

Horse passports

In the guide

Identification requirements

Passport requirements

Why does my horse need a passport?

What's in the passport and how do I get one?

Identification of older animals

Foals

When must the passport accompany a horse?

Smartcard

What if I buy or sell a horse?

What do I do if my horse dies?

What should I do if the passport is lost or damaged?

Veterinary treatment

Wild or semi-wild horses on Dartmoor, Exmoor and the New Forest

Imported horses

Horse export

Enforcement

Further information

Penalties

Key legislation

Note: although the United Kingdom has left the European Union, certain pieces of legislation (formally known as 'retained EU law') will still apply until such time as they are replaced by new UK legislation; this means that you will still see references to EU regulations in our guidance.

This guidance is for England

All horse owners must ensure that their horse is correctly identified; they must also hold a valid passport (equine identification document) for their animal. The same requirement applies to all owners of equines.

In Regulation (EU) 2015/262 *laying down rules pursuant to Directives 90/427/EEC and 2009/156/EC as regards the methods for the identification of equidae (Equine Passport Regulation)* 'equidae' or 'equine animal(s)' are defined as "wild or domesticated soliped mammals of all species within the genus *Equus* of the family Equidae, and their crosses" - for example, horse, donkey, mule, hinny (jennet), zebra, Przewalski, or their crosses.

Identification requirements

Since 1 October 2020 horses, regardless of age, need to be microchipped with a unique number and this must be done before applying for a horse passport.

Microchips, which are also known as transponders, are read-only passive radio frequency identification devices that are implanted into a horse's body and have an identification number unique to that particular animal. Only a registered veterinary surgeon of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons or equivalent professional body in a Member State of the European Union (EU) can implant the device. A vet must undertake procedures to detect any previous devices already fitted to a horse before beginning to implant a microchip.

Passport requirements

Horses must hold a valid passport issued by a recognised horse passport issuing body (IB) - also known as a passport-issuing organisation (PIO) - by 30 November of the year of their birth or within six months of their birth, whichever is the later.

Foals will need to be microchipped and get a passport earlier if they are to be sold before this time limit has elapsed.

The passport must hold correct and up-to-date information. If the owner believes the details in the passport need updating they must ask the IB to modify and update the passport. This includes:

- eligibility for slaughter
- a change in the horse's status - for example, a change in its registered status
- an alternative form of identification has been applied to the horse
- a change of ownership

Where the passport has not been applied for within the required time limits, the animal will automatically be signed out of the human food chain.

Only the owner of the horse can apply for a passport.

Why does my horse need a passport?

Horse passports are required by law and are necessary in order to prevent horses that have been treated with certain veterinary medicines (such as wormers and analgesics) from entering the human food chain. Although we do not consume horse meat in any great quantity in the UK, a large number of horses are slaughtered in Britain each year for export for human consumption.

Passports will also help reduce the risk of a ban being introduced on up to 75% of veterinary medicines (including phenylbutazone, also known as 'Bute') currently used to treat horses.

Ensuring your horse passport, microchip and registered information on the Central Equine Database is up to date will also allow lost, stolen or straying horses to be quickly reunited with their owners. It reduces the likelihood of theft and illegal sale and prevents horses being slaughtered if they are signed out of the food chain. Additionally the Central Equine Database can be used to identify horses and owners during a disease outbreak and gives a clear picture of England's horse population.

What's in the passport and how do I get one?

A passport is a booklet (minimum A5 size), written in both English and French, that uniquely identifies a horse throughout its life and has been issued by a recognised IB. The passport details the horse's identity, including its unique life number and microchip number. This information will be laminated to prevent alteration. The later pages show the veterinary treatment history of the horse, its movement and ownership history, and a declaration as to whether or not the horse is intended for human consumption.

Applications for passports must be made by the owner of the horse (or the owner's appointed agent) in writing to an IB and be in the format specified by that IB.

A list of IBs / PIOs is available on the GOV.UK website.

Identification of older animals

Horses born on or before 30 June 2009 had until 1 October 2020 to be microchipped and a passport document applied for. Older horses have now been brought into line with the current requirements.

Since 1 October 2020 horses, regardless of age, need to be microchipped with a unique number that is matched to the owner's contact details and a passport. You can be fined if your horse is not microchipped.

Horse owners can log in to the 'ChipChecker' at the Equine Register, enter their horse's microchip number and check that the centrally registered information about their horse is correct and up to date. If anything is incorrect, you should contact the IB to rectify.

Foals

Foals need to be microchipped with a unique number that is matched to the owner's contact details, as well as getting a passport. This must be done before the foal is six months old or by 30 November in the year it is born, whichever is later. However, foals will need to be microchipped and get a passport earlier if they are to be sold before this time limit has elapsed.

Foals without a passport may be moved with their dam / foster mare for production purposes - for example, to and from a stud; they may also be sold without a passport providing they remain with their dam. Owners should note that some auctioneers may require all horses to have a valid passport for sale at auction.

When must the passport accompany a horse?

The passport must accompany a horse at all times. The person with primary responsibility for the horse must have the passport made available to them if they are not the owner. The exceptions to this are:

- emergency situations
- when a horse is being grazed or stabled but the passport can be produced without delay in the event of an inspection
- when a horse is being moved on foot, where the passport can be viewed without delay
- when a horse is being used for competition or an event and is required to leave the venue temporarily
- unweaned foals accompanying their dam or foster mare

Smartcard

A smartcard is a plastic device with an embedded computer chip capable of storing data that can be read by compatible computer systems. They can be used to accompany the horse if the animal is registered or being moved for breeding and production purposes rather than the actual passport for movements into and within England.

Smartcards must contain the following visible information:

- IB
- unique life number
- name
- sex
- colour
- the last 15 digits of the code transmitted by the transponder (as appropriate)
- photograph of the equine animal

Part A section I of the passport must be available electronically.

The same applies for the movement of registered horses and equines for the purpose of breeding and production within the UK, in circumstances where those horses have entered into the United Kingdom (UK) from the EU.

The devices can be authorised to be used for export to Member States of the EU, to accompany the horse instead of the passport, which allows equines to move within agreed European national boundaries. It is recommended that you check with the relevant Member State before using a smartcard.

The smartcard must be issued by the same IB that issued the paper passport.

What if I buy or sell a horse?

When a horse is sold the owner must give the passport to the buyer at the time there is a transfer of ownership (whether or not any money changes hands). Within 30 days of transfer the new owner must:

- notify the IB of the change of ownership. The new owner must provide their name, address and contact details.
- return the passport to the issuing agency for updating.

In the case of auction sales, the passport must be given to the auctioneers, who must then give it to the buyer to follow this process.

There is no exemption for dealers that sell a horse within 30 days of purchasing it.

A horse cannot be sold without a passport (veterinary or breed certificates are not sufficient).

Note: it is advisable to thoroughly check a passport before purchasing a horse to ensure the details provided are accurate, and in particular check that the date of birth has not been altered.

What do I do if my horse dies?

When a horse dies, the keeper must return the passport to the IB within 30 days of death and can request

that it is sent back once the procedure of logging the death and cancelling the passport has been completed. The same requirement applies if the horse becomes lost, including theft.

When a horse is sold to a slaughterhouse, the occupier of the slaughterhouse will give the passport to the official veterinary surgeon.

What should I do if the passport is lost or damaged?

Where a passport has been lost but the horse's identity can be established and an ownership declaration is available, any person may apply to the IB for a replacement passport for that horse (if the IB is known).

Where the original IB is not known, and there is no microchip that can be traced, the owner should apply to any IB to obtain a replacement passport.

Veterinary treatment

Article 37 of Regulation (EU) 2015/262 states: "An equine animal shall be deemed to be intended for slaughter for human consumption except where it is, in accordance with this Regulation, irreversibly declared as not so intended in Part II of Section II of the identification document by ..." the signature of (a) the owner at their own discretion, or (b) the keeper and veterinarian responsible (for administering veterinary medicine); or where applicable the IB issuing a duplicate or replacement identification document in accordance with the relevant articles.

The passport needs to be available at the time of treatment with a veterinary medicine. If the horse is not already signed out of the food chain and the veterinary medicine to be administered will require it, the vet is obliged to ensure this is done in part II of section II of the passport. The vet may also need to 'invalidate' part III of section II.

The substances that should not be administered, supplied or prescribed to a food-producing animal are:

- any product that contains an active substance not contained within table 1 (the 'allowed list') of Regulation (EU) No 37/2010 on *pharmacologically active substances and their classification regarding maximum residue limits in foodstuffs of animal origin* or on the list of essential substances (such as phenylbutazone) will automatically mean that the horse must be permanently excluded from the food chain
- medicines containing substances included on the 'prohibited substances' list

If any of these substances are administered the horse can **never** be slaughtered for human consumption and the declaration in section II of the horse passport must be signed by the veterinarian or the owner as 'Not intended for human consumption'. Your vet will be able to advise you further regarding the above products and medicines.

You are advised to think carefully before deciding whether you wish to voluntarily sign your horse out of the human food chain. A 'not intended' declaration at part II of section II of the passport cannot be reversed and a horse may not be consigned for slaughter for human consumption if this section has been signed.

If unplanned or emergency veterinary treatment is required and the passport is not available, the vet will not know whether your horse is signed out of the food chain and will therefore be permitted to administer only substances suitable for food-producing animals. The vet is required to record all vaccinations a horse receives in sections VII and VIII of the horse passport.

The vet is also required to enter the date of the last administration, as prescribed, of that medicinal product in section II of the passport. The animal so treated can be slaughtered for human consumption only after the end of the general withdrawal period of six months following the date of the last administration.

Wild or semi-wild horses on Dartmoor, Exmoor and the New Forest

Wild or semi-wild horses identified in the lists kept by the Dartmoor Commoners Council, the stud book of the Exmoor Pony Society, the lists kept by Verderers of the New Forest, the stud book of the New Forest Pony Breeding and Cattle Society, or identified in the lists kept by the National Trust as Konik equines located at Wicken Fen, are exempt from the requirement for horse passports until such time as they leave those respective areas, or are brought into domestic use. This exemption applies to those animals so listed and contained within the designated areas. All other horses in those areas are required to have horse passports.

Imported horses

A horse may be moved within the UK only if it is accompanied by a passport (with a few exceptions).

Horses entering the UK with an identification document may be considered valid if they comply with set conditions. The owner of any horse entering the UK without a horse passport issued by an IB must apply for a horse passport within 30 days of entering the country. Until the passport is issued, no change of ownership may take place.

The horse will need to be identified in accordance with UK rules and will require a microchip when being issued with a passport. If the horse has an existing microchip detected, it may be possible to use this identification and update the existing passport. Any passport so issued must state that the horse is not intended for human consumption.

For information on other import rules please refer to the guidance on importing animals on the GOV.UK website.

Horse export

To export horses (except registered horses*) into the EU from the UK, as well as holding a valid passport, horse owners must have an EU travel identification document, which can be obtained from your IB. The EU travel identification document must also accompany the animals while they are being moved or transported to slaughter.

[*Registered domestic horses are those registered with a recognised breed society or companies like the British Horse Database at Weatherbys. 'Registered domestic Equidae' does not simply mean those with horse passports.]

For information on other export rules please refer to the GOV.UK website's guidance on special rules for export horses and ponies.

Enforcement

Authorised officers of the Secretary of State or the local authority have the power to enter premises (and vehicles) and inspect horse passports and other documents at any reasonable time.

Further information

More comprehensive information on horse passports can be found on the GOV.UK website.

Penalties

Failure to comply with trading standards law can lead to enforcement action and to sanctions, which may include a fine and/or imprisonment. For more information please see 'Trading standards: powers, enforcement and penalties'.

Key legislation

Regulation (EU) No 37/2010 *on pharmacologically active substances and their classification regarding maximum residue limits in foodstuffs of animal origin*

Regulation (EU) 2015/262 *laying down rules pursuant to Directives 90/427/EEC and 2009/156/EC as regards the methods for the identification of equidae (Equine Passport Regulation)*

Equine Identification (England) Regulations 2018

Equine (Records, Identification and Movement) (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019

Last reviewed / updated: March 2021

In this update

Updated information about the identification of older horses

Please note

This information is intended for guidance; only the courts can give an authoritative interpretation of the law.

The guide's 'Key legislation' links may only show the original version of the legislation, although some amending legislation is linked to separately where it is directly related to the content of a guide. Information on amendments to legislation can be found on each link's 'More Resources' tab.

© 2021 Chartered Trading Standards Institute

Source URL:

<https://www.businesscompanion.info/en/quick-guides/animals-and-agriculture/horse-passports>