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 in Wales
Imported horses
Enforcement
Further information
Penalties
Key legislation

This guidance is for Wales

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 EU 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

Horses born since 12 February 2019 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 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**

The passport application must be received by a recognised horse passport issuing body (IB) - also known as a passport-issuing organisation (PIO) - by 1 December in the calendar year in which the horse was born or 30 days before it reaches six months of age, whichever is 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

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 Wales'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 Welsh Government website.
Identification of older animals

Horses born between 1 July 2009 and 11 February 2019 need to be microchipped with a unique number that is matched to the owner's contact details, and a passport.

Horses born on or before 30 June 2009 have until 12 February 2021 to be microchipped and a passport document applied for. This will bring older horses into line with the current requirements.

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. The passport application must be received by the IB / PIO no later than 1 December in the calendar year of the horse's birth or 30 days before the horse reaches six months of age, whichever is the 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 Wales.

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 devices can be authorised for use in Member States of the European Union (EU), to accompany the horse instead of the passport, which allows equines to move within agreed European national boundaries. 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 EU 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 EU 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 in Wales

In Wales there is a derogation whereby wild or semi-wild horses on certain specified commons identified by the Welsh Government are not required to be microchipped and have passports. These specified areas include the Cymdeithas Merlod y Carneddau - covering the Carneddau ponies of Northern Snowdonia - and the Hill Pony Improvement Societies of Wales.

A microchip and passport is required for a wild or semi-wild horse if it:

- leaves the specified areas (subject to exceptions)
- is treated with veterinary medicinal products
- is brought into domestic use

Only those ponies managed by the above organisations are covered by the derogation, all other ponies kept on common land are subject to the requirements of the Equine Identification (Wales) Regulations 2019.
**Imported horses**

A horse may be moved within the EU only if it is accompanied by a passport (with a few exceptions). Horses entering the EU from a third country (a non-EU country) with an identification document may be considered valid if they comply with set conditions. The owner of any horse entering the UK from outside the EU 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 EU 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.

**Enforcement**

Authorised officers of the Welsh Ministers 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 movements and registration can be found on the Welsh Government 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**

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

EU 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 (Wales) Regulations 2019

Last reviewed / updated: January 2020

**In this update**

Information on foals added
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.

This site contains impartial free information, and is Government-backed.

The content on Business Companion is written and verified by expert contributors, but is not designed to be a replacement for professional advice and is intended only for guidance; only the courts can give an authoritative interpretation of the law.

Though not marked as relevant for Northern Ireland, the advice and guidance that applies to England can be taken to reflect the 'spirit' of the law in NI, but should not be relied upon without professional advice.

If you are in any doubt about your legal responsibilities with regard to the topics on this site and would like more guidance, start by getting in touch with your local trading standards service; you can find their contact details by using the search tool on the Chartered Trading Standards Institute website.

We store cookies on your computer to help us improve this website. If you proceed, we'll assume you're happy with this; otherwise, you can change your cookie settings at any time.

© 2020 Chartered Trading Standards Institute