

Horse Passports

All horses, ponies, donkeys, mules and zebras must have an equine passport, even if they never leave their field. This is applicable across the United Kingdom as stated in the following regulations:

- England: The Horse Passports Regulations 2009
- Scotland: The Horse Identification (Scotland) Regulations 2009
- Wales: Equine Identification (Wales) Regulations 2009
- Northern Ireland: The Horse Passports Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2010

The legislation states that owners or keepers with the primary responsibility for the care of the horse, have a legal duty to ensure that the horse is correctly identified.

The passport legislation is an EU Directive, so therefore the United Kingdom (UK) must comply. The purpose of horse passports is to protect the human food chain and to ensure that no horses that are treated with certain drugs, for example Bute, are slaughtered for human consumption. Within the EU, horsemeat is commonly eaten and horses from the UK can end up in the human food chain. It is important that the UK complies with the legislation as failure to do so could result in the withdrawal of a number of key equine medicines from sale.

Horses must be accompanied by their passport at all times. The exceptions are when the horse is stabled, out at pasture or if the horse is moved on foot. However, the passport must be made available within three hours of it being requested by an enforcement agency.

The passport must always accompany the horse:

- when the horse is moved into or out of the United Kingdom
- when the horse is used at a competition
- when the horse is moved to new premises
- when the horse is presented at a slaughterhouse for slaughter
- at the time a horse is sold
- when the horse is used for breeding purposes
- when a veterinary surgeon attends the horse to administer vaccinations or if the horse requires medication
- when the horse is transported. Note: the only exception when the passport is not required is when the horse is being transported for emergency veterinary treatment.

In addition, passport details, such as the Unique Equine Life Number, are often required by insurance companies when insuring your horse.

From 1 October 2018 it will be mandatory for all owners to microchip their horses, ponies and donkeys. Owners will have two years to comply with the new regulations, until October 2020. The Central Equine Database will then allow local authorities and police to track the owners of abandoned horses and lost or stolen horses will be reunited with their owners more easily.

In all other circumstances Local Authorities are responsible for enforcing the legislation.

Equine Register provides and manages the Central Equine Database and National ChipChecker for Defra. There are 81 UK Passport Issuing Organisations and Equine Register manages their data on the Central Equine Database, which houses over 1.2 Million equine records. To check a microchip or access the Central Equine Database, visit: www.equineregister.co.uk/home

Failing to identify horses in accordance with the legislation could result in a fine of up to £5,000.

Under the legislation, foals must have a passport and microchip within six months of birth or before 31 December of the year in which they were born, whichever date occurs later.

This information has been taken from the British Horse Society website – www.bhs.org.uk