demand for such type of service in combination with immemorial tradition of horse (mainly Malopolski) breeding [Zwoliński 1971], has a positive influence on horse-ride tourism. Its competitiveness and level of service provided increase in each year [Kaproń 1999].

The study aimed at comparing the offers of horse-ride centres working on selected areas in Lublin region, with expectations of tourists interested in horse-riding.

#### MATERIAL AND METHODS

The analysis included leisure stables working within above-mentioned protected areas. The data were collected from:

1 – owners of 23 horse-ride centres (8 objects – Roztoczański National Park, 5 – Kazimierski LP, 2 – Kozłowiecki LP, 6 – Poleski LP, 2 – Lasy Janowskie LP);

2 – a group of 100 students of University of Life Sciences in Lublin – Horse Breeding and Horse-riding specialization.

In both cases, the information was collected on the basis of a questionnaire. Two types of questionnaires, composed of 20 similar questions, were applied. The stable owners were generally asked for details of available offer (questionnaire 1 – A1), while students – for their preferences related to horse-ride tourism (questionnaire 2 – A2).

The questions were divided into three blocks referring to the subjects:

1 – general issues with elements of ecological education level assessment;

2 – tourist infrastructure of polled areas;

3 – horses used in the tourism.

The questionnaire arrangement was as follows (questionnaire for stable owners – A1, questionnaire for students – A2).

##### Block I

1. Does the horse-ride tourism attract your interests?

a) Yes                      b) No                      c) It increases (I am going to be interested in)

2. Has the horse-ride tourism the perspectives for development? (for A1 and A2)

a) Yes                      b) No

3. What is the level of your ecological knowledge? (for A1 and A2)

a) Zero                      b) Low                      c) Moderate                      d) High

4. Should horse-ride tourism go hand in hand with ecology? (for A1 and A2)

- a) Yes      b) No      c) Not in all cases
5. Can the horse-ride tourism within protected nature areas be an additional asset? (for A1 and A2)
- a) Yes      b) No
6. Is more interesting for you to observe rare species of:
- a) Fauna      b) Flora      c) Fauna and flora      d) No opinion
7. Is diversity of the landscape an additional virtue of the horse-riding? (for A1 and A2)
- a) Yes      b) No
8. Which natural objects do you prefer during the horse-ride tourism?
- a) Forests      b) Meadows      c) Beaches      d) Lakes      e) Mountains
9. Which type of horse-ride tourism do you prefer?
- a) A few-hour ride (maybe up to ... hours)      b) One-day ride (maybe only up to ... hours)
- c) A few-day ride (maybe up to ... days, ... hours daily)

#### Block II

10. In case of one or several-day ride, are you interested in gastronomical infrastructure?

- a) Yes – packed lunch is enough      b) Yes – with warm and nutritive meals      c) No

11. In case of several-day ride, are you interested in staying for the night?

- a) Yes – with appropriate standards      b) Yes – minimum conditions are enough      c) No

12. In case of several-day ride, do you expect for additional attractions?

- a) Yes      b) No

– Information from the guide;

– Possibility for sightseeing;

– Other .....

#### Block III (for A1 and A2)

13. How numerous should be the riders-tourists group?

- a) Up to 5 persons      b) Up to 10 persons      c) No matter

14. Is the breed of the horse used for tourism important?

- a) Yes (preferred breed.....)      b) No

15. Is the coat color of the horse used for tourism important?

- a) Yes (preferred coat color .....)      b) No

16. Is the sex of the horse used for tourism important?

- a) Yes (preferred sex .....)      b) No

17. Is the age of the horse used for tourism important?

- a) Yes (preferred age .....)      b) No

18. Is the temper of the horse used for tourism important?

- a) Yes (preferred temper .....)      b) No

19. Should the horse used for tourism comfortably carry the rider?

- a) Yes      b) No matter

20. In case of several-day ride, would you handle the horse by yourselves during the whole day (feeding, drinking, etc.)?

- a) Yes      b) No

When analyzing the questionnaires, the percentage of all kinds of answers was calculated and analogous issues were compared.

## RESULTS

No major divergence within analogous questions (A1 and A2) qualified to Block I was found (Tab. 1). In both questionnaires, quite great and growing interests in horse-riding tourism were observed. Only 22% of students did not want to experience that form of leisure. It was univocally found that horse-ride tourism has wide development perspectives. Instead, significant divergence occurred in reference to ecological knowledge assessment. It was higher in students than in stable owners. The problem is particularly important, since the necessity of horse-ride tourism in combination with ecology and protective nature areas was univocally indicated as obvious in case of both types of questionnaires. The demand for several-hour or several-day rides appeared to be interesting, as well. One-day horse-rides found the approval of almost 20% of respondents.

Table 1. The percentage of answers referring to general issues and elements of ecological knowledge level estimation

Tabela 1. Procentowe zestawienie odpowiedzi uzyskanych na pytania dotyczące ogólnych zagadnień z elementami oceny poziomu wiedzy ekologicznej

Number of question Numer pytania	Answers (%) Odpowiedzi (%)									
	a		b		c		d		e	
	A1	A2	A1	A2	A1	A2	A1	A2	A1	A2
1	75	61	0	22	25	17				
2	100	96	0	4						
3	10	0	20	10	50	13	20	77		
4	94	61	0	3	6	36				
5	100	90	0	10						
6	20	22	10	2	70	72	0	4		
7	60	97	40	3						
8	65	29	5	22	5	13	20	15	5	21
9	50	43	20	17	30	40				

Table 2. The percentage of answers referring to touristic infrastructure of areas including horse-back tourist tracks

Tabela 2. Procentowe zestawienie odpowiedzi uzyskanych na pytania dotyczące infrastruktury turystycznej terenów obejmujących konne szlaki turystyczne

Number of question Numer pytania	Answers (%) Odpowiedzi (%)					
	a		b		c	
	A1	A2	A1	A2	A1	A2
10	30	56	65	37	5	7
11	75	79	20	14	5	7
12	30	64	70	36		

Table 3. The percentage of answers referring to horse utilization in tourism  
 Tabela 3. Procentowe zestawienie odpowiedzi uzyskanych na pytania dotyczące wykorzystania koni w turystyce

Number of question Numer pytania	Answers (%) Odpowiedzi (%)					
	a		b		c	
	A1	A2	A1	A2	A1	A2
13	55	28	25	40	20	32
14	30	59	70	41		
15	10	15	90	85		
16	95	41	5	59		
17	60	56	40	44		
18	95	72	5	28		
19	30	97	70	3		
20	75	96	25	4		

Analysis of Block II answers revealed that basic range of tourist infrastructure is necessary to perform that form of leisure (Tab. 2). The largest divergence referred to answers for questions on gastronomic infrastructure. Most of students were interested in the opportunity to consume only packed lunch during the ride. However, in A1 – up to 65% of respondents indicted the need to provide higher standards of gastronomic services. Such situation could result from a considerable selectivity of A2 questionnaire respondents. Another difference referred to additional attractions that, according to students, should accompany the horse-ride excursions. Mainly visiting the historical monuments, listening to thematic stories, or bathing, also along with horses, were indicated. People organizing such leisure did not take into account these needs in their offers. As to the accommodation, the answers were consistent and in majority (about 80%) pointed out the need to provide minimum circumstances.

Answers related to the horses used in tourism (Tab. 3) revealed that the breed made greatest divergence. Over half of leisure stables did not take into account such aspect, while majority of potential tourists found the issue important and preferred Hucul horses and not too big Małopolski horses. Similar fact was observed referring to the horse's sex: most of owners did not offer stallions for riding, whereas 60% of responding students indicated that the sex of the horse was not important. The lack of evaluation of the way of carrying the rider by particular horses also appeared to be a problem. Answers referring to the horse service (self-service was preferred), their temper (quiet horses preferred), age (older animals preferred), colour (black, seal-brown or leopard-spotted horses preferred in few cases), were consistent.

#### DISCUSSION

Almost 80% interests in horse-riding tourism indicate the considerable discrepancy in relation to data published both in scientific papers and commonly available materials describing the issue of touristic preferences of people taking advantage of rural recrea-

tion. According to Majewski [2003], a will to ride horses was expressed by almost three times less people who took advantage of that offer compared to the present results. However, the latter may be inflated due to a specificity of respondents' interests.

Instead, problem of ecological knowledge, possibilities to hand it down to the tourists, as well as legal aspects associated with utilization of protected areas during horse-ride tourism, arouse some concerns. According to Niezgoda [2004] and Sondel [2006], organization of leisure within a protected area is an additional asset that can positively affect its development. Unfortunately, too low level of ecological knowledge represented by horse-ride excursion organizers from Lublin region and associated lack of possibilities to hand down at least basic information, arouses objections. Problem becomes more important during several-day rides, that are very occupied, and that might have often a thematic character. It is supposed that the existing problem can be solved by increased number of trainings and practices on ecological knowledge for recreation organizers.

The tourist infrastructure that should be developed to the highest possible level, is another issue. It is both determined by tourist's good and economical aspects consisting mainly in creating the job opportunities [Dębniowska and Suchta 1995]. In this case, the scope of gastronomic and accommodation services appeared to be disputable: the service's development level should be discussed. Affluence of tourists is nowadays very differentiated, which may indicate the possibility of using the infrastructure at various levels [Majewski 2003].

The issue of a proper horse selection for tourism also appeared to be noteworthy. According to Kaproń [1999], the leisure horse's temper and its proper riding way are one of its principle virtues. However, the results univocally indicated that there are many other elements that should be taken into account during such selection. The way of carrying the rider should be one of more important criteria for selecting horses used in the tourism. Unfortunately, such aspects are more often of secondary importance in practice [Suchorski 1977]. The selection of an appropriate horse breed also appeared to be important. Possibility of common using of the Małopolski breed is surprising. Considerable increase of a Małopolski horses size may principally eliminate them from the leisure and horse-ride tourism [Zwoliński 1971, Kulisa *et al.* 2000]. The horse's coat colour was also concerned, because of its esthetic and cognitive features, that elevate the attractiveness and thus level of services provided [Stachurska *et al.* 1999].

#### CONCLUSIONS

1. The horse-ride tourism finds its wide interests in Lublin region and it has significant perspectives. However, the ecological knowledge of the organizers of that leisure form should be improved, because the nature protection is one of its main assets.

2. During the horse-rides, the participants should be provided with an appropriate standards of gastronomy and accommodation, as well as enhanced offer of additional attractions.

3. The horse-ride tourism should involve older, calm mares and geldings, mainly of Hucul and smaller Małopolski breeds. Their coat colour plays a secondary role, although horses of dark basic colours and white patterns are chosen more willingly.

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**Streszczenie.** Celem pracy stało się porównawcze zestawienie oferty ośrodków jeździeckich, działających na wybranych terenach Lubelszczyzny, z oczekiwaniami osób zainteresowanych jazdą wierzchem. Analizą objęto 23 „stajnie koni rekreacyjnych” działające na terenie obszarów chronionych. Wykorzystano dwa rodzaje ankiet składających się z dwudziestu podobnie brzmiących pytań (ankieta dla właścicieli ośrodków oraz potencjalnych turystów). Dokonano procentowego zestawienia odpowiedzi oraz porównania analogicznych zagadnień w obrębie obu ankiet. Stwierdzono, iż oferta turystyki konnej pokrywa się z oczekiwaniami osób zainteresowanych. Największe rozbieżności dotyczyły niskiego poziomu wiedzy ekologicznej organizatorów wypoczynku, częściowo nieodpowiedniego doboru koni rekreacyjnych oraz braku dodatkowych atrakcji i wykwalifikowanych przewodników w trakcie wycieczek kilkudniowych.

**Słowa kluczowe:** konie, aktywny wypoczynek, ekoturystyka