



Horse Passports and microchips

Passports

In the UK, all horses, ponies, mules and donkeys must have a passport by law; however there are a few exemptions for feral and semi-wild ponies. It is the owner's responsibility to ensure their horse has a passport, not the "keeper" of the horse (i.e. yard owner, trainer etc.). Foals must be microchipped and have a passport before they are 6 months old or by December 31st in the year that they are born, whichever is later.

The animal's keeper must have the passport with them at all times when they're with the animal, unless it's in a stable, grazing or being moved by foot. Passports are required in the EU for identification, effective disease control and for food producing animals, to ensure certain medicines do not enter the human food chain. If a horse does not have a valid passport it cannot legally be transported, sold or slaughtered for human consumption. Certain medicines cannot be prescribed for horses who do not have a passport.

Once a passport is issued, it is valid for life. When the animal dies the passport should be returned to the Passport Issuing Organisation (PIO) that issued it for it to be invalidated, within 30 days. This is required so the passport and microchip number can be invalidated. Owners can request to have it returned to them for them to keep.

For lost passports, the PIO should be contacted and a duplicate passport can be requested.

Passports need to be updated within a month after purchase by a new owner. Horses cannot be sold without a valid passport and the vendor is committing an offence if they try to sell a horse without a valid passport.

Microchips

Microchipping by a veterinary surgeon is compulsory when a passport is applied for, to help identify the individual animal. It is a quick and simple procedure where your vet will implant a small microchip (about the size of a grain of rice) in the mid left hand side of your horse's crest. It is very well tolerated and sometimes, local anaesthetic is used to aid placement in wriggly foals or horses! Once placed, the animal can be scanned with a microchip reader and a specific number will appear on the scanner. Copies of the special number labels will be given to you and placed on the passport application forms.

If a horse already has a passport and is microchipped, it is the owner's responsibility to inform the PIO and to keep their own record of the microchip number.

Occasionally we see horses which have accidentally been microchipped twice- in these cases both numbers would be entered in the passport and reported to the PIO so accurate records are maintained.

For more information and for a list of PIOs contact:

Defra helpline: 08459 33 55 77 (9am-5pm)

defra.helpline@defra.gsi.gov.uk