

HORSE PASSPORTS

All horse owners must have a passport for their horses. The owner of a horse shall obtain a passport for it on or before 31 December of the year of its birth or by six months after its birth, whichever is the later.

Foals born since 1 August 2009 need to be microchipped with a unique number that is matched to the owner's contact details, as well as getting a passport.

A horse cannot be sold without a passport (veterinary or breed certificates are not passports). When a horse is sold, the seller must give the passport to the buyer at the time of the sale and the buyer must register the new ownership within 30 days. If a horse dies or is slaughtered, the keeper must return the passport to the passport-issuing organisation within 30 days of the animal's death.

Definition of 'horse'

For the purpose of the Horse Passports Regulations 2009, the term 'horse' means any wild, exotic or domesticated soliped from within the genus *Equus* of the family Equidae - for example horse, donkey, mule, hinny (jennet), zebra, Przewalski or their crosses.

Why does my horse need a passport?

Horse passports are required by law, and are necessary in order to prevent horses entering the human food chain if they have been treated with medicines that must not be administered to food-producing animals. Although we do not consume horsemeat in any great quantity in the UK, a large number of horses are slaughtered in Britain each year for export for human consumption. The introduction of 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.

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

A horse passport is a small booklet with a link document, written in both English and French, that uniquely identifies a horse throughout its life and has been issued by a recognised passport-issuing organisation (PIO). The passport pages show the veterinary treatment history of the horse, its movement history, and a declaration as to whether or not the horse is intended for human consumption.

Applications for a passport shall be made by the owner of the horse (or the owner's appointed agent) in writing to a PIO and be in the format specified by that PIO.

Can I keep a horse without a passport?

The owner or keeper with primary responsibility for any horse commits an offence if it is kept without a passport and identification (passport or silhouette) for that horse. As well as getting a passport, a horse will need to be microchipped. However, if your horse was born before 1 August 2009 and you have a passport, the horse will not need to be microchipped. All horses over six months old should already have passports. However, where a horse has not previously been issued with a passport it will need to be microchipped before the passport can be applied for. 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.

The owner of a horse shall obtain a passport for it on or before 31 December of the year of its birth, or by six months after the animal's birth, whichever is the later. Only the owner of the horse can apply for a passport. It is an offence not to apply for a passport within these time limits.

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

Important: it is advisable to thoroughly check a passport before purchasing a horse, and in particular check that the date of birth has not been altered.

Passports for 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 31 December 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 cannot be sold without a passport but may be moved with their dam/foster mare for production purposes - for example, to and from a stud.

Removal of the diagram of the horse - the 'silhouette'

Since 1 August 2009, the diagram of the horse (silhouette) is no longer compulsory in newly issued passports because horses are now microchipped to confirm their identity. However, if your horse is registered with a breed society, their individual rules may state that you still need a silhouette or a similar record of identification marks. This does not replace the requirement for a microchip.

Microchips

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.

Smartcard

A smartcard is a plastic device with an imbedded computer chip capable of storing data that can be read by compatible computer systems. The devices can be authorised for use in member states of the European Union (EU) to accompany the horse instead of the passport, allowing equines to move within agreed European national boundaries. The smartcard must be issued by the same PIO that issued the paper passport and must be approved by Defra for use in the UK.

When must the passport accompany a horse?

The passport (or smartcard) 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 within three hours

- when a horse is being used for competition or event and is required to leave the venue

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 of the sale (sale includes transfer of ownership). The buyer must notify the issuing PIO (note the PIO may be based in another EU member state) to register the new ownership within 30 days, and include:

- the buyer's name and address
- the identification of the horse

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

What do I do if my horse dies?

When a horse dies, the keeper must return the passport to the PIO within 30 days of the animal's death, but can request that it is sent back once it has completed the procedure of logging the death and cancelling the passport.

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 for a replacement passport for that horse to the PIO, if known. Where the original PIO is not known, the owner should apply to any PIO.

Veterinary treatment

EU Regulation (EC) No 504/2008 *implementing Directives 90/426/EEC and 90/427/EEC as regards methods for the identification of equidae* states that: 'An equine animal shall be deemed to be intended for slaughter for human consumption, unless it is irreversibly declared as not so intended in part II of section IX of the identification document, by signature of:

- the keeper or owner on his/her own discretion - or
- the keeper and veterinarian responsible' (for administering medicine)

The passport needs to be available at the time of treatment with a veterinary medicine. All owners must sign the declaration at part II of section IX of the passport if substances unsuitable for entry into the food chain have been administered, supplied or prescribed. If the owner declines to sign the declaration the vet is required to do so after administering, supplying or prescribing the medication. Vets are required to ask to see the passport before treating a horse, so it is advisable to have the passport easily accessible.

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 the horse's passport must be signed at section IX by the veterinarian or the owner as 'not intended for human consumption'. This is irreversible.

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 IX 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 V and VI 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 IX 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](#), and identified in the lists kept by [Verderers of the New Forest](#) or entered in the stud book of the [New Forest Pony Breeding and Cattle Society](#), are exempt from the requirement for horse passports until such times 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. There is also a similar exemption for wild and semi-wild ponies in Wales.

Imported horses

A horse may be moved within the EU only if it is accompanied by a passport. The owner of any horse entering England from outside the EU without a horse passport issued by a PIO 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 minister or the local authority have power to enter premises (and vehicles) and inspect horse passports and other documents at any reasonable time. Failure to produce a horse passport upon demand, or the movement of a horse without its passport.

We are happy to offer advice to anyone who is unsure what to do or how to proceed. You can also download our comprehensive guide [here](#).

Equally, you can contact DEFRA for advice by email at: defra.helpline@defra.gsi.gov.uk or by telephone: 08459 33 55 77.

Many thanks to Gloucestershire Trading Standards for this really important and worthy document.