

Livestock identification and traceability: guidance

Horses

All horses, ponies and donkeys must have a horse passport. All owners, or if different, the keeper who has primary responsibility, must obtain a passport for each horse, pony or donkey they own. The passport helps to:

- make sure horses treated with certain medicines do not end up as food for human consumption
- prevent the sale of a stolen horse, pony or donkey, as the passport will prove its identity

Microchipping became compulsory on 1 July 2009 and aids accurate identification as it provides a permanent link between the horse and its passport. Microchipping will also help recover and identify stolen and abandoned horses, as well assist with welfare cases.

From **1 October 2020** it will become a legal requirement for **all horses resident in England, Wales and Northern Ireland** to be implanted with a transponder by a vet who is a member of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS).

From **28 March 2021** it will become a legal requirement for **all horses resident in Scotland** to be implanted with a transponder by a vet who is a member of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS).

Horse passports

A horse passport is not an ownership document. It is an identification document which records the identity of a horse and certain veterinary medicines administered to it. The passport should remain with the horse and, in particular, should accompany the horse when it is moved for the purposes of competition or breeding, out of Scotland, on to the premises of a new keeper or for the purposes of receiving veterinary treatment.

Horse passports contain details about your horse, including:

- its unique life number (UELN)
- its microchip code number
- its age
- its breed/type
- all the vaccinations it has been given and any medicine that would affect its food chain status

Horse passports issued from 1 January 2016 can be declared as 'intended' or 'not intended' for the human food chain in Section II Part II of its passport.

Horse passports issued prior to 1 January 2016 can be declared as 'intended' or 'not intended' for the human food chain in Section IX Part II of its passport.

Your vet must record in the passport, any medication or injections your horse is given as this affects what happens to the horse when it dies.

To apply for a passport you must be the owner of the animal or, if different, the keeper who has primary responsibility for it. You need a passport for each horse, pony or donkey you own.

You can get an application form for a horse passport from an authorised [passport issuing organisation \(PIO\)](#). The passport will not be valid if it is issued by an unauthorised organisation.

Selling or buying a horse, pony or donkey:

- if you sell your animal, give the passport to the new owner - if you do not, you could be prosecuted
- if you buy a horse, pony or donkey, let the PIO know you are the new owner within 30 days
- if someone tries to sell you a horse, pony or donkey without a passport, contact your local Trading Standards office

Importing or exporting a horse, pony or donkey:

- if you import a horse, pony or donkey from a European Union (EU) country, it needs a valid passport issued by an authorised PIO in the EU and must be registered with a UK appropriate PIO within 30 days

Your horse passport must be available for inspection at all times.

Death of a horse

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

If your horse is slaughtered at an abattoir, it is the responsibility of the abattoir to return the passport to the issuing body within 30 working days. The horse can only be slaughtered if it is accompanied by a valid passport and Section II Part II, or Section II Part IX in the case of animals issued with a passport before 1 January 2016, shows it is intended for human consumption.