

## Identification of Horses and Donkeys.

### Frequently Asked Questions about horse passports and microchips

(Commission Regulation No 504/2008)

---

This document is issued for guidance only and does not purport to be a legal interpretation.

Consult DAFF website [www.agriculture.ie](http://www.agriculture.ie) for up-to-date version of document

---

**Q: What does the law require as regards identification of equines (horses, ponies donkeys etc.) prior to July 1<sup>st</sup> 2009?**

A: Since 2004 all equines must have a passport. Some of the approved equine passport issuing bodies already stipulate that horses be micro-chipped as part of the passport issuing process.

**Q: What does the law require after July 1<sup>st</sup> 2009:**

A: All horses identified after July 1<sup>st</sup> 2009 must be micro-chipped.

*Q. How does the Regulation on Equine ID affect owners/keepers of horses?*

A. Regulation No 504/2008 requires that all equines born in, or, imported into the EU must, if they have not been identified prior to 1<sup>st</sup> July 2009, be identified by means of a passport and microchip. The Regulation comes in to effect on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2009. The Regulation covers horses, ponies, donkeys, and other equidae.

**Q. Why are passports and microchips required?**

A. The aim of Regulation No 504/2008 is to improve the system for the identification of horses. The new system will build on a single identification document i.e. one passport, issued for the lifetime of the animal when it is born or is imported into the EU from a Third country. This passport will be linked to the horse by the implanted microchip. The Regulation will provide extra safeguards for owners, breeders of equines as to the identity of animals and

it represents a major step forward in safeguarding the food chain. Whereas horse-meat is not consumed to any great extent in Ireland – it is commonly consumed in other EU member states and this Regulation applies to all Member States.

**Q. How are horses identified under this Regulation ?**

A. From 1<sup>st</sup> July 2009 the identification system for horses will comprise of a passport, a micro-chip and details recorded on a database maintained by approved issuing bodies. Each horse will also be identified within the passport by a Unique Equine Life Number (UELN).

**Q. How do I get a passport?**

A. An up-to-date list of the equine passport issuing bodies approved by the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (referred to below as “issuing bodies”) can be accessed by clicking on:

[http://www.agriculture.gov.ie/farmingsectors/horses/equineidentificationdocumentspassports/Issuing Bodies approved by the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine for the purposes of issuing identity documents for equidae](http://www.agriculture.gov.ie/farmingsectors/horses/equineidentificationdocumentspassports/Issuing_Bodies_approved_by_the_Minister_for_Agriculture,_Food_and_the_Marine_for_the_purposes_of_issuing_identity_documents_for_equidae)

The issuing bodies will advise you of the steps necessary to register your horse with their organisation. Please note that some organisations issue passports and microchips for pedigree animals only i.e. for animals entered or suitable for entry in their respective studbooks, whereas other organisations provide passports and microchips which are used for “ID” purposes only and do not involve the animal being registered in a studbook, or recording of pedigree information.

**Q. What are the arrangements for pedigree animals?**

---

A. If you think your animal may be suitable for pedigree registration, please contact the appropriate studbook into which you would like to register your animal and they will inform you of their registration procedure, which will include the micro-chipping of your animal and the issuing of a passport.

**Q. What do I do if I have a passport with no breeding recorded and subsequently get information to prove the pedigree of the horse?**

A. When a horse with an 'ID only' passport, is subsequently found to be eligible for registration with an approved breeding organisation, that organisation can update the passport by adding the relevant information to the certificate of origin pages contained in the passport, or by inserting a certificate of origin page into the original passport. A second passport must not be issued for this animal.

**Q. How much does it cost to get my horse identified in accordance with the Regulation?**

A. The cost of registration will vary, it will consist of a combination of the fees charged by the approved passport issuing body, the fee charged by the veterinary practitioner and any additional costs such as DNA costs, etc. incurred as part of the registration process.

**Q. How long are passports valid for?**

A. Once issued a passport is valid for the lifetime of the horse. The keeper must return the passport to the issuing body when an animal dies, informing that organisation of the date of death of the animal.

**Q. How soon after birth do I need to register a foal?**

A. A foal must be micro-chipped and issued with a passport by six months of age or in any event before they leave their birth holding. However foals under the age of six months that are unweaned and accompanied by their dam or foster mare do not need to be accompanied by a passport.

**Q. My horse already has a passport issued by an approved issuing body before 1<sup>st</sup> July 2009; does he now need to be micro-chipped?**

A. No, only horses presented for identification for the first time after 1<sup>st</sup> July 2009 need to be micro-chipped as part of the identification process.

**Q. I have an adult horse that has never been registered, what should I do?**

A. You should contact one of the approved passport issuing bodies and seek to identify and microchip the horse immediately. As there is no recorded history of medicines given to these animals they cannot be slaughtered for human consumption. For further information on passport issuing bodies click on:

[http://www.agriculture.gov.ie/farmingsectors/horses/equineidentificationdocumentspassports/Issuing\\_Bodies\\_approved\\_by\\_the\\_Minister\\_for\\_Agriculture,\\_Food\\_and\\_the\\_Marine\\_for\\_the\\_purposes\\_of\\_issuing\\_identity\\_documents\\_for\\_equidae](http://www.agriculture.gov.ie/farmingsectors/horses/equineidentificationdocumentspassports/Issuing_Bodies_approved_by_the_Minister_for_Agriculture,_Food_and_the_Marine_for_the_purposes_of_issuing_identity_documents_for_equidae)

**Q. I am the keeper, not the owner of a horse – am I responsible for obtaining the passport?**

A. Yes, where the keeper has no ownership of the horse, he/she must act on behalf of and in agreement with the owner of the horse, to ensure the horse is identified in accordance with the Regulation.

**Q. What type of micro-chip must I use when registering my horse and where do I get a microchip?**

---

A. Micro-chips must comply with ISO standard 11784. All approved issuing bodies in Ireland must and do use microchips meeting this standard. Micro-chips supplied by one of the issuing bodies should only be implanted in equines registered by that issuing body. The issuing bodies will advise as to how you can get a microchip to register your horse with their organisation.

**Q. Who is permitted to insert a microchip in a horse?**

---

A. Micro-chips can only be implanted in horses by veterinary practitioners. Veterinary practitioners are required to take all appropriate measures to ensure a horse has not been micro-chipped previously.

**Q. What is the Unique Equine Life Number (UELN) that is included on the passports?**

A. This is the number that appears on the passport and which identifies the horse with the passport issuing body. This number will be supplied by the organisation that issues the passport. The first three digits will be a country code (372 for Ireland) and the next three digits a code belonging to the organisation issuing the passport. The last nine digits will be issued by the passport-issuing organisation to identify each equine registered with it. Please note that the UELN number is not always the same as the microchip number.

**Q. What do I do if I lose my passport?**

A. You apply to an approved issuing organisation for a duplicate or replacement passport. Any such passport will be stamped ‘duplicate’ or ‘replacement’ as appropriate, and will always state that the horse cannot be slaughtered for human consumption. Where the original passport is lost and the animal’s identity can be established by reference to the micro-chip, the issuing body shall issue a duplicate passport. Where the original passport is lost and the animal’s identity cannot be established the issuing body shall issue a replacement passport.

**Q. I am permanently importing a horse into Ireland from a country outside the EU – will I need to obtain a passport?**

A. If your horse does not already have a passport then yes, you will need to apply for a passport from one of the approved issuing bodies within 30 days of importing the horse. If your horse already has a passport then you must have the existing passport registered with the appropriate Irish issuing body which will record details of the animal in their database.

**Q. What do I do if I am permanently importing a horse into Ireland from another EU Member State?**

A. Horses imported from other EU Member States should be accompanied by a passport, which complies with the EU legislation.

**Q. What do I do with my horses passport when he dies.**

Passports of equines disposed of in slaughter plants will be stamped “invalid” on the first page, the date of death will be recorded and the document will be returned to the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, AIM Division, Backweston, Celbridge, Co Kildare from where they will be forwarded to the relevant issuing body. Where an equine dies other

than in slaughter plants there is a legal obligation on the keeper to return the passport to the body which issued the passport within 30 days of the death of the equine. Issuing bodies must then update their databases accordingly, recording the death of the animal

**Q. What is the purpose of the section IX in the passport?**

A. Section IX is for the owner and the veterinary practitioner to declare whether or not the horse is intended for human consumption. The declaration does not need to be signed upon issue of the passport, with the exception of duplicate, replacement, and passports issued to horses over six months of age at the time of registration. However the declaration must be signed before:

- any medication containing a substance for which a Maximum Residue Limit has not been fixed, e.g. 'Bute' (phenylbutazone) cannot be administered to a horse intended for the food chain. The Section IX declaration must be signed as 'not intended for human consumption' if administered.
- The owner can at anytime prior to one of the above events choose to sign the declaration. 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. Signing the 'not intended' declaration removes any option of slaughtering the animal for food at a later point in its life.

**Q. What medications must be recorded within the Section IX pages?**

A. Part III of Section IX must be completed where a horse has received one of the so-called 'essential substances' listed in Commission Regulation 504/2008.

**Q. What should I do if my horse has been administered Bute (Phenylbutazone)?**

A. Bute is authorised to be given to horses but it must not be administered to horses intended for human consumption. Therefore, you must sign the relevant section (Part II) of Section IX of your horse's passport. This will confirm that your horse is not intended for human consumption.

**Q. If I sell my horse, can its new owner change the declaration contained in Annex I, Section IX, Part II of the passport?**

A. Once a horse has been declared as not for human consumption, a subsequent owner cannot change this.

**Q. Will I need a passport if my horse is never intended for human consumption or will not travel abroad?**

A. Yes, all horses will need a passport irrespective of whether or not the horse is ultimately intended for human consumption.

**Q. Can a veterinary practitioner treat a horse that is not accompanied by its passport?**

A. Yes. A veterinary practitioner may treat a horse not accompanied with a passport with normal authorized medicines or, under the 'Cascade' rules, with substances which have an MRL. However, in the case of 'exceptional' treatments (i.e. substances without an MRL or those covered by Regulation 504/2008), the veterinary practitioner is required by EU legislation (Article 20 of Regulation 504/2008) to ascertain the status of the animal (i.e. excluded from the food chain or not) from its passport.

**Q. Who is enforcing the requirements?**

A. The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine has overall responsibility for the enforcement of this legislation, penalties can be applied by the courts for non-compliance.

**Q. I need to dispose of my horse for various reasons- what are my options?**

A: Horses can of course be sold through various channels (sales venues, traditional fairs, private sales etc.), they can also be exported, but your animal must have a passport before it can be sold or exported.

Horses suitable for slaughter for human consumption (i.e. these animals must meet the veterinary requirements in place) can be sent for slaughter in an approved slaughter plant,

provided they have a passport compliant with current veterinary requirements. There are currently three approved plants in Ireland (B&F Meats, Pleberstown, Thomastown, Co Kilkenny , Ashgrove Meats, Dually, Newcastlewest, Co Limerick & Shannonside Foods, Morrell Bridge, Turnings, Straffan, Co.Kildare). You should check with these plants to ascertain the eligibility of your animal for slaughter. Horses cannot be slaughtered for human consumption if there is any indication on the passport that the animal is unsuitable for the food chain.

Horses not intended for human consumption can be disposed of through certain Category 2 Intermediate Plants (Knackeries); there are a number of these premises throughout the country for further information contact your local District Veterinary Office (DVO).

**Q. I am exporting my horse to France/UK– do I need to take my horse’s passport?**

A. Yes – a horse must always be accompanied by its passport, whether moving within Ireland or moving out of the Country.

**Q. Who should I contact for further information?**

A. For information on the procedures about applying for a passport, contact the relevant approved issuing body or

**Equine Infrastructures Section,  
Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Farnham Street, Cavan**

Email: [equine.infrastructures@agriculture.gov.ie](mailto:equine.infrastructures@agriculture.gov.ie)

Telephone: 049-4368291

Or

**For Un-registered Horses**

**Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, AIM Division, Backweston Campus,  
Celbridge, Co. Kildare**

Email: [horseid@agriculture.gov.ie](mailto:horseid@agriculture.gov.ie)

Telephone: 01-5058881



---

*Updated by The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2013.*