

Guidance on horse passports



The Purpose of Horse Passports and Microchips

The primary purpose of the Horse Passport Regulations 2009 is to prevent animals that have been treated with powerful equine veterinary medicines from entering the human food chain. Horse passports and micro-chipping also help buyers to ascertain the age of a horse and help prevent and detect horse thefts.

The legislation also helps in the containment and eradication of diseases such as African Horse Sickness should they ever be discovered in the UK.

You should not sell or purchase an equine that does not have a passport. Further, before buying a horse, satisfy yourself that the passport matches the horse. If you have any concerns **do not** buy the horse.

When you buy a horse, make a note of the name of the PIO (passport issuing organisation), the unique equine life number (UELN) and the microchip number (if applicable) in case of loss of the passport to aid in obtaining a duplicate for your horse.

What Animals does the Legislation Cover?

A 'horse' is defined as any wild or domestic solipeds within the genus *Equus* of the family *Equidae* and their crosses. All horses, ponies, asses, mules, donkeys, zebras and 'exotic' horse species, (e.g. Przewalski's horses) all require passports and where appropriate microchips.

General Requirements

All equines **must** have a passport. Newly born equines must be registered and issued with a passport by 31 December in the year of birth or within 6 months of birth, whichever is the longer. If the 'foal' is moved before then it must have a microchip and passport, except where it is being moved with the dam. If an application for a passport is received outside of the time limits then the passport-issuing organisation must stamp the passport, "not to be slaughtered for human consumption". From 1st August 2009 it also became compulsory that equines be micro-chipped. The microchip number must be recorded on the passport application. Any horse identified prior to the implementation of The Horse Passport Regulations 2009 should have a passport only.

The veterinary surgeon who implants a microchip into a horse must first check that it has not already been identified with a previous microchip. This acts to prevent the horse being issued with a secondary passport. Due to the requirement to microchip it is no longer compulsory to complete the silhouette on the passport application. However some Passport Issuing Organisations (PIO) still requires it as part of the application process and by asking the veterinary surgeon to complete a silhouette it also provides further information on the physical appearance of the equine including any unique marks (e.g. whorls) that may help identify the horse. Imported horses, without passports, must be registered within 30 days of landing. This does not apply if the stay is less than 30 days. The passport must state that the 'horse' is not intended for human consumption. Horses registered with the New Forest Verderers, Dartmoor Commoners Council or Exmoor Pony Society, prior to movement (except for welfare reasons), must be marked with a sticker issued by one of these organisations. The horse must then be moved directly to the premises of destination. Within 30 days a passport must be applied for. No subsequent movement can take place before the passport is received.

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Obtaining a Horse Passport

For obtaining and using a horse passport, visit:

<https://www.gov.uk/horse-passport/apply-for-a-horse-passport>

Or, contact the Defra Helpline:

defra.helpline@defra.gsi.gov.uk or 08459 33 55 77 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm)

What do I need a Horse Passport to do?

You must keep your horse passport with your horse at all times. The passport must be shown to a Veterinary Surgeon prior to veterinary medicinal treatment being given.

If you don't have a valid horse passport, you can't do things like:

- use your horse in competitions, like a race or show
- move your horse to a new premises
- sell or export your horse
- use your horse for breeding
- have your horse slaughtered for human consumption

Principal Offences

- The Regulations specify that the following are the principal offences:
- An owner who sells* a horse and who fails to give a passport to the buyer at the time of sale (*sale includes transfer of ownership)
- Buyers who fail, within 30 days, to notify the passport issuing organisation of their details
- Failing to ensure that a transponder is fitted and failing to obtain a passport within the specified period
- Applying for a duplicate passport, except where the horse identify can be established
- A failure by a vet to check whether a transponder has already been fitted prior to fitting a new one
- Failing to ensure, when moved, that the horse is accompanied by its passport (certain exemptions apply). The Regulations provide for the use of smart cards and also temporary documents
- Failing to return, within 30 days, the passport to the passport-issuing organisation, following death.

Further Offences

It is an offence to:

- Destroy or deface a passport
- Alter any entry in the passport
- Be in possession of a passport knowing it to be forged

Enforcement of the Regulations

County Council Trading Standards Service enforces the Horse Passport Regulations.

You could be fined up to £5000 if you don't have an up-to-date horse passport.

You are responsible for making sure you have an up-to-date horse passport so your horse can be identified.

This leaflet is a brief summary of the law. It is not an authoritative document on the law and is only intended for guidance. For further advice, please contact Trading Standards.