Equine identification - questions and answers

Please note that the Equine Identification (Wales) Regulations 2009 only apply in Wales. England, Scotland and Northern Ireland have their own domestic legislation.

1. How do the Equine Identification (Wales) Regulations 2009 affect owners of horses?

The previous Horse Passports (Wales) Regulations 2005 (http://www.opsi.gov.uk/) required all owners to obtain an identification document for each horse they own. The introduction of the Equine Identification (Wales) Regulations 2009 builds on the requirement to obtain an identification document aka as a “passport” (references will be made to a passport in the rest of this document) and, in doing so, strengthens the horse passport regime. The passport requirement is now extended to Zebras and Exotic equidae.

It is an offence to keep any equine without a passport. The only exemptions to this requirement are covered in question 37.

2. Why have the Regulations been updated?


The provisions of the Commission Regulation are directly applicable in UK law from 1 July 2009 but require domestic legislation to define offences, penalties and those exemptions (‘derogations’) in the Commission Regulation that are being applied in Wales.

The main provision of the new Commission Regulation is the strengthening of the link between the horse and the information regarding its medical treatment that is recorded on the passport. This measure will reduce the risk of unsuitable horses entering the food chain. The permanent link will be achieved by means of an implanted microchip containing a unique identification number, with passport and microchip details recorded on a database.
3. What are the main changes?

The key changes being introduced are:

- mandatory micro-chipping of foals (and adult horses not previously identified) before a passport can be issued;
- horses must be accompanied by their passport at all times (See question 17 for specific details);
- it is now an offence to keep a horse without a passport, this also applies to keepers with primary responsibility for care of the horse;
- a vet is now required to see the passport before administration of veterinary medicines;
- extends the passport rules to zebra and other exotic equidae not previously covered;
- allows Member States to authorise the use of ‘smart cards’ instead of paper passports to accompany equidae moving within national boundaries;
- the introduction of a revised passport format which includes a Certificate of Origin to record pedigree details and a new section to be used in the event of a disease outbreak.

4. Why are passports required?

The aim of horse passport legislation is to ensure that horses which have been treated with veterinary medicines not authorised for use in food-producing animals cannot be slaughtered for human consumption.

5. What are the other benefits of the legislation?

The other benefits of the legislation include:

- it discourages the indiscriminate breeding of horses and ponies that may be of low quality or value;
- our (Welsh Assembly Government) capability to monitor disease and prevent outbreaks is improved because we will have information about the numbers of horses and contact details for owners.

6. When do I need to apply for a passport?

Foals have to have a passport and microchip by 31 December in the year in which they are born or 6 months after birth, whichever is the latest.

Animals born before 1 July 2009 which, at that date, do not have a
passport under the existing rules will have to have a passport and microchip. Owners of horses that have not applied for a passport within the timescales are committing an offence.

Owners should note that those horses born before 1 July 2009 that are issued with a first passport and micro-chip after this date will irreversibly be excluded from the human food chain. The Passport Issuing Authority will be required to complete Part 2 of Section IX of the passport to this effect.

7. How do I get a passport?

Horse owners must obtain a passport for each horse they own. This is done by application to one of the Passport Issuing Organisations (PIOs) that have been authorised by the Welsh Assembly Government, DEFRA or one of the other devolved administrations to issue horse passports.

Some of these organisations deal with only one particular breed of horse others will issue passports for all types of horses. A list of recognised Organisations and Associations that have been authorised to issue horse passports in the UK (which are recognised under Commission Decision 92/353/EEC) can be found http://eur-lex.europa.eu/en/index.htm

After 1 July 2009 all equines must have a microchip implanted before the application is submitted. If your passport is urgently required, you may wish to check the processing time with the PIO. Some PIOs offer a ‘fast track’ service.

There is no minimum age under which an owner cannot apply for a horse passport. Question 37 provides details for certain semi-feral ponies.

8. How do I get a microchip implanted?

The microchip must be implanted by a veterinary surgeon, it is an offence for anyone other than a veterinary surgeon to insert a microchip.

The microchip itself will be supplied by the vet. Some passport-issuing organisations will provide a micro-chip along with the passport application form for you to give to your vet. You may not implant one of these yourself.

Before implantation, the vet will check the animal to ensure that it has not already had a micro-chip implanted.
Only microchips that comply with standard ISO 11784 and applying HDX or FDX-B technology should be used. Any microchip inserted must not begin with the 826 UK code.

The vet will implant the microchip into the neck of your horse and will note the site of implantation and the microchip number on your passport application form.

9. I am the permanent keeper of a horse – am I responsible for obtaining the passport?

No. It is the responsibility of the horse owner to obtain a passport.

The ‘keeper’ means a person who is not the owner of a horse but is appointed by the owner to have day-to-day charge of that horse. Keepers with primary responsibility for the horses day-to-day welfare should satisfy themselves that all the horses under their care have been correctly identified before agreeing to keep them. It is an offence to keep a horse without a passport.

10. How much does a passport cost?

The cost of a passport is set by the private sector equine organisations authorised to issue them. The cost of implanting a micro-chip is an issue for individual veterinary practices.

11. Will the microchip help prevent theft?

Many owners already microchip their horses as a security measure as it can act as a deterrent and help to identify stolen or ill-treated animals.

12. My horse has a passport, does it need to be micro-chipped and do I need new documents?

Horses that had passports issued before 1 July 2009 will remain valid, and will not require micro-chipping, providing these passports fully comply with UK domestic legislation.

13. What will be the penalties for failing to correctly identify animals under the new rules after 1 July 2009?
Failure to correctly identify animals under the new rules could lead to a fine of up to £5,000.

14. **How long are passports valid for?**

Passports are valid for the entire lifetime of the horse.

15. **What shall I do if the passport requires updating with change of address or new ownership details?**

Changes of ownership or change of permanent address of owner must be notified to the organisation that has issued the passport. The passport-issuing organisation (PIO) may require that the passport be returned for updating. You must inform the PIO of either of these occurrences within 30 calendar days of the event.

Whilst your passport is with the PIO they will issue you with a temporary document that will allow you to move or transport your horse within the UK.

16. **My horse has died, what should I do with the passport?**

Upon the death of the animal you must return the passport to the issuing body within 30 calendar days. They are required by law to invalidate the passport (and, if a microchip was implanted, the microchip number). You may however request that they return it once they have finished with it.

17. **When do I need my passport?**

At all times – with the following exceptions:
- stabled or on pasture and the passport can be produced without delay;
- moved temporarily on foot in the vicinity of the holding and the passport can be produced within 3 hours;
- moved on foot between summer and winter grazing;
- unweaned and accompanied by their dam or foster mare;
- participating in a training or test of an equestrian competition which requires them to leave the event venue or moved or transported under emergency conditions.
18. How are horses identified in the passport?

The Horse Passports (Wales) Regulations 2005 required completed passport applications to contain a silhouette (a diagram of the horse showing markings, whorls etc.) that have been verified and signed by either a veterinary surgeon or a competent representative from a recognised Passport Issuing Organisation.

From 1 July 2009 microchips replace silhouettes as the primary means of identification for passport purposes. Some PIOs – as part of their individual rules - may still ask for a completed silhouette.

Other methods of identification (such as hot- or freeze-branding) cannot be used in place of the microchip as a method of identification for passport purposes but may be used as a supplementary method.

19. I already have a passport? Do I need to do anything else?

Only passports issued by authorised passport-issuing organisations (PIOs) are valid under the passport legislation.

If you have a valid passport that was issued before 1 July 2009, you will not have to have a microchip implanted. If you have a horse passport that was issued before 2005, it may need to be updated if it doesn’t include a Section IX. To do so you should return it to the issuing PIO for updating.

If you have been issued with a passport or identification papers (with completed silhouette) by an organisation that is not authorised, you may still be able to send these papers to an authorised PIO for insertion into a passport.

Vaccination Certificates and Joint Measurement Board (JMB) Certificates are not passports.
20. I have more than one passport for my horse - what should I do?

**Duplicate horse passports issued prior to 1 January 2007**

An owner whose horse has duplicate passports issued prior to 1 January 2007 may choose which document to retain. However, the Section IX on the retained document must be signed as 'not intended' for human consumption, as there is a possibility that medicines may have been recorded in the passport that is not retained. The unwanted passport must be returned to the issuer for cancellation.

**Duplicate horse passports issued post 1 January 2007**

An owner whose horse has duplicate passports issued post 1 January 2007 must retain the original document on every occasion. The original document must be retained with no exceptions and the Section IX must be signed as 'not intended'. The unwanted passport must be returned to the issuer for cancellation.

21. Inclusion of verified breeding/pedigree information, in horse passports issued by Passport Issuing Organisations not representing a specific Breed (ID only)

When a horse with an ‘ID only’ passport, is found to be eligible for registration with a Breed Society, the owner should contact that breed society as there are measures in place that allow for a passport to be ‘upgraded’ from breeding/production (ID-only) to pedigree. The society will be able to advise you further regarding the actual process and costs.

22. I have a British Horse Database (BHD) passport – is it still valid?

Yes, if updated to current standards. All passports issued by an organisation on the list of passport issuing organisations are valid. In addition, although the BHD are no longer issuing passports, Weatherbys (Passport issuing Organisation associated with Thoroughbreds) will be
updating passports issued by them with the required veterinary medication pages and changes of ownership for a small fee.

23. **I have an F.E.I. passport – what shall I do?**

Owners of horses with F.E.I. (Federation Equestre Internationale) passports should contact the British Equestrian Federation directly, to confirm that the passport meets the current requirements.

Ex-competition horses with an 'out of date’ FEI passport can continue to use the passport after the horse has ceased competing. The passport remains valid for the purposes of the EU regulations but not for competition purposes. The passport will need to be sent to the British Equine Federation (BEF) with a note explaining that the horse will no longer compete internationally. The BEF will record this and update the passport accordingly.

24. **I have an identification document issued by a studbook approved by the International Studbook Committee (ISBC), what should I do?**

Identification documents issued by studbooks approved by the International Studbook Committee (ISBC) should be updated by Weatherby’s.

25. **I have lost my passport, what should I do?**

You should contact your passport-issuing organisation (PIO) as soon as possible. They will issue a duplicate passport and will sign Part I of Section IX of the passport prohibiting the animal from ever entering the human food chain. This is a requirement under European law and is a measure to prevent fraudulent use of the horse passports regime. You may be charged a fee for the duplicate passport.

26. **I am permanently importing a horse into Wales from a country outside the EU. Will I need to obtain a passport?**

Yes, if it doesn’t already have an EU-compliant passport. You will need to apply for a passport (and therefore have a microchip implanted) from one of the authorised PIOs in the UK within 30 calendar days of importing the horse. However, if you have identification papers with a completed and
certified silhouette these may (at the discretion of the individual PIO) be added to a new passport issued to comply with the new requirement.

27. **I am temporarily importing a horse into Wales from a country outside the EU. Will I need to obtain a passport?**

Horses which remain in the UK for less than 30 calendar days do not need a passport. However, a valid passport must accompany horses that are moved from the UK to other EU Member States. If such horses are exported directly to a third Country, they may require a passport if this is a particular requirement of the importing country.

28. **I am importing a horse (permanently or temporarily) into Wales from another EU Member State. Will I need to obtain a passport?**

Horses imported from other EU Member States must be accompanied by a passport which complies with the EU legislation.

If your passport needs updating (to include a Section IX), you should send it to the issuing organisation. This may be an organisation based either in the UK or in another Member State. However, it must be an approved organisation. If the organisation is not approved (either in the UK or elsewhere in the European Union), you should get your passport updated by an authorised organisation in the UK.

29. **Do I need a passport before I sell my horse?**

Yes. The passport must be passed to the buyer at the time of sale. The buyer will need to notify the Passport-Issuing Organisation of the change in ownership within 30 calendar days.

30. **I am buying a horse. What should I be aware of?**

You should not purchase a horse without a passport. If you do so you will be committing an offence if you transport it or move it to the home of a new keeper without the passport.

You should always ensure that you are satisfied that the horse described in the passport is the one that you intend to buy – check the silhouette against the animal. If there is not a completed silhouette, i.e. the passport was issued after 1 July 2009 and the animal is identified solely by a micro-
chip you may need to employ a vet to check the identity of the horse. It is always advisable to have a horse vetted before you buy it.

It is your responsibility to advise the passport-issuer within 30 calendar days of the change of ownership, not the sellers. You should always see the passport before you purchase and the seller is required to hand it to you at the completion of the transaction.

After the purchase you must send the passport to the issuing body to record the change of ownership. Failure to do so is an offence under the Equine Identification (Wales) Regulations 2009.

31. What is the purpose of the section IX in the passport?

Section IX is for the owner to declare whether or not the horse is ultimately intended for human consumption. In Wales, the declaration does not need to be signed upon issue of the passport. However Part II of Section IX must be signed before:

any medication containing a substance specified in Annex IV of Council Regulation 2377/90 is administered (in this case the declaration must be signed as ‘not intended for human consumption’). Additionally, Bute (phenylbutazone) cannot be administered to a horse intended for the food chain. Part II of Section IX declaration must be signed if administered; the horse is consigned for slaughter for human consumption; the horse is sent outside the UK.

The owner can, at any time prior to one of the above events, choose to sign the declaration. It must be remembered that once the declaration has been signed as ‘not intended for human consumption’, this can never be changed.

You are advised to think carefully about the following points 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 cannot be reversed. Though it may be many years ahead, what do you expect will happen to your horse when it reaches the end of its life, and what might it cost to dispose of?
have you made financial provision for the euthanasia of your horse at the end of its life? are you likely to sell your horse - some future owners might only want to purchase a horse where they have the option to elect for abattoir euthanasia there are currently a number of options open to owners for dealing with their horse at the end of its life – but these options might not be available in the future leaving the declaration unsigned doesn’t mean you have to elect for abattoir euthanasia – but it does mean you will have kept open that option should your circumstances change in the future if the declaration at Part II Section IX has not been signed, it will be necessary to keep a record of veterinary medicines administered. Certain medicines must be recorded in the passport itself. Your vet can advise you regarding this.

32. What medications must be recorded within the section IX pages?

The Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD) provides guidance about which medicines need to be recorded in the passport. A link to the European Commission website, where a list of these medications is available, can also be found on the VMD website. www.vmd.gov.uk/

33. What other medications should be recorded in the passport?

The vet should also record all vaccinations in Sections V and VI of the passport.

34. What should I do if my horse has been administered Bute (Phenylbutazone)?

Bute is authorised to be given to horses but it must not be administered to horses that are for the food chain. Therefore, you must sign Part II in the Section IX of your horse’s passport. This will confirm that your horse is not intended for human consumption.

35. If I sell my horse, can its new owner change the declaration?

Once a horse has been declared as not for human consumption, at Part II of Section IX, a subsequent owner cannot change this. This is in order to prevent animals entering the human food chain if they have been administered with medicines that must never be used in a food animal.
36. **Will I need a passport if my horse is never intended for human consumption or will not travel abroad?**

   Yes, all horses will need a passport irrespective of whether or not the horse is ultimately intended for human consumption or is not expected to leave the UK.

37. **Do semi-feral horses require a passport?**

   Normally yes. However, the semi-feral ponies maintained by the Hill Pony Improvement Societies of Wales and the Cymdeithas Merlod y Carneddau have detailed agreements with the Welsh Assembly Government over the management and movement of such ponies.

38. **Are passports required for foals?**

   Yes. A foal must be issued with a passport by 31 December of the year of birth or by 6 months of age, whichever is the later. However, if the foal is sold or exported with or without its dam or sent for slaughter it will require a passport regardless of its age.

39. **Can a veterinary surgeon treat a horse that is not accompanied by its passport?**

   The passport should be available at the time of treatment with a veterinary medicine. All owners must sign the declaration at Part II of Section IX, if substances unsuitable for entry into the food chain have been administered. If the owner declines to sign the declaration, the vet is required to do so after administering or prescribing the medication.

   If, in an emergency, the passport is not available and the vet does not know if your horse is signed out of the food chain then they are only permitted to administer substances suitable for food producing animals. These medicines are generally more expensive than more commonly available medicines.

40. **Who is enforcing the requirements?**

   The Meat Hygiene Service (MHS) will be responsible for enforcing the checks carried out at slaughterhouses, and the Local Authorities (e.g. Trading Standards Departments) will be responsible for enforcing the law elsewhere. As with all Government legislation, there are penalties that can
be applied by the courts for non-compliance. Prosecution will lead to fine up to, but not exceeding, the statutory maximum of £5,000.

**Disposal routes for horses**

In Wales, horses that are kept as pets can be buried, provided the owner obtains the agreement of their local authority and follows its advice regarding burial.

If your horse is not a pet it must be disposed of without delay in accordance with the EU Animal By-Products Regulation 2002. This means they must be delivered to a premises approved under the regulation for proper collection and disposal (e.g. hunt kennels, knacker yard, incinerator operator).

For guidance please contact the Animal Welfare & By-products team on 01267 245009

**41. Whose responsibility is it to remove a dead horse from private land if the horse does not have a horse passport?**

If a horse dies at a competition the owner is responsible for its removal. In the circumstances where a carcass is dumped or found on private land, wherever possible the owner of the animal will be identified and held responsible. However, if ownership cannot be proven, responsibility for disposal rests with the landowner. Local Authorities have powers, under the statutory nuisance provisions of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, to deal with such a situation and can take appropriate action against the owner of the carcass.

**42. I am exporting my horse to France/Ireland – do I need to take my horse’s passport?**

Yes. Since 28 February 2005 it is an offence for an owner to move their horse outside the UK without a passport. The declaration at section IX must be both signed and counter-signed.
43. Import, Export of Horses, Route Plans and Export Licenses

Information on importing or exporting horses and whether your horse will require a route plan or an export license can be obtained by e-mail or by calling the following telephone numbers:

Export Controls and Procedures
Web: www.defra.gov.uk/animalh/int-trde/general/contacts.htm
International Animal Health Division
Service Delivery Unit
Ceres House
2 Searby Road
Lincoln, LN2 4DT
Tel: 01522 563132
Email: Lincoln.iahsdu@animalhealth.gsi.gov.uk

Import Controls and Procedures
Tel: 01245 358383
Email: ahitchelmsford@animalhealth.gsi.gov.uk

Government Policy and Implementation of Import and Export Legislation
Web: www.defra.gov.uk/animalh/int-trde/general/contacts.htm

Route Plans and Transport
Web: www.defra.gov.uk/animalh/welfare/farmed/transport.htm
Telephone: 08459 335577
E-mail: aw-transport@defra.gsi.gov.uk

Guidance for equine owners and transporters exporting equines to Ireland through Welsh ports.
Horses and ponies 14.2 (147 cms) or less require a export licence and a minimum value certificate or evidence that the horse or pony is competing in Ireland.
For the application form and guidance go to http://wales.gov.uk/topics/environmentcountryside/ahw/horses/?lang=en or contact the Animal Welfare & By-products team on 01267 245009
44. I live in England / Scotland / Northern Ireland. Do the Equine Identification (Wales) Regulations 2009 still apply?

England, Scotland and Northern Ireland have introduced their own domestic legislation that implements Commission Regulation 504/2008 in each of the devolved areas. For details on their legislation you should contact the appropriate body:

**England – Department of the Environment and Rural Affairs**

Equine Passports & Zootechnics Team  
DEFRA  
5th Floor  
C/O 17 Smith Square  
LONDON  
SW1P 3JR

Tel: 08459 33 55 77  
Email: horse.passports@defra.gsi.gov.uk  
www.defra.gov.uk/animalh/id-move/horses/index.htm

**Scotland - The Scottish Government**

Livestock Identification and Traceability  
Pentland House  
47 Robb’s Loan  
EDINBURGH  
EH14 1TY

Tel: 0131 244 6404  
livestockid@scotland.gsi.gov.uk  
www.scotland.gov.uk/topics/agriculture/animal-welfare

**Northern Ireland - Department of Agriculture and Rural Development**

Farm Policy Branch  
Room 910  
Dundonald House  
Upper Newtonards Road  
BELFAST  
BT4 3SB

Tel: 02890 520836  
seamus.hughes@dardni.gsi.gov.uk
45. **How do I update a passport issued by a recognised Passport Issuing Organisation in the European Union?**

The owner should first attempt to contact the original issuer of the passport. Contact details for PIOs can be located on the following websites:

http://circa.europa.eu/irc/sanco/vets/info/data/breeding/br-eq.html

Should the owner be unable to make contact, or there are circumstances preventing the passport from being sent for updating. The owner can approach an aligned society in the UK e.g. Trakehner Breeders Association, Poland can be referred to Trakehner Breeders Fraternity, England.

46. **I organise competitions, do I have to check passports when competitors arrive?**

No. It is the responsibility of the owner or keeper to ensure that they horse passport accompanies any horse competing at an event. The organiser or the Society holding the competition may state, as part of its own rules, that competitors must be in possession of their horse’s passports in order to compete. At competitions and shows, Local Authorities have the powers to check horse passports and enforce the Equine Identification (Wales) Regulations 2009.

47. **What is the National Equine Database?**

The National Equine Database (NED) is a large database developed to meet the needs of both Government and the horse industry. It consists of a ‘core’ horse passport based element and a commercial arm providing breeding and performance information that is accessible by Internet website for a fee.

There is a statutory requirement placed on PIOs to provide information, such as the horse’s name, breed, sex, age, Unique Equine Life Number (UELN), microchip number and owner details on a monthly basis to NED. If we do not have accurate information on the overall size of the UK horse population and its geographic distribution, we cannot plan effective monitoring of equine diseases, or develop effective control strategies in the event of an outbreak of a notifiable or exotic disease of horses, such
as African Horse Sickness or West Nile Fever. PIOs and competition organisations may pass breeding and performance information to NED on a voluntary basis. Further details can be found at: www.nedonline.co.uk/public/Home.aspx

48. I have a horse passport issued by Richard J Steel (Horse Passports) Limited but I cannot contact them. What should I do?

Richard J Steel (Horse Passports) Limited closed down in April 2009. The administration of Richard J Steel passports was transferred at this time to the Donkey Breed Society. Horse owners that have Richard J Steel passports should contact them when transferring ownership or otherwise amending the details within the passport. Their contact details are:

Rosemary Clarke
Passports Registrar
Donkey Breed Society
Bryncelyn
Llanfyllin
Powys
SY22 5NE
Telephone: 01691 648168
E-mail: ros11e@btinternet.com
www.donkeybreedsociety.co.uk
49. **Who should I contact for further information?**

For information on the procedures about applying for a passport, contact the appropriate organisation - a list of these can be found

www.wales.gov.uk/animalhealth

or contact

Farm Development Division
Welsh Assembly Government
Cathays Park
CARDIFF
CF10 3NQ
029 2080 1499
equineIDceffylau@wales.gsi.gov.uk
www.wales.gov.uk/topics/environmentcountryside/ahw/horses

**Farm Development Division**

**July 2009**