

Study on Land Use in and around Cork
Philipp Fritzsche / Traveller Visibility Group
2000

<http://communities.msn.com/TravellerVisibilityGroup/landuse1.msnw>

1. Background and aim of the study

Since the implementation of the Control of Horses Act, the Traveller Visibility Group has observed how it affected Travellers who are trying to maintain a link with the tradition of horse ownership. It is clear that the Act is making horse ownership more difficult than ever. Among the many obstacles facing horse owners, Travellers have stated that farmers are less and less prepared to rent land to them. Even among the farmers who are prepared to rent land to Traveller horse owners, it is reported that some refuse because they fear how their neighbours might react. It is alleged by other farmers that they are threatened with tax investigation if they continue to rent their land to Travellers.

The Traveller Visibility Group is planning to establish a Horse Project near Cork, which will allow Travellers safe and secure stabling and grazing for their horses, at a fair economic rent. The case for seeking Government support to establish the project is partly based on the belief that Travellers find it difficult to secure grazing land for horses. However, this belief has not been tested by statistical research, hence the decision to carry out this study.

The aim of the study was to discover what proportion of land to rent within 20 miles of Cork may be rented by Travellers for grazing horses.

About the researcher

Philipp Fritzsche is a student of Social and Community Work at the Fachhochschule of Koblenz in Germany. Originally from Baden-Württemberg, he is in Ireland under the ERASMUS Programme, which is the European Union 3rd level student exchange programme. Cork Community Development Institute (CCDI) kindly made Philipp available to carry out the study from February to April 2000.

2. Method of the study

The method chosen was to interview farmers over the telephone using a structured interview, and to record the data from each part of the interview for use in the study results. The data to be used in presentation of findings would include two parallel sets of information:

- **Presentation of research findings by the amount of land surveyed:**
 1. Of the land surveyed, expressed in acres: we show the percentage of that land that is available for grazing horses; and:
 2. Of the land which is available for grazing horses, we calculate the percentage of that land that is available to Travellers for grazing horses
- **Presentation of research findings by the number of farms surveyed:**

1. Of the number of farms surveyed: we calculate the percentage of farms with land to rent for grazing horses.
2. Of those farms, we calculate what percentage of them is available for rent to Travellers for their horses.

The decision to present the findings in these two ways was taken to provide a more complete picture of the results.

2.1 Difficulties in producing a representative random sample of farmers for the study

The most representative and the most effective way to do this study would be to work from a list of farmers chosen at random from those who live within 20 miles of Cork. Therefore the first step in the study was to try to acquire such a list. There were many difficulties in the way of doing this, which meant that in practical terms it was impossible to get one. The following table shows the different institutions we approached:

Institution	Response
Department of Agriculture	Referred us to the Central Statistics Office and the Land Registry
Central Statistics Office	Legally bound not to give out information e.g. addresses of farmers.
Cork County Council	Referred us to the Land Registry
Land Registry	Invited us to examine 150,000 paper records and they could waive the fee £1 per record if a Government Department sponsored the study. As the records are not yet computerised, this was not possible to do within our limited resources.
Irish Farmer Association	Gave no response
Eircom Web site on the Internet	Access to this site was suspended during the time of the study pending a court action under the Data Protection Act
Veterinarian Surgeons	We called five vets to ask them if they could send us a list of farmers. All of them told us that it is impossible for them because of protection for the farmers.

The outcome of these enquiries is that we had to conduct the study without the benefit of having a random sample to work from. The alternative was to seek a sample of farmers for the study using a number of different routes, as described in the next sub-section.

2.2 Alternative approach to producing a sample list of farmers

- ***Golden Pages***

We looked for farmers in the Golden Pages. This showed 9 farmers within 20 miles of Cork two of whom have land to rent. Out of a total of 9 farmers questioned from the Golden Pages list, 2 have land to rent and these are analysed in the research findings.

- ***Newspaper Advertisements***

Over several weeks we checked advertisements in the Examiner newspaper. Most of the land lettings were in the names of auctioneers. Only 5 farmers were included in the study from these advertisements.

The problem with calling the auctioneers is that they may represent their opinions and not necessarily the opinions of the farmers. For example, if an auctioneer does not like to do business with Travellers he may finish the phone-call without asking the farmer for his opinion. (*See text box, p.5*)

Of the 11 auctioneers contacted by the researcher, only two reacted in this way. However their responses covered findings of 468 acres of rentable land which was recorded in the findings of the study. The findings generated by these two auctioneers represents 29.3% of all the land surveyed in the study.

Reaction typical of two auctioneers out of the 11 contacted. The text in quotation marks is a written record of the words spoken.

Auctioneer: "Yes. The land is for grazing horses." (friendly)

Philipp: "Do you think the farmer would rent the land to Travelling people?"

Auctioneer: "I don't know."

Philipp: "Could you ask the farmer about that?"

Auctioneer: "All right, I will check it out for you. You can call me on Thursday again."

Two days later

Philipp: "Did you ask the farmer if he/she would rent the land for Travellers?"

Auctioneer: "The land is not for grazing horses and we do not have any land for grazing horses. Bye!" (Unfriendly)

(When the researcher called another auctioneer it was nearly the same.)

- ***Calls to people in the Phone book chosen at random***

The researcher called phone numbers in rural areas chosen at random in the phonebook. If the person who answered was not a farmer, the researcher asked the person if he or she knew farmers who have land to rent. After 40 phone calls the researcher abandoned this method as it did not result in finding even 1 farmer to survey.

2.3 Outcomes of the alternative approach to producing a sample list of farmers

To do this study there have been only two ways to get access to farmers: the Golden Pages and newspaper advertisements. The breakdown of the sources of the survey sample is as follows:

The average of land to rent per farm: *34 acres*

Golden Pages	2 farmers
Newspaper advertisements	5 farmers directly
	40 farmers represented by auctioneers
Total survey sample	47 farmers, expressed as the number of farms in the study

Direct interviews with only 7 farmers went into the results of the study, so the results cannot be safely described as representative of farmers' views. However, the result of the study probably gives an accurate picture of the experiences of Travellers, because they have to go through the same route that the researcher did by going through auctioneers.

With huge resources of time, it would have been possible to sift through Land Registry records. However, within the limited resources available to conduct this study, a lot was achieved. Contact was made either directly or via an auctioneer with 80 farmers, of whom 47 have land to rent. This became our sample for the study.

2.4 Details of the interviews

- *Directly with farmers*

When the researcher called a farmer he told them that he was a student from Germany and that he was doing a survey of the statistics of land available for grazing horses.

If the farmer's name came from the Golden Pages the researcher asked them at first if they had land to rent because only the land which was to rent was recorded in the study.

The next question was if the land which was to rent was for grazing horses. If the land was not for rent for this purpose, the number of acres went on file as part of the record of the total amount of land to rent.

The third question asked for the details of the land which was to rent:

- How many acres
- What buildings are available to rent with the land
- How long may the land be rented for
- Price of rent

The fourth question that the researcher asked the farmers was if they would rent the land to Travelling people. If the answer was "Yes" this was entered as a result, including the number of acres.

If they answered "No" the researcher asked them for the reason why.

The last question was to ask if they knew anybody else who might have land to rent in order to compile more information.

- ***Interviews with auctioneers***

These calls were made only to auctioneers who had advertised land to rent.

The first words were that the researcher introduced himself, followed by the question above regarding land to rent for horse grazing.

When the researcher came to the question about Travellers, he asked if they thought that the farmer would rent the land to Travelling people. If they said "Yes" the researcher said that he would give their phone number to the horse owners. If they said "No" he asked for the reason why.

If they said "I don't know" he asked them if they could check it with the farmers and that he would call them again.

3. Statistics gained from research findings

- **Presentation of research findings by the amount of land surveyed:**

1. Of the land surveyed, 18% (292 acres) is available for grazing horses and 82% (1306 acres) is not.

2. This 18% of land that is available for grazing horses breaks down as follows: 13%

(217 acres) is available to Travellers to rent for their horses, and the remaining 5%

(75 acres) is available to rent for grazing horses, **but not if they are owned by Travellers.**

Of land to rent, 82% is not available for grazing horses.

13% is available for grazing Travellers' horses.

5% is available for razing for horses, but not if they belong to Travellers.

- **Presentation of research findings by the number of farms surveyed:**

1. Of the number of farms surveyed, 85% (40 farms) do not have land to rent for grazing horses and 15% (7 farms) do.
2. The 15% (7 farms) which do have land for grazing horses break down as follows: 9% (4 farms) are available to rent to Travellers, and 6% (3 farms) are available for grazing horses, **but not if they are owned by Travellers.**

85% of the farms to rent are not available to rent for horses

9% of farms are available for renting Travellers' horses

6% are available for grazing for horses, but not if they are for Travellers' horses

- **Amount of land surveyed through each channel**

18% directly with farmers

82% through auctioneers

The reasons put forward by the auctioneers/farmers why they do not like to rent the land to Travellers:

There have been 3 pieces of land which are for grazing horses but not for Travellers' horses.

1. **Farmer:** *He said for him it is no problem, but he is afraid of his neighbours.*
2. **Auctioneer:** *(See box above on page 5)*
3. **Auctioneer:** *The auctioneer did not ask the farmer for the reason why.*

4. Interpretation of Findings

- Finding land for grazing horses is only possible through the Golden Pages and advertisements in the newspaper.
- The Golden Pages are not effective because only two farmers in there have land to rent.
- 89% of the land lettings in the newspaper were sent in by auctioneers. If Travellers try to find land for their horses they will have to call an auctioneer 9 times out of 10, which makes it more difficult than the traditional method of bargaining in person with the landowner.
- Only 18% of the land which is to rent is for grazing horses. This makes it difficult for any horse owner to find suitable land to rent. When a Traveller tries to find rentable land, he or she has the added difficulty of having to deal with an auctioneer in most cases.
- The statistics as presented do not take account of the quality of the land to rent, which may or may not be suitable
- Taking all of these points together, the chances of a Traveller succeeding in renting land for grazing for horses is remote.

Appendix

Interview text

Interview number: _____

Date of interview: _____ Source of farmer's/auctioneer's name: _____

Name of farmer/auctioneer: _____

Phone: _____

1. Do you have any land to rent for grazing horses? Circle: yes no

Will you take part in the survey? (Five minutes at the most)

IF YES, PROCEED TO ASK QUESTION 2.

IF NO: Ask: Do you know anybody else who might have land to rent?

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Address: _____

2. How many acres of land do you have to rent? _____

What buildings / stables are available to rent with the land? _____

What length of time would you rent the land for? _____

Price of rent? _____

3. Would you rent the land to horse owners who are Travelling people? Circle: yes no

IF YES, FOLLOW INSTRUCTIONS BELOW

IF NO: ASK THE REASON WHY? _____

**AND ASK: Do you know anybody else who might
have land to rent?**

Name: _____

Phone _____

Address: _____

Say that you will give the details and the phone-number to the horse owners

Address of the land: _____