

Identification of horses



Historically, various forms of horse identification have been used including, hot iron

Freeze branding

Is a visible mark that allows easy identification that can be quickly linked to the owner. There is an excellent record of recovery for freeze branded equines, unmarked they are sometimes never found. Freezemarking is a means of visibly identifying a horse. A branding iron is cooled in liquid nitrogen to freeze a brand of numbers and letters onto a horse. The cold iron destroys the pigment cells on the skin so that white hairs grow within a few weeks. On grey or light coloured horses the freezebrand is applied for longer to provide a bald mark. The application of the brand causes momentary discomfort before the skin senses are numbed within a few seconds. The freeze branding companies such as Farmkey hold a register of all the horses they brand and supply the owner with a registration document. The cost of freezemarking is approximately £35 to £55, depending on the number of horses done, including the first years membership.



Micromark (Trade Marked)

In addition to the four digit freezemarks, Farmkey also provides a Micromark. A clear and innovative way to identify horses which have been microchipped. Micromark is a 35mm discreet horse shoe brand. Yet its presence sends a clear warning to potential horse thieves: **this horse is traceable - it has been microchipped.**



Their freeze marking technicians are equipped with the latest scanners to instantly retrieve the data held in the implanted chip to verify owner's details.

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Microchipping

Microchipping is widely accepted as a safe, effective and more importantly a tamper-proof method of identifying horses, thereby reducing the chances of false documentation and improving animal welfare by tracing owners who neglect horses. Whilst microchipping has been compulsory in foals in the thoroughbred breeding industry since 1999, it is only in the summer of 2009 that any foal whether it be horse, pony, donkey or mule born after 1st July 2009 will have to be microchipped. Petlog is the largest pet reunification service in the UK and is the only UK member of the European Pet Network. The database is on hand 24 hours a day 365 days a year to receive calls from authorised bodies such as animal wardens, animal welfare centres, veterinary surgeons, police and rescue centres.

The recognised standard site for microchipping of horses is by deep injection into the nuchal ligament 2-3 cm below the top left mid crest. The area should be tested to ensure there is not already a microchip present. The microchip to be inserted should be checked before implantation and again after implantation. Microchipping is deemed an act of veterinary surgery and as such can only be carried out by Veterinary Surgeons or qualified Veterinary Nurses under veterinary supervision.

Adverse reactions are very rare. The skin at the site should be clean but not necessarily surgically prepared. Normally, local anaesthetic or sedation is not required but young foals and some older horses require additional restraint. The procedure takes seconds with a few minutes to do the paperwork and can easily be done at a routine vaccination etc, It is not uncommon for the site to bleed but pressure applied for a few readily stops this.

Each microchip comes with a unique 15 digit number and barcode. Migration of the microchip rarely occurs in horses with a higher incidence of migration in cats and dogs due to the positioning under the skin in small animals. Microchipping is not a visual deterrent but signs for gates can be obtained from the microchip companies.

The British Horse Society and SPCA have always supported compulsory microchipping.

Further information on the above topics can be obtained from your local Veterinary Surgeon.

Be Prepared

Take good, clear pictures of your horse, from all sides, in winter and summer and keep them in a safe place.