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### **Characteristics of agritourism farms in the context of the use of horses in a varied tourism offer**

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Charakterystyka gospodarstw agroturystycznych w kontekście wykorzystania  
koni w urozmaiceniu oferty turystycznej

**Summary.** The aim of the study was to evaluate the profile of agritouristic farms, also considered in the context of the use of horses in shaping an attractive tourist offer and the potential development of such services. The study materials consisted of answers to the questions which were included in the survey addressed to the owners of agritouristic farms that do not use horses (general farms) and the ones that use horses (horse farms). The survey contained 11 questions, which concerned e.g. farms characteristics and potential addressees of the offer. Basing on the results it was concluded that the number of accommodation places in the national agritouristic farms is mostly 5–10; however, horse farms were characterized by both a significantly more expanded accommodation base and a larger area, which may follow from the possibility of organizing large equestrian events, as well as the specific character of using and breeding horses. It can be assumed that in the national agritouristic farms the use of Polish Konik, Hucul and Małopolski horses will be mostly aimed at teaching horse riding. This situation should positively affect the development of these horses' breeding within the framework of the protection of genetic resources.

**Key words:** agritourism, special offer, horses

#### INTRODUCTION

Horses are animals that accompany mankind for several thousand years and thus constitute an essential element of the rural landscape [Łuszczynski *et al.* 2003]. Men-

tioned basis of the usage of these species makes it perfect fit into the agritourism [Chodkiewicz and Drabek 2009]. Nowadays, the pace of life is constantly increasing, and people dedicate themselves extensively to work and at the same time they rarely have time to rest [Grzywa and Pocięcha 2006]. At a time when they can afford to take a break, more often, they are looking for places to take a rest from the hustle and bustle of the city – guaranteeing a return to nature, which is why agritourism is becoming increasingly attractive as a tourist activity. The possibility of spending this kind of holiday in rural households, which increasingly have horses, allows tourists to forget about everyday worries and relax mentally. The contact with a horse has a huge impact on the human body. This results in many benefits for the physical and emotional sphere [Grobelny 2009]. The mentioned considerations mean that the horsemanship and other uses of horses in rural tourism are becoming, more and more often, the main attraction and encouragement for the growing number of holidaymakers [Grobelny 2007].

The increased interest in equestrian tourism and services considered with the horse riding and simply the contact with horses during the tourist stays has its origin in the fact that the recreation and riding sport are increasingly popular form of daily leisure time [Styperek 2010]. The greater awareness of the positive impact of this kind of physical activity on health is also important. It is also worth emphasizing that in Poland there are very favorable conditions for the riding tourism, as it can be evidenced by the newly created tourist horse trails, and the presence of horses on a farm makes it more attractive for potential customers [Adamowicz and Świstek 2009]. It often happens that these animals are the main attraction in agritourism or they are going to become such an attraction in the near future [Janczarek and Zniszczyńska 2009].

The presented issue caused that the aim of this study was to evaluate the profile of agritourism farms, considered also in the context of the use of horses in shaping attractive tourist offer and the potential development of such services.

#### MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study materials consisted the answers to the questions which were included in the survey, that was addressed to the owners of agritourism farms that do not use horses (general farm), and the ones that use horses (horse farms). The survey was prepared by the authors of this study. The survey consisted of 11 questions addressed to all respondents and one additional question addressed to the owners of general farms. Questions addressed to all respondents included issues that related to the number of beds, area of the farm (ha), seasonality of services, connection between occupancy of accommodation and seasonality, occupancy of accommodation during the period of increased tourism (%), it means May–September, potential recipients of tourism offer of farms, actual recipients of tourism offer of farms, age of children staying on the farm with their resting families or guardians, age of adults resting on the farm, the possibilities of active resting on the farm and the form of active rest (if it is possible). Other questions were designed to obtain information about tourists' interests in offers of equestrian services, the type of services related to horses that are in demand on the farm as well as the breed of horses, which the purchase is planned by the owners of general farms and maintained by horse farms. Additional question concerned the reasons for a negative decision to the possible

purchase of horses in general farms. In some of the questions, respondents could choose more than one answer.

These questionnaires were sent by email to a random sample of farms in Poland. To choose the addresses of farms, official websites were used: [agroturystyka.pl](http://agroturystyka.pl), [fajnewczasy.pl](http://fajnewczasy.pl), [agroturystyczny24.pl](http://agroturystyczny24.pl), [e-agro.pl](http://e-agro.pl), [zaplanujurlop.pl](http://zaplanujurlop.pl), [agrowypoczynek.pl](http://agrowypoczynek.pl), [ruszajwpolske.pl](http://ruszajwpolske.pl).

Agritourism farms mentioned on the listed websites are affiliated with leading organizations, agro-tourism and rural tourism (for example Mazowieckie Stowarzyszenie Turystyki Wiejskiej, Lubelskie Stowarzyszenie Agroturystyczne, Stowarzyszenie Kwaterodawców Miasta i Gminy Zwierzyniec, Warmińsko-Mazurskie Stowarzyszenie Agroturystyczne, Roztoczańskie Stowarzyszenie Agroturystyczne w Sułcu, Gdańskie Stowarzyszenie Agroturystyczne, Poznańskie Towarzystwo Agroturystyczne, Podlaskie Stowarzyszenie Agroturystyczne – Janów Podlaski, Słupskie Stowarzyszenie Agroturystyczne Pomorzanie i Kaszubi, Bałtyckie Stowarzyszenie Agroturystyczne, Stowarzyszenie Turystyczne Kaszuby, Góralskie Stowarzyszenie Agroturystyczne, etc.).

506 questionnaires were mailed, 63 of them were sent back as completed (12%), which were used for further analysis in the context of this work. From the submitted surveys 13 farms (20%) had horses and provided services associated with them, while 50 farms (80%) did not have these species.

The variants of the answers for the particular questions are shown in a numerical and percentage arrangement using the computer program Excel 2007, the significant differences between the values expressed, as a percentage were determined using the Parker test [1978].

## RESULTS

It was alleged that the general farms offered the tourists mostly from five to ten beds (Tab. 1). Above this range the percentage share declined progressively. However, there were no general farms with fewer than five beds. Horse farms had mostly 16–20 accommodation places. There were also horse farms pointing their offer to several people and large groups as well. To sum up, besides the centers offering above 20 accommodation places, there were found significant differences between the values characterized by the two types of farms.

In most cases, the general farms occupied an area of 1–6 hectares, which was indicated by 38% and 22% of those surveyed (Tab. 2). The farm with the area which has less than 1 ha happens to be rare. More than half of horse farms were characterized with their surface of more than 9 hectares. The farms of small and medium large areas were virtually absent. Not one of the owners marked the response, which would indicate that the surface of their farm has less than one hectare, or belong to the range of 7–9 hectares. There were significant differences between the analyzed types of farms in the majority of responses.

It was also alleged that regardless of the profile of a farm, the resting offer included mostly the whole year. This type of response was pointed respectively by 88 and 84% of general and horse farms. For both types of farms, the booked rooms were associated with the season. The average occupancy of rooms during the tourist season was about 51–70% (general farms) and

51–70%, and more than this value, was reported in the case of horse farms as well (Tab. 3). There were no significant differences between the analyzed types of farms.

Table 1. Accommodation places offered by the surveyed agritourism farms  
Tabela 1. Miejsca noclegowe oferowane przez ankietowane gospodarstwa agroturystyczne

Accommodation Liczba miejsc	General farms Gospodarstwa ogólne		Horse farms Gospodarstwa konne	
	number of replies liczba odpowiedzi	%	number of replies liczba odpowiedzi	%
Below 5 Poniżej 5	0	0 <sub>x</sub>	2	15 <sub>y</sub>
5–10	18	36 <sub>x</sub>	2	15 <sub>y</sub>
11–15	15	30 <sub>x</sub>	2	15 <sub>y</sub>
16–20	9	18 <sub>x</sub>	5	38 <sub>y</sub>
Above 20 Powyżej 20	8	16 <sub>x</sub>	3	17 <sub>x</sub>

Expressed percentages which are presented in rows are marked with different letters (x, y) differ significantly with  $P \leq 0.05$ .

Wyrażone w procentach wartości w wierszach oznaczone różnymi literami (x, y) różnią się istotnie przy  $P \leq 0,05$ .

Table 2. The average size of surveyed agritourism farms  
Tabela 2. Średnia powierzchnia ankietowanych gospodarstw agroturystycznych

Area Powierzchnia	General farms Gospodarstwa ogólne		Horse farms Gospodarstwa konne	
	number of replies liczba odpowiedzi	%	number of replies liczba odpowiedzi	%
Below 1 ha Poniżej 1 Ha	6	12 <sub>x</sub>	0	0 <sub>y</sub>
1–3 ha	19	38 <sub>x</sub>	3	23 <sub>y</sub>
4–6 ha	11	22 <sub>x</sub>	3	23 <sub>x</sub>
7–9 ha	5	10 <sub>x</sub>	0	0 <sub>x</sub>
Above 9 ha Powyżej 9 ha	9	18 <sub>x</sub>	7	54 <sub>y</sub>

Expressed percentages which are presented in rows are marked with different letters (x, y) differ significantly with  $P \leq 0.05$ .

Wyrażone w procentach wartości w wierszach oznaczone różnymi literami (x, y) różnią się istotnie przy  $P \leq 0,05$ .

It was alleged that more than 50% of total agritourism farms was focused on live-stock farming. Predictably, in the case of horse centers this type of activity was marked by 100% of respondents. The survey results also enabled to note that the agritourism farms which offered various forms of active rest occurred in 88% of general farms and 100% in the horse farms.

Table 3. Average booked rooms during the tourist season  
Tabela 3. Średnie obłożenie pokoi w okresie sezonu turystycznego

The percentage occupancy Procent obłożenia	General farms Gospodarstwa ogólne		Horse farms Gospodarstwa konne	
	number of replies liczba odpowiedzi	%	number of replies liczba odpowiedzi	%
Below 30% Poniżej 30%	10	20 <sub>x</sub>	3	23 <sub>x</sub>
31%–50%	10	20 <sub>x</sub>	2	15 <sub>x</sub>
51%–70%	18	36 <sub>x</sub>	4	31 <sub>x</sub>
Above 70% Powyżej 70%	12	24 <sub>x</sub>	4	31 <sub>x</sub>

Expressed percentages which are presented in rows are marked with different letters (x, y) differ significantly with  $P \leq 0.05$ .

Wyrażone w procentach wartości w wierszach oznaczone różnymi literami (x, y) różnią się istotnie przy  $P \leq 0,05$ .

Table 4. Forms of recreation offered to tourists of agritourism farms (the ability to choose multiple answers)

Tabela 4. Formy rekreacji ruchowej oferowane gościom gospodarstw agroturystycznych (możliwość wyboru wielu odpowiedzi)

Forms of recreation Formy rekreacji	General farms Gospodarstwa ogólne		Horse farms Gospodarstwa konne	
	number of replies liczba odpowiedzi	%	number of replies liczba odpowiedzi	%
Football Piłka nożna	12	6 <sub>x</sub>	4	6 <sub>x</sub>
Volleyball Siatkówka	25	13 <sub>x</sub>	7	12 <sub>x</sub>
Cycling Jazda na rowerze	41	20 <sub>x</sub>	12	21 <sub>x</sub>
Table tennis Tenis stołowy	15	8 <sub>x</sub>	6	11 <sub>x</sub>
Water recreation (pedal boats, kayaks, pontoons, boats) Rekreacja wodna (rowery wodne, kajaki, pontony, łodzie)	18	9 <sub>x</sub>	2	4 <sub>y</sub>
Fishing Wędkarstwo	31	16 <sub>x</sub>	5	9 <sub>y</sub>
Swimming (access to the pool/water) Pływanie (dostęp do kąpieliska)	18	9 <sub>x</sub>	6	11 <sub>x</sub>
Jogging, walking, mushroom picking Jogging, spacerowanie, zbieranie grzybów	34	17 <sub>x</sub>	12	21 <sub>y</sub>
Rother/ Inne	4	2 <sub>x</sub>	3	5 <sub>y</sub>

Expressed percentages which are presented in rows are marked with different letters (x, y) differ significantly with  $P \leq 0.05$ .

Wyrażone w procentach wartości w wierszach oznaczone różnymi literami (x, y) różnią się istotnie przy  $P \leq 0,05$ .

The owners of surveyed centers highlighted many leisure activities for tourists (Tab. 4). In general farms there were mostly marked activities: cycling (93%), jogging and walking (77%), fishing (70%) and playing volleyball (57%). In less than half of the surveyed centers it is also possible to use different forms of water recreation. The least interest was focused on playing football. In horse farms, except the horse riding, which in this case for obvious reasons did not ask, the physical recreation is mainly concentrated on jogging and walking (92%), cycling (92%) and playing volleyball (54%). Subsequently, playing table tennis and swimming was mentioned. It is worth mentioning that the water recreation was selected by 15% of surveyed, taking the last place. For more than half features, there were no significant differences between the analyzed types of farms.

The offer of recreation in the countryside was addressed in most cases to all categories of tourists, with a special focus on families with children, which was mostly pointed by the owners of the general farms (Tab. 5). Only 5% of responses were focused on the young people. The horse farms reported a similar situation, and the only exception was a greater percentage of the youth (11%) inviting such facilities. The significant differences between the analyzed types of farms occurred in only two case.

Table 5. Groups of people to whom the offer of agritourism farms is addressed (the ability to choose multiple answers)

Tabela 5. Grupy osób, do których kierowana jest oferta gospodarstw agroturystycznych (możliwość wyboru wielu odpowiedzi)

Groups Grupa	General farms Gospodarstwa ogólne		Horse farms Gospodarstwa konne	
	number of replies liczba odpowiedzi	%	number of replies liczba odpowiedzi	%
Families with children Rodziny z dziećmi	22	25 <sub>x</sub>	7	27 <sub>x</sub>
Marriages and couples Małżeństwa i pary	12	14 <sub>x</sub>	4	15 <sub>x</sub>
Groups of young people Grupy młodych ludzi	4	5 <sub>x</sub>	3	11 <sub>y</sub>
Seniors Seniorzy	11	13 <sub>x</sub>	3	11 <sub>x</sub>
All interested people Wszyscy zainteresowani	37	43 <sub>x</sub>	9	36 <sub>y</sub>

Expressed percentages which are presented in rows are marked with different letters (x, y) differ significantly with  $P \leq 0.05$ .

Wyrażone w procentach wartości w wierszach oznaczone różnymi literami (x, y) różnią się istotnie przy  $P \leq 0,05$ .

Approximately half of the respondents of general farms stated that families with children, marriages and couples used their farm in order to rest (Tab. 6). At the last place there were the young people, whose presence was noted by 5% of the farms. Horse farms, just like before, were visited mostly by families with children. More than 10% of the respondents also indicated the young people and seniors who use the services of this type of farm. In two cases, there were significant differences between the analyzed types of farms.

Table 6. Groups of tourists using the offer of agritourism farms (the ability to choose multiple answers)

Tabela 6. Grupy turystów korzystających z oferty gospodarstw agroturystycznych (możliwość wyboru wielu odpowiedzi)

Groups Grupa	General farms Gospodarstwa ogólne		Horse farms Gospodarstwa konne	
	number of replies liczba odpowiedzi	%	number of replies liczba odpowiedzi	%
Families with children Rodziny z dziećmi	29	30 <sub>x</sub>	9	28 <sub>x</sub>
Marriages and couples Małżeństwa i pary	22	23 <sub>x</sub>	7	23 <sub>x</sub>
Groups of young people Grupy młodych ludzi	5	5 <sub>x</sub>	4	13 <sub>y</sub>
Seniors/ Seniorzy	12	13 <sub>x</sub>	4	13 <sub>x</sub>
All interested people Wszyscy zainteresowani	28	29 <sub>x</sub>	7	23 <sub>y</sub>

Expressed percentages which are presented in rows are marked with different letters (x, y) differ significantly with  $P \leq 0.05$ .

Wyrażone w procentach wartości w wierszach oznaczone różnymi literami (x, y) różnią się istotnie przy  $P \leq 0,05$ .

People aged 36–45 years mostly took rest in the general farms (Tab. 7). The age of people staying occasionally in these types of centers can be selected between 18–25 years old. The oldest are also a relatively small group of tourists. The age range between 36 and 45 years old of resting tourists, was also marked in horse farms. People over 60 years old did not benefit from the offer of horse farms. The percentage of other age groups was similar. Significant differences between the analyzed types of farms occurred in two cases of the youngest and the oldest tourists.

Table 7. The age of adults mostly residing in agritourism farms (the ability to choose multiple answers)

Tabela 7. Wiek osób dorosłych najczęściej przebywających w gospodarstwach agroturystycznych (możliwość wyboru wielu odpowiedzi)

Visitors age Wiek osób odwiedzających	General farms Gospodarstwa ogólne		Horse farms Gospodarstwa konne	
	number of replies liczba odpowiedzi	%	number of replies liczba odpowiedzi	%
18–25	10	8 <sub>x</sub>	6	17 <sub>y</sub>
26–35	33	26 <sub>x</sub>	9	28 <sub>x</sub>
36–45	44	34 <sub>x</sub>	12	38 <sub>x</sub>
46–60	30	23 <sub>x</sub>	6	17 <sub>x</sub>
Above 60 years old Powyżej 60 lat	11	9 <sub>x</sub>	0	0 <sub>y</sub>

Expressed percentages which are presented in rows are marked with different letters (x, y) differ significantly with  $P \leq 0.05$ .

Wyrażone w procentach wartości w wierszach oznaczone różnymi literami (x, y) różnią się istotnie przy  $P \leq 0,05$ .

Matching the results also allowed to state that the age of children traveling with their parents to the general farms is mostly stated in the range of 4–6 years old (Tab. 8). Often, slightly older children used the rest there. Young people at the age of 13 and older occasionally spent their holidays in the countryside. The age of the children vacationing in horse farms appears to be different. Over 70% of respondents pointed to the frequent visits of parents with wards, aged from 4 to 12 years. Only in one case there were no significant differences between the analyzed types of farms.

Table 8. The age of children residing in agritourism farms (the ability to choose multiple answers)  
Tabela 8. Wiek dzieci przebywających w gospodarstwach agroturystycznych (możliwość wyboru wielu odpowiedzi)

Children age Wiek dzieci	General farms Gospodarstwa ogólne		Horse farms Gospodarstwa konne	
	number of replies liczba odpowiedzi	%	number of replies liczba odpowiedzi	%
Children 0–3 years old Dzieci 0–3 lat	18	14 <sub>x</sub>	2	6 <sub>y</sub>
Children 4–6 years old Dzieci 4–6 lat	37	30 <sub>x</sub>	10	32 <sub>x</sub>
Children 7–12 years old Dzieci 7–12 lat	20	16 <sub>x</sub>	10	32 <sub>y</sub>
Children 13–15 years old Dzieci 13–15 lat	13	20 <sub>x</sub>	8	27 <sub>y</sub>
Youth 16–18 years old Młodzież 16–18 lat	13	20 <sub>x</sub>	1	3 <sub>y</sub>

Expressed percentages which are presented in rows are marked with different letters (x, y) differ significantly with  $P \leq 0.05$ .

Wyrażone w procentach wartości w wierszach oznaczone różnymi literami (x, y) różnią się istotnie przy  $P \leq 0,05$ .

The owners of general farms indicated their decision of not having horses pointing their issues of lack of appropriate infrastructure (35%) and lack of experience in this industry (33%) (Tab. 9). The financial issue also occurred to be important matter as well as the fact that the owners indicated the small demand for services related to horsemanship.

Respondents said that tourists from general farms, who were questioned about the willingness to use the services of the horses, were frequently not determined or were inclined rather negatively to that idea (Tab. 10). Horse farms also met with a lack of interest in that type of services. Such answers, however, have been occasional. The interest of this type of offer was mostly large. The answer "I am rather interested" was indicated by 53% of respondents. In all cases, there were significant differences between the analyzed types of farms.

According to a survey, filled by the owners of general farms, carriage rides, sleigh rides and tours of small children on ponies should be the most popular by farm tourists (Tab. 11). The sport horse riding turned out to be quite unpopular in the countryside. The most popular recreation was assigned in horse farms by the horseback riding, where hippotherapy was the smallest. In three of the six analyzed cases there were significant differences between the analyzed types of farms.



Table 9. The reasons for a negative decision on the possible purchase of horses in general farms (the ability to choose multiple answers)

Tabela 9. Przyczyny negatywnej decyzji w sprawie ewentualnego zakupu koni w ogólnych gospodarstwach agroturystycznych (możliwość wyboru wielu odpowiedzi)

Reason for a negative decision on the possible purchase of horses Przyczyna negatywnej decyzji w sprawie ewentualnego zakupu koni	Number of replies Liczba odpowiedzi	%
Financial issues Kwestie finansowe	13	16
Lack of adequate infrastructure (no stables, riding arena, pastures, small size of the farm) Brak odpowiedniej infrastruktury (brak stajni, ujeżdżalni, pastwisk, mały obszar gospodarstwa)	28	35
Lack of experience and skills associated with farming and handling of horses Brak doświadczenia i umiejętności związanych z chowem i obsługą koni	27	33
Health issues Przyczyny zdrowotne	3	4
The lack of demand for services related to horses Brak popytu na usługi związane z końmi	10	12

Table 10. The degree of interest of equestrian services by resting people

Tabela 10. Stopień zainteresowania wypoczywających ofertą konnych usług turystycznych

The degree of interest of equestrian services Stopień zainteresowania ofertą konnych usług turystycznych		General farms Gospodarstwa ogólne		Horse farms Gospodarstwa konne	
		number of replies liczba odpowiedzi	%	number of replies liczba odpowiedzi	%
1	Yes, always Tak, zawsze	4	8 <sub>x</sub>	3	23 <sub>y</sub>
2	Rather yes Raczej tak	5	10 <sub>x</sub>	7	53 <sub>y</sub>
3	Maybe Może	15	30 <sub>x</sub>	1	8 <sub>y</sub>
4	Rather not Raczej nie	15	30 <sub>x</sub>	1	8 <sub>y</sub>
5	Not Nie	11	22 <sub>x</sub>	1	8 <sub>y</sub>

Expressed percentages which are presented in rows are marked with different letters (x, y) differ significantly with  $P \leq 0.05$ .

Wyrażone w procentach wartości w wierszach oznaczone różnymi literami (x, y) różnią się istotnie przy  $P \leq 0,05$ .

Table 11. Types of services related to horses that are in demand in the agritourism farms  
(the ability to choose multiple answers)

Tabela 11. Rodzaje usług związanych z końmi, na które istnieje zapotrzebowanie  
w gospodarstwach agroturystycznych (możliwość wyboru wielu odpowiedzi)

The type of services related to horses Rodzaj usługi związanej z końmi	General farms Gospodarstwa ogólne		Horse farms Gospodarstwa konne	
	number of replies liczba odpowiedzi	%	number of replies liczba odpowiedzi	%
There is no general requirement for this type of service Nie ma w ogóle zapotrzebowania na tego typu usługę	11	12 <sub>x</sub>	3	6 <sub>x</sub>
Horse riding lessons Nauka jazdy konnej	14	16 <sub>x</sub>	10	20 <sub>x</sub>
Recreational horse riding (horse riding school, trips into the field) Rekreacyjna jazda konna (jazda na ujeżdżalni, wyjazdy w teren)	13	15 <sub>x</sub>	12	24 <sub>y</sub>
Sports riding (eg. Jumping) Sportowa jazda konna (np. skoki przez przeszkody)	0	0 <sub>x</sub>	4	8 <sub>y</sub>
Guided children on ponies Oprowadzanie dzieci na kucach	15	18 <sub>x</sub>	7	14 <sub>y</sub>
Carriage rides, sleigh rides Przejażdżki bryczką, kuligi	25	30 <sub>x</sub>	6	12 <sub>y</sub>
Hippotherapy Hipoterapia	3	7 <sub>x</sub>	1	2 <sub>y</sub>
Horse rides trips (one-day and multi-day) Rajdy konne (jednodniowe i kilkudniowe)	2	2 <sub>x</sub>	7	14 <sub>y</sub>

Expressed percentages which are presented in rows are marked with different letters (x, y) differ significantly with  $P \leq 0.05$ .

Wyrażone w procentach wartości w wierszach oznaczone różnymi literami (x, y) różnią się istotnie przy  $P \leq 0,05$ .

It was also found that a small proportion of respondents (10%) of general farms pointed their willingness to purchase horses on their farms.

It was alleged that most owners of general farms would like to buy Hucul and Polish Konik (Tab. 12). Małopolski horses, ponies and a cold-blooded type of horses were indicated almost 15% of respondents. The horse farms, however, most have Hucul and Polish Konik. Slightly less popular are Małopolski horses. In two of the five analyzed cases there were significant differences between the analyzed types of farms.

Table 12. Breed of horses, the purchase of which is planned by the owners of general farms and maintained by horse farms  
 Tabela 12. Rasy koni, których zakup jest planowany przez właścicieli gospodarstw ogólnych i utrzymywanych przez gospodarstwa konne

Horse breed Rasa koni	General farms Gospodarstwa ogólne		Horse farms Gospodarstwa konne	
	number of replies liczba odpowiedzi	% of all respondents interested purchasing horses % ankietowanych zaintereso- wanych zakupem koni	number of replies liczba odpowiedzi	%
Małopolski breed Koń małopolski	1	14 <sub>x</sub>	8	24 <sub>y</sub>
Hucul Hucul	2	29 <sub>x</sub>	10	30 <sub>x</sub>
Polish Konik Konik polski	2	29 <sub>x</sub>	10	30 <sub>x</sub>
Pony Kuc	1	14 <sub>x</sub>	4	12 <sub>x</sub>
Cold-blooded type horses Typ zimnokrwisty	1	14 <sub>x</sub>	1	3 <sub>y</sub>

Expressed percentages which are presented in rows are marked with different letters (x, y) differ significantly with  $P \leq 0.05$ .

Wyrażone w procentach wartości w wierszach oznaczone różnymi literami (x, y) różnią się istotnie przy  $P \leq 0,05$ .

#### DISCUSSION

As the replies of the respondents suggest, the structure of agritourism farms allows organizing recreation for a relatively small group of tourists staying on their farm. It can be concluded that starting this type of agritourism, emphasizing its peacefulness, tranquility and family atmosphere, are fulfilled [Ciodyk 1999]. It turns out that a sizeable centers base is often offered by horse farms, which is most likely dictated by the organization, in their area, of equestrian events. Zawadka [2010] shares a similar view, which states that being able to offer accommodation for a dozen groups of tourists on farms, which provide equestrian services, give an open field to create very interesting special offers. It is also necessary corresponding surface facilities which specialize in rural tourism [Walkowicz and Bandosz 2004]. As it is indicated by the obtained results, Polish agritourism farms have a typical and comparable area to that observed in Portugal, Lithuania and Italy [Poczta *et al.* 2007]. It is obvious that dealing with livestock farming will be most often associated with a greater acreage of agricultural land, especially for horses that need large areas of pasture and paddocks for their proper functioning. Besides, it is also important to produce animal feed, since its purchase will multiply the cost [Pruski *et al.* 2006].

Being able to assure the financial profitability, which in the current financial realities of the global economy is becoming a key issue, points to the need to be able to offer

agro-tourism services throughout the year [Bąk 2005]. It turns out, however, that provide people is possible only during the tourist season. The consequence of such a situation may be raising the price of farms which protect themselves from bankruptcy. The desire to remain on the market and attract as many tourists as possible is a driving force to enlarge the tourist offer, especially for the various forms of physical recreation [Walkowicz and Bandosz 2004]. It is worth highlighting that cycling is the most popular activity of spending free time to both types of farms. Similar conclusions can be found in Krupińska's thesis [2003].

Another issue is the characterization of people visiting farmhouses. The results of this study indicate that in national conditions, families with relatively young children have an advantage in this case. A small group young people belong to a small group of visitors, which is especially evident in general farms. Thanks to it, it can be seen that horseback riding has a motivational influence on the young people. The discussed situation is different from that recorded in other European countries, where people aged 20 - 30 years state the group of tourists frequently visiting rural tourist resorts [Brščić 2006]. Probably this situation may be due to the fact that the Polish tourist farms offer is unsuited to the needs of young people, which is largely emphasized by the results of distributed questionnaires.

According to the results of European research, horse services in farms constitute a valuable offer for tourists [Quinn 2004]. Similar indications give the results of this work. However, it can see that significant developments in the area of riding may be limited. The owners of agritourism farms are apparently afraid of innovation in their area, indicating that the main barrier against buying horses is the lack of adequate infrastructure, or simply-experience. A frequent indication is also financial condition that may increasingly interfere the development of rural equestrian tourism. On the other hand, the constant prices increase for horse services may have a negative influence on number of people who might be interested in this form of recreation [Ciodyk 1999].

Analyzing the results of this study it can be also emphasized that the use of equine sector, which is the most popular among tourists is also quite limited, which may be caused by insufficient advertising of this type of entertainment. According to Grobelny [2009], intensive promotion is an essential driving force of the tourism industry. The choice of specific breeds of horses that could be purchased by the owners of horse farms seems to be interesting as well. In this case, the biggest interest is focused on primitive horses: Hucul and Polish Konik. This is most likely related to the economics of maintaining individuals of these races [Haller 2005].

The indications of surveyed people concerning breeds of horses which are usually kept in a horse farms it is probably due to the low maintenance costs of that breeds. It turns out that the most popular horses are primitive ones, and not even Małopolski horses. However, they are only held in more than half of horse farms. This should be an important signal for their farmers, especially for those who are interested in the program of protection of genetic resources of Małopolska horse breed [Janczarek and Próchniak 2010]. However, it seems that horses produced by this program, in the future, should provide an effective basis for the development of the national equestrian tourism, which would be preceded by a big advertising campaign.

## CONCLUSIONS

1. The number of accommodation in the national agritourism farms was often small, which enables individual approach to vacationing people.

2. Horse farms are characterized by both a significantly expanded accommodation base and a larger surface area than general farms, which may be dictated by the possibility of organizing large equestrian events, as well as the specifics of the use and breeding horses.

3. The rest in agritourism farms has relatively little interest among young people. Therefore, the change or extension of the profile of the special offers of innovative forms of recreation is advisable. It is also beneficial to offer services related to the use of horses.

4. It can be assumed that in the national agritourism farms the use of Polish Konik, Hucul and Małopolski horses will be mostly held to learn horse riding. This situation should positively affect the development of mentioned horse breeding within the framework of the protection of genetic resources.

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**Streszczenie.** Celem pracy stała się ocena profilu działalności krajowych gospodarstw agroturystycznych, rozpatrywanej również w kontekście wykorzystania koni w kształtowaniu atrakcyjnej oferty turystycznej oraz potencjalnych możliwości rozwoju tego typu usług. Materiał do badań stanowiły odpowiedzi na pytania zawarte w ankiecie, która była skierowana do właścicieli gospodarstw agroturystycznych niewykorzystujących koni (gospodarstwa ogólne) i wykorzystujących konie (gospodarstwa konne). Ankieta zawierała 11 pytań, które dotyczyły m.in. charakterystyki gospodarstwa i potencjalnych odbiorców oferty. Na podstawie uzyskanych wyników stwierdzono, że liczba miejsc noclegowych w krajowych gospodarstwach agroturystycznych jest najczęściej nieduża, natomiast konne gospodarstwa agroturystyczne charakteryzują się zarówno znacznie rozbudowaną bazą noclegową i większą powierzchnią, co może być podyktowane możliwością organizowania dużych imprez hipicznych, a także specyfiką użytkowania oraz hodowli koni. Można przypuszczać, że w krajowych gospodarstwach agroturystycznych najczęściej będzie się spotykało wykorzystywane do nauki jeździectwa koniki polskie, hucuły i konie małopolskie. Sytuacja ta powinna pozytywnie wpływać na rozwój hodowli koni wymienionych ras w ramach programu ochrony zasobów genetycznych.

**Słowa kluczowe:** agroturystyka, oferta specjalna, konie