**Horse Passport Regulations - Questions and Answers**

**Why do horses need to be identified?**

A horse passport is an identification document which records the identity of the horse and certain veterinary medicines administered to it. 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.

**When do I need to apply for a passport?**

It is the responsibility of the owner of any horse located in NI to ensure that an application is submitted to an authorised PIO by the last day of the period of six months, beginning with the day on which the foal was born.

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.

**How much does a passport cost?**

The cost of a passport is set by the individual PIOs authorised to issue them.  Some organisations may offer discounted rates for riding schools and charities or for bulk applications.  Owners may wish to check this on application.  The average veterinary costs of having one horse implanted with a microchip, including a call out fee is approximately £100.00.

**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;
* temporarily ridden, driven, led or taken in the vicinity of the holding so that the passport can be produced without delay; or from and to registered summer grazing grounds provided that the passport can be presented at the holding of departure;
* 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;
* moved or transported under emergency conditions.

**I have a fully grown horse that doesn’t have a passport, what should I do?**

An application for a horse passport should be requested from an authorised PIO and a veterinarian should be engaged to confirm the horse isn’t microchipped and if this is not the case, then they can proceed to microchip the horse. Without a history of medicines administered to the horse a duplicate/replacement passport will be issued and it will be excluded from entering the human food chain.

**How long are passports valid for?**

Passports are valid for the entire lifetime of the horse. The passport remains the property of the PIO and must be returned to the PIO at the end of the animal’s life.

**How are horses identified in the passport?**

From 1 July 2009 microchips have been used as the primary means of identification for passport purposes, however, silhouettes (a diagram of the horse showing markings, whorls etc.) are still required. 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.

**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 veterinarian.  Before implantation, the veterinarian will check the animal to ensure that a microchip has not already been implanted (even it has been subsequently removed).  Only microchips that comply with standard ISO 11784 and applying HDX or FDX-B technology should be used.  Any microchip inserted must begin with the 826 UK code, except where the equine has been accepted onto a stud book for a breeding program approved outside of the UK, where it is recognised in NI, in which case the prefix associated with the studbook country of origin shall be used.  The veterinarian will implant the microchip into the neck of your horse and will note the microchip number on your passport application.

**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.

**My horse has a passport, does it need to be microchipped?**

All passports issued after 1 July 2009 require that the horse is microchipped by a qualified veterinarian. Passports issued before 1 July 2009, under the existing rules, will remain valid.

**What are the penalties for failing to correctly identify a horse?**

Failure to correctly identify animals could lead to a fine of up to £5,000. An owner could be fined up to £5,000 if they don’t have an up-to-date horse passport. All horse and ponies have to be accompanied by an identification document (passport) during their movements (on foot and during transport).

**What shall I do if the passport requires updating with a change of address?**

Changes of ownership must be notified to the organisation that has issued the passport within 30 days.  The PIO may require that the passport be returned for updating.

**What steps need to be taken if there is a change of ownership?**

A person who transfers a horse to another person must give them the passport at the time of transfer. New owners should then notify the PIO, which issued the passport, of the transfer of ownership,within 30 days of the transfer and provide their name, address and contact details. Owners must send the physical passportto the PIO for updating – it cannot be done online without the passport.

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

You should contact your PIO as soon as possible. Following the loss of a passport, a duplicate or replacement must be issued and the animal irreversibly excluded from 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 are likely to be charged for the duplicate/replacement passport.

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| Situation | Registered Horse (identifiable from microchip or diagram) | Breeding and production Horse (identifiable from microchip or diagram) | Horse whose identity cannot be established through its microchip or diagram |
| Lost passport | Duplicate passport | Duplicate passport | Replacement passport |

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

Yes.  The passport must be passed to the buyer at the time of sale, who should notify the PIO of the new ownership within 30 days.

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

You should not purchase a horse without a 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 as well as the microchip Unless you have access to a microchip scanner 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 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 Regulations (NI) 2019](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisr/2019/67/pdfs/nisr_20190067_en.pdf).

**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 horse’s 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.

**Can you tell me about the inclusion of verified breeding/pedigree information, in horse passports issued by PIOs 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 process and costs.

The known parentage etc. of the horse will be recorded on the new passport. The original food chain status will remain unchanged in the new passport.

**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 the 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 will be checking horse passports and enforcing the Regulations.

**What is the purpose of Section II in the passport?**

Horse passports issued prior to 1 July 2009 can be declared as ‘intended’ or ‘not intended’ for slaughter for human consumption in Section IX Part II of the passport. In NI, the declaration does not need to be signed upon issue of the passport.  However, Part II of Section II 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 II declaration must be signed if administered.
* The horse is consigned for slaughter for human consumption.

It must be remembered that once the declaration has been signed as ‘not intended for human consumption’ this can never be changed, in order to protect the human food chain.  A ‘not intended’ declaration at Part II of Section II cannot be reversed. You are advised to think carefully about the following points before deciding whether you wish to have your horse voluntarily signed out of the human food chain:

* 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 it?
* Is there 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)?
* A number of options are currently 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 the option open, 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 veterinarian can give you advice.

**What medications must be recorded within the Section II pages?**

The [Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/horse-medicines-and-recording-keeping-requirements) provides guidance about which medicines need to be recorded in the passport.

**What other medications should be recorded in the passport?**

Veterinarians who have treated your horse should record all vaccinations in Sections VII and VIII of the passport.

**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 of Section II in your horse’s passport.  This will confirm that your horse is not intended for human consumption.

**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 II, a subsequent owner cannot change this declaration.  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.

**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.  Veterinarians must sign the declaration at Part II of Section II, if substances unsuitable for entry into the food chain have been administered.  The veterinarian is required to do so before administering or prescribing the medication.  If, in an emergency, the passport is not available and the veterinarian 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.

**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 days.  They are required by law to invalidate the passport (and, if a microchip was implanted, the microchip number).  However, you may ask for the passport to be returned on completion of the paperwork.

**Disposal routes for horses**

Information on the disposal routes for horses can be obtained by calling the Department on the following DAERA helpline number: 0300 200 7852.

**What is the procedure when a horse is killed for disease purposes or is slaughtered for human consumption?**

When a horse is killed for disease control purposes, the owner or keeper, who has primary responsibility for it, must return the passport to the PIO as soon as is reasonably practicable and inform the Department’s veterinary surgeon that he or she has done so.

When a horse is slaughtered for human consumption the food business operator must return the marked passport to the PIO, as soon as is reasonably practicable, and inform the Department’s veterinary surgeon that he or she has done so.

**I live in Great Britain. Do the Horse Passport Regulations still apply?**

Yes. Scotland, England, and Wales have introduced their own domestic legislation that implements Commission Regulation (EU) 2015/262 in each of the devolved areas. For further details click on the links below for each country:

* **Scotland:**

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/livestock-identification-and-traceability-guidance/pages/horses/>

* **England:**

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

* **Wales:**

<https://gov.wales/horse-passports-guidance-horse-owners>