

This document has been prepared to give guidance to horse owners on the care of the horse and options available to prevent horses becoming unwanted or neglected. These options primarily include alternative uses and retirement. They also include inevitable end-of-life decisions, including euthanasia, humane destruction and disposal.

Ireland has an international reputation for the production of high quality horses and for excellent horsemanship. This reputation has been built on a long legacy of quality care and husbandry. The Irish Thoroughbred Welfare Council (ITWC) was created in 2020 to assist HRI with the formation of initiatives to enhance the care and welfare of horses.

It is comprised of representatives of the Breeders, Trainers, Owners, the IHRB, DAFM, International Federation for the Aftercare of Racehorses and the animal welfare department of UCD Veterinary College. Further details can be found at [www.hri.ie](http://www.hri.ie)



### CARE OF THE HORSE

Responsible horse ownership, horse breeding and every other horse related activity require a clear knowledge and understanding of the owner's responsibilities both legally and in terms of the care, cost implications, demands on time, usage and limitations of use, legislation and ultimately disposal of the horse. Every equine keeper has an individual responsibility in this context.

### • 30-DAY FOAL NOTIFICATION

From January 2019 breeders are required to notify Weatherbys Ireland General Stud Book within 30 days of the birth of a thoroughbred or non-thoroughbred foal born in Ireland and bred for racing. The notification of birth can be done through the Weatherbys ePassport.

The 30-day foal notification is an important step in ensuring that we have full lifetime traceability of all thoroughbreds for health and welfare reasons.

Further details: [www.weatherbys.co.uk](http://www.weatherbys.co.uk)

### • EQUINE PREMISES NUMBER

Anyone intending to keep equines must first apply to their Department of Agriculture (DAFM) Regional Veterinary Office (RVO) to register the establishment for this purpose. Establishments, once approved to keep equines, are issued with a unique EPRN (herd number).

If there are other species on the establishment (such as sheep or cattle), the EPRN will be the same as the flock / herd number. However, it is still necessary to notify the RVO of your intention to keep equines by submitting a completed EPRN application form. Once approved, the existing herd number will be activated for equines.

### • EQUINE CENSUS

The registered operator of every establishment where equines are kept on the annual census night must submit a completed census return. Operators who do not return a completed census are committing an offence. If you do not make a census return, your EPRN will be de-activated, and you will be unable to obtain passports for your equines; export equines; sell equines or qualify for payments under DAFM equine-related schemes. More information can be found at [www.gov.ie](http://www.gov.ie) or contact [horseid@agriculture.gov.ie](mailto:horseid@agriculture.gov.ie) or phone +353 (1)505 8881

### • TRANSFER OF OWNERSHIP

When ownership of an equine changes:

- the person who transfers equine ownership to another person must present the passport to the new owner at the time of transfer. Never purchase an equine without receiving its passport. Both parties involved in the transfer must keep a record of the transaction.
- the new owner must register transfer of ownership with the Passport Issuing Organisation (PIO) that issued the original passport if it issued in Ireland or with the PIO that lodged the passport in Ireland if it was issued elsewhere. It is a legal requirement for a new owner to forward a declaration of ownership to a PIO within 30 days of purchase. The new owner may also submit the passport to be updated where the rules of the PIO so require.

Further details can be found on: [www.weatherbys.co.uk](http://www.weatherbys.co.uk)

## RESPONSIBLE OWNERSHIP OF THOROUGHBREDS



Every horse owner has to consider all the options available for their horse, to prevent it becoming unwanted or falling into a state of neglect or suffering. Horse owners must be mindful that there is a legal requirement to have an identification document (passport) for each horse they possess, and that this should accompany the animal on journeys, when sold and during the disposal process.

Best practice standards of care are available from the Farm Animal Welfare Advisory Council, Animal Health & Welfare Division, Agriculture House, Kildare St., Dublin 2. The relevant document is available at [www.fawac.ie](http://www.fawac.ie) or email [fawac@agriculture.gov.ie](mailto:fawac@agriculture.gov.ie)

Legal obligations are under the Protection of Animals Act 1911 and Amendment 1965 in addition to other legislation relevant to the individual type of horse. The EU Animal Health Act came into effect in 2022 which updated and consolidated existing legislation.



## ALTERNATIVE USES

Horses are best kept in an active and stimulating environment which will fulfil their needs according to their state of health and wellbeing. Owners can seek to place their horses in alternative use and career programmes, which can include retraining or donation to therapeutic riding programmes.

Horse owners have to be realistic, since not all horses are suitable for these programmes and opportunities for placement within them is limited.

Support and retraining options for thoroughbreds is available through the following organisations:

- The Irish Horse Welfare Trust – [www.ihwt.ie](http://www.ihwt.ie)
- Treo Eile – [www.treoeile.com](http://www.treoeile.com)

## RETIREMENT

Retirement requires that adequate long term provision is made to ensure that the horse cannot fall into a state of neglect. Those who cannot provide retirement facilities themselves can consider paying others to provide this service for them. Responsible retirement can be achieved by adhering to four principles of animal welfare, to which every horse is entitled and which horse owners are obliged to provide:

1. Good Feeding: Access to clean, fresh water and food as part of a tailored and balanced diet, with proper feed management
2. Good Housing: A horse's environment should be designed to meet their welfare requirements, minimise the risk of injury, and provide shade and shelter
3. Good Health: Prevention of pain, injury, and disease are the goal and where prevention is not possible, rapid treatment should be achieved
4. Good Well-being: Focus on the human-horse relationship and having a good understanding of horse behaviours and personality to support this relationship

Retirement without ensuring that these principles can be provided and adhered to for the rest of the horse's life is irresponsible, potentially cruel and can lead to prosecution. If you think you have seen an animal being abused or neglected please contact the ISPCA National Cruelty Help Line on 0818 515 515.



## EUTHANASIA, HUMANE DESTRUCTION / SLAUGHTER & DISPOSAL

Euthanasia to prevent suffering is an established principle in every sector of animal care. The veterinary profession provides this highly skilled and humane service where horses are kept. Disposal of the remains / carcass is then the responsibility of the horse owner. Burial is no longer an option due to restrictions imposed by environmental laws (European Communities Animal By-Products Regulations 2003).

It is a legal requirement for horses who have been given prescribed drugs to have their passport signed out of the food chain or stamped 'Not For Human Consumption'. This can only be done by the administering veterinary practitioner, after the drugs administration. It is important that breeders ensure this law is adhered to, because the presence of 'bute' poses a human health risk and the signing out is permanent.

Humane destruction and carcass disposal is also available through the knackery service. A list of Ireland's knackeries and horse slaughter facilities is available from the Department of Agriculture at [gov.ie](http://gov.ie) - EU Approved ABP Plants ([www.gov.ie](http://www.gov.ie))

Humane destruction is also available through horse slaughter facilities, which are licensed and supervised by the Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine. These facilities dispose of horse remains / carcasses in accordance with EU and national legislation.

## SUMMARY

If you own or keep a horse you are wholly and legally responsible for its health, safety and welfare while it is in your ownership/possession.

If you have any queries with regards the information provided in this booklet, please contact the ITBA offices on +353 45 877 543 or email [office@itba.ie](mailto:office@itba.ie)

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