

WHAT HAPPENED TO HORSES IN THE 20TH CENTURY?

Background information

The horse has been a remarkable domestic animal in the 20th century. It has been used for travelling, to help in fields and forests and for transporting heavy loads. In wars it's been essential help for transport and draft and carriage work. The horse has been a loyal friend and it has been taken good care of.



Firehorse and firefighters in Kajaani in the 1920's. Source: Yle News

Population	
Years	Mean
1920-1940	10 919 091
1950-1970	13 098 300
1980-2000	14 966 315

Amount of Horses	
Years	Mean
1920-1940	373 000
1950-1970	243 000
1980-2000	52 000

Members of The Equestrian Federation of Finland											
Year	1960	1962	1966	1970	1974	1978	1982	1986	1994	1996	2000
Members	1575	1732	3336	6455	8269	11 004	137 17	16 085	18 877	21 079	26 273

Amount of Cars	
Years	Mean
1920-1940	22 000
1950-1970	276 000
1980-2000	2 031 000

Amount of Tractors	
Years	Mean
1920-1940	2 720
1950-1970	86 300
1980-2000	297 000



A horse is pulling a load of logs in the wintry forest. Source: Time machine – History and Retro

Introduction

The study investigated the changes in the horse population and factors that may have caused them. Research questions:

- How has the number of horses changed in the 20th century?
- What things may have had some effect on the changes?

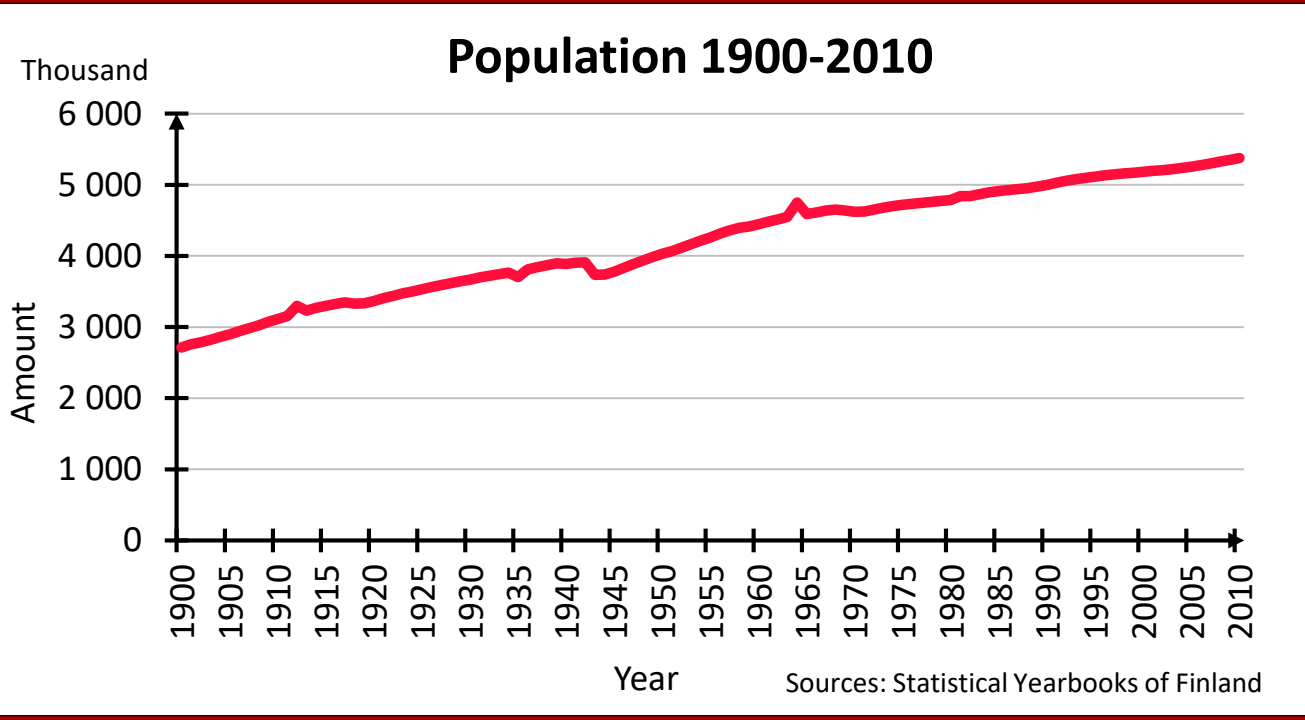
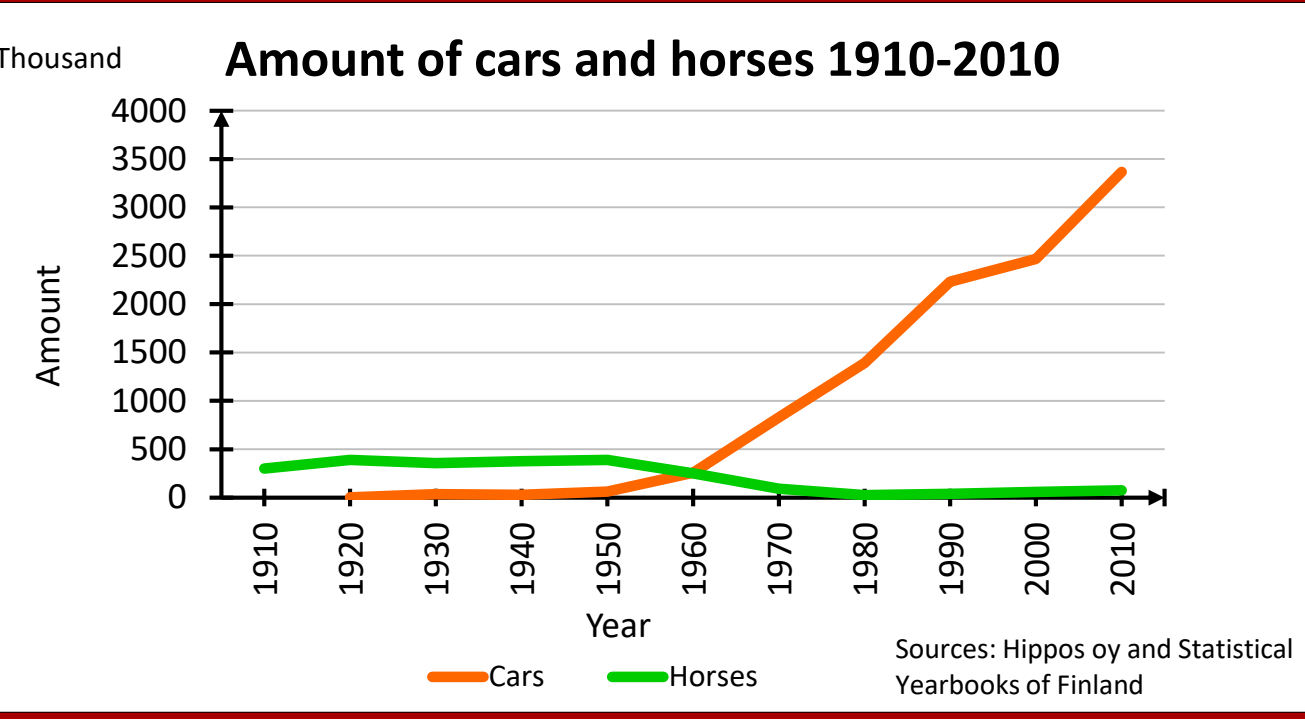
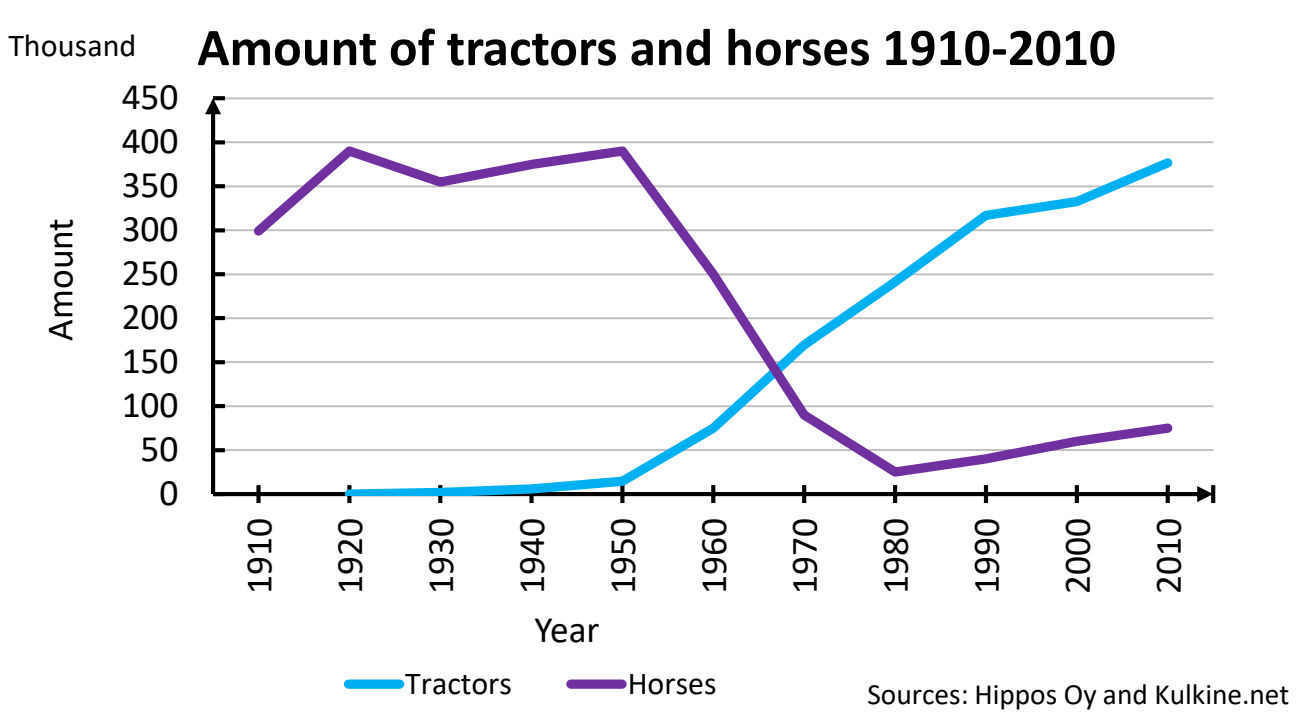
Research methods

We searched for the information on the Internet and books. We analyzed the data collected and used graphs to describe the data.

Hypotheses

Based on the background information we believe that the increase in the number of machinery may have decreased the amount of horses.

After some investigations we found that the amount of horses had started to drop fast in the 1950's. We think that the number has decreased suspiciously fast so we believe we are going to see an increase in the amount of slaughtered horses at the same time as tractors and cars have started to become more common.



Results

There were about 390 000 horses in Finland in 1920, and their number decreased by the 1930's to 355 000. In the 1950's the amount of horses rose back to 390 000. The amount started to fall in the 1950's until it began to increase again in the 1980's.

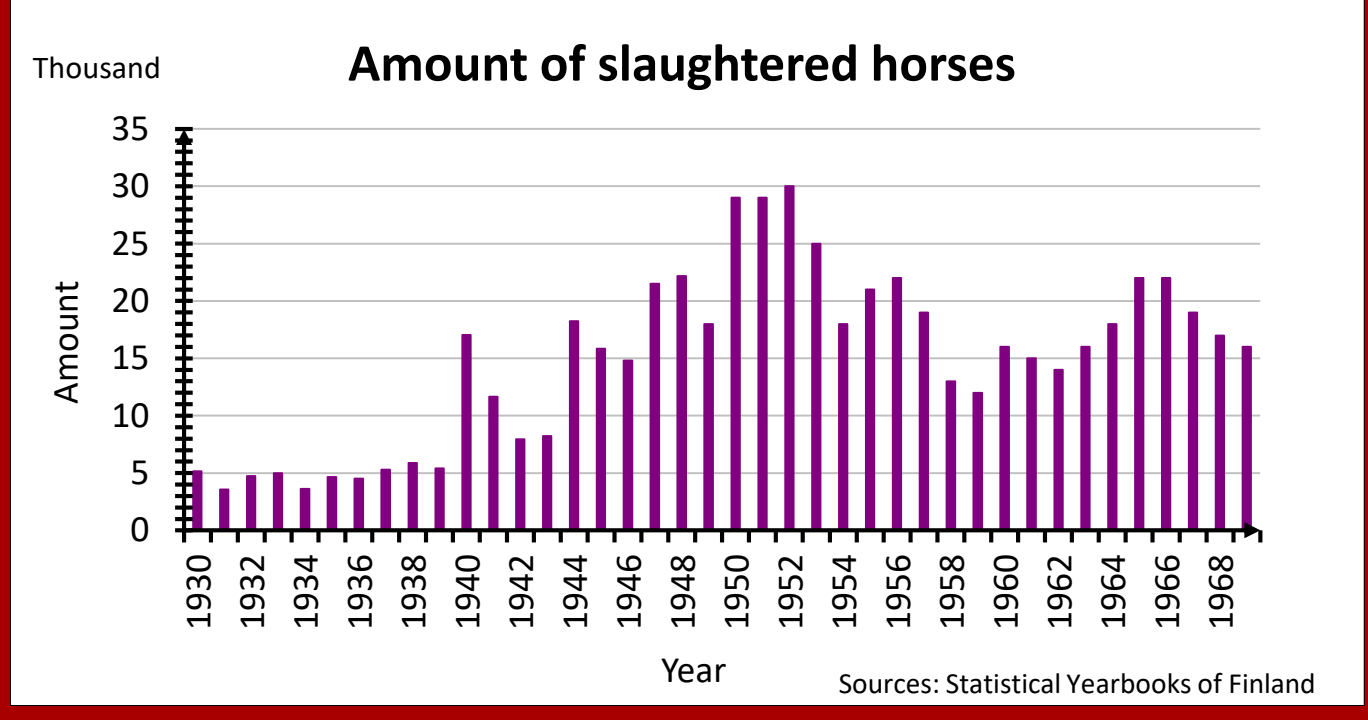
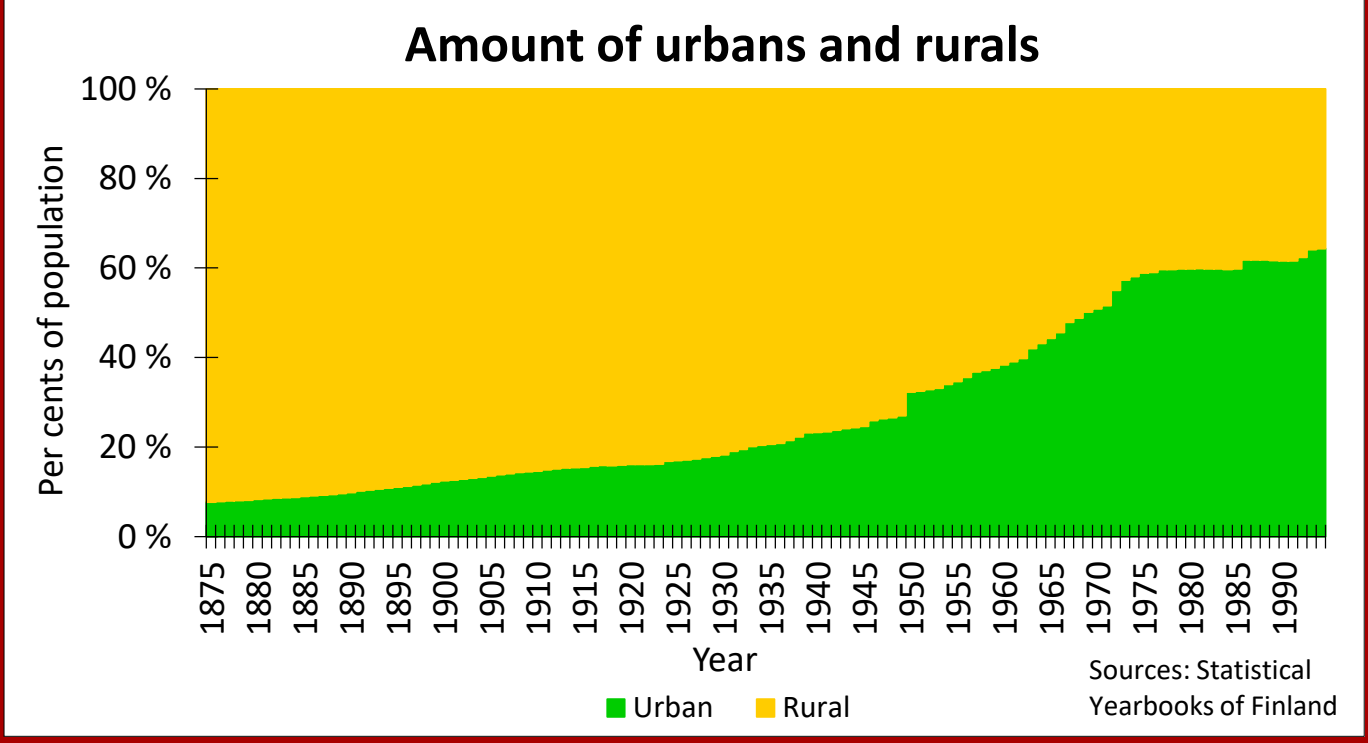
The number of tractors and cars started to increase in the 1950's, at the same time as the number of horses started to drop.

A radical change can't be seen in the development of the population in the 1950's. Between 1875 and 1949 the amount of the rural population has decreased 0,32 per cent annually, but in 1950 the change was even 7,2 per cent. We can state that the migration to towns accelerated in the 1950's.

The number of horses could not have decreased that fast naturally, that is, older horses dying gradually and no more horses bred. We decided to research if there could be seen a rise in the amount of horses slaughtered in that year. We found a statistics about slaughtered horses. Approximately 15 000 horses were slaughtered annually between 1910 and 1969, but between 1950 and 1952 the average was 29 000. A clear increase can be seen in the amount of slaughtered horses, which means that more horses have died between 1950 and 1952 than in the previous years.

The tables present the averages of the numbers at a certain timespan. The fact that the number of cars and tractors has increased clearly more than the population can be seen on the tables. We can make the conclusion that cars and tractors have become more popular.

The increase of the horse population from the 1980's is probably due to the growing popularity of equestrian sports. This presumption is supported by the table of the members of The Equestrian Federation of Finland, according to which the number of the members has grown quite constantly and more faster towards to the 2000's.



Conclusions

Wars must have killed many horses. However, the number of horses has been compiled to the statistics only every tenth year, so the statistics do not show strict annual variations.

In the 1930's there were only a few tractors and cars so they could not have caused an occasional decrease in the number of horses. In Finland there was an economic depression between the late 1920's and the early 1930's. The lack of food did not allow keeping horses so most likely some of the horses were slaughtered and eaten. This claim is supported by a rise in the amount of slaughtered horses between 1950 and 1952. Horses were not bred a lot because the market was poor.

According to the results of our research it can be presumed that different kind of machinery, such as tractors and cars, has become more common, which has decreased the number of horses from the 1950's onward.

The amount of rural population and the number of horses seem to be connected because there was a significant change in both in the 1950's. We believe that when people moved from the countryside to cities they must have sold any horses they had for example for slaughter. A rise in the amount of horses slaughtered is seen between 1950 and 1952.

Thoughts

The study caused challenges especially in finding the statistics but we managed to get good information about the subject and learned how to find accurate information. We think that we have learned more about the history of Finland during our research than we have learned in the history lessons at school.

Our hypotheses were quite accurate, but we were surprised that the amount of horses had decreased so much. There was a rise in the amount of horse corpses as we assumed.

In the future it will be interesting to investigate how machines have effected our society and if humans are undergoing the same process as horses.

Summary

The amount of horses has decreased in the 1930's caused by the depression. Many horses also died during wars, like The Second World War between 1939 and 1945.

The amount of horses decreased in the 1950's because machines replaced horses in their duties. Horses were eaten and foals weren't born that much because horses weren't indispensable anymore.

The amount of horses has increased since the 1980's caused by the growing popularity of equestrian sports.

Timeline

Horses are important help at work, the amount of horses is at its top

The economic depression decreases the amount of horses

Tractors and cars become more common → the amount of horses decreases

The amount of machines is higher than the amount of horses

The popularity of equestrian sports grows → the amount of horses starts to increase



A hundred years ago most of the farming works were done by horses. Source: Tako.nba.fi