

*1. Please introduce yourself and your company/position in the industry.*

Russell Williams (President, USTA; Chairman, Hanover Shoe Farms, Inc., which is the largest Standardbred breeding farm in the world)

Michael J. Tanner (Executive Vice President, USTA)

Charles T.C. Lane (Director of Registry and Member Services, USTA)

*2. What it is that you wish you could do, but just cannot do today due to cost or lack of technology?*

There are a few conditions that seem to have a genetic component but cannot be removed from the gene pool by selection, because we have already selected over numerous generations for speed and gait.

The primary example of this is osteochondrosis dissecans (OCD), which has attained such a high incidence in our horse population that we are confident that there is a genetic component. There is research that points to a developmental component as well, but the ability to steer around any genetic factor would be a great advantage to our industry and its horse population.

There are other conditions as well, such as various spinal stenoses that could be avoided and reduced by a clearer understanding of their genetic underpinnings.

*3. What is/are the largest current and 10-year challenge(s) to your industry that genetics research might be able to address?*

One of the major issues that we face today in the standardbred industry is the decline of foal crops. While the decreases have been minimal during the last couple of years due to the expansion of expanded gaming, we are nearly half of what we were 20 years ago. That being said, the need to optimize the health and durability of our equine athletes has never been higher. To continue to compete at such a high level at the current frequency, the USTA would be very much in favor of receiving a benefit from the various genomic research projects as well as participating.

*4. What issues are of common interest to multiple areas (breeds) of the horse industry?*

As indicated in #3, as the economy shifts by potential loss of disposable income, the ability or desire to produce foals may continue to decline. That being said, foal crop shortage would be a common thread between the multiple breeds.

*5. Other insights?*

Our breeders/owners/drivers and trainers always want to know how to get the most enjoyment as well as performance out of their horses. This very essential information will allow us to perform

at peak levels and could provide proper veterinary and nutritional care to keep these horses healthy and sound for much longer periods, providing great value to our nearly 17,000 members.