

Microchipping and your horse

COMPULSORY MICROCHIPPING AND YOUR HORSE

Following the introduction of compulsory passports for all horses in 2005, new European Union (EU) regulations, which came into effect on 1st July 2009, mean that all foals born must now be microchipped before an owner can apply for an equine passport.



DOES THIS AFFECT ME AND MY HORSE?

The new rules do not apply to older horses with an existing passport which were born before 1st July 2009, but any foal (horses, ponies, donkeys or mules) born after this date must be microchipped within six months of birth, or by December 31st of the year of birth, whichever is later.

Horses born before 1st July 2009 which do not have an existing passport, must also be microchipped when the passport is issued. Failure to correctly identify animals under the new rules could lead to a fine.

Even if your horse is not affected by these regulations, microchipping is increasingly being seen as the best way of identifying an individual horse and it has advantages over the other methods of identification.

WHAT IS MICROCHIPPING?

A microchip is a small implant, about the size of a grain of rice, which contains a unique serial code. It is inserted, via an injection, into the ligament on the left side of the horse's neck. This procedure must only be carried out by a veterinary surgeon.

The horse owner's details and a unique serial code are stored on a computerised database, which links the owner to the horse. It is therefore important that the owner's details on the database are kept up to date.

Once the microchip has been implanted, it can be read easily by an electronic microchip reader.

The microchip cannot move or be seen – therefore, it is tamper-proof and permanent, unlike other more traditional methods of identification, such as freeze-marking.

Although microchipping is considered to be very safe, there is a very small risk of bruising, abscess formation and on very rare occasions, migration of the microchip. Your vet will be able to advise you further.





WHY IS MICROCHIPPING SO IMPORTANT?



The introduction of horse passports and microchipping has been widely welcomed by the equine community. The EU legislation ensures that horses, which have been treated with veterinary medicines not authorised for use in food-producing animals, cannot be slaughtered for human consumption in Europe.

If horse owners in the UK do not comply, there is a risk that we could lose 70% of horse medicines, including common medications such as 'bute', which would have grave consequences for equine welfare.

It is intended that microchipping will make the horse identification and passport system more robust.

This reliable, sophisticated and cost-effective technology will also help to reunite owners with their horses in the event of theft or escape, aid disease surveillance and help animal welfare organisations with prosecutions in cases of neglect.



HOW DO I GET MY HORSE MICROCHIPPED?

To find out more, or to get your horse microchipped, seek the advice of your veterinary surgeon.

A recent online Horse and Hound survey showed that 75% of horse owners are not aware of the new microchipping legislation which came into force on 1st July 2009.

