



Equine passports

Any of the equine vets at Town & Country Veterinary Centre would be happy to discuss your horse's passport requirements. Do not hesitate to contact us if you are unsure as to what you should be doing. Listed below however are a couple of frequently asked questions which may be of interest.

1. Which animals need to have passports?

All horses, donkeys, mules and even zebra and wild horses must have a passport, whatever their age (if they are over 6 months old) and regardless of whether they are likely to travel anywhere. It is an offence not to have a passport. The only exception to this rule is for defined populations of identified and listed animals in designated areas of Dartmoor, Exmoor and the New Forest.

2. Why does my horse need a passport?

The regulations were introduced to ensure that animals who are not intended for human consumption can be identified as such and can benefit from the use of medicinal treatments that are banned for use in 'food producing' animals. As far as the regulations are concerned, horses are considered food producing animals unless they have been officially identified and the section IX part of their passport has been filled in confirming that they are in fact NOT for human consumption.

A good example of a common drug that is not permitted for food producing animals would be phenylbutazone (the active ingredient in 'bute' or Equipalazone). This can only be given to horses who have a passport with section IX completed.

A horse should be accompanied by its passport at all times. If you have a horse on loan, arrangements should be made to ensure that the passport is available for inspection at any point. If you travel to a show or take your horse on holiday, you must take the passport with you so that it is available in the event of your horse requiring veterinary treatment at any point.

3. What do I have to do to get a passport?

If you have a horse who does not have a passport then you have to obtain a passport application form. There are many different passport issuing organisations, including breed societies and a number of general horse societies and companies.

A complete list of organisations should be available on the DEFRA website www.defra.gov.uk/animalh/tracing/horses/horsepassport.htm

A couple of general passport issuing organisations include:

British Equine Federation www.bef.co.uk
British Horse Society www.bhs.org.uk
Farmkey www.farmkey.co.uk
Horse Passport Agency Ltd www.horsepassportagency.org
Pet-ID UK Ltd www.pet-id.net
Weatherbys www.weatherbys-group.com

Microchip: Since July 1st 2009 it is compulsory to have your horse microchipped when applying for a passport. The chip must be implanted by a qualified, registered veterinary surgeon. The vet must scan the horse prior to insertion of the chip and check for any scars that would suggest that a chip had been surgically removed. If the horse is found to have a chip present, then the number must be reported to the passport issuing authority and the national equine database, who will investigate whether a passport has been previously issued. The horse will not be given a second chip. Freeze branding or DNA verification do not replace the requirement for a chip.

Identification: Most passport issuing organisations will request that a veterinary surgeon completes the identification sketch of your horse. Some will permit this part of the procedure to be performed by someone who is not a veterinary surgeon. Check with your passport issuing authority.

Once your horse has been chipped and the paperwork completed, the application can be sent off.

4. What age do I have to get a passport for my foal?

All foals must be chipped by the time they are 6 months old or before December 31st of the year they were born. (Whichever of these comes later). If the foal is sold at younger than 6 months old, or before December 31st then they don't need a passport for the purpose of the sale, but the new owner must get one within 30 days of purchase.

5. What do I have to do if I have just bought or wish to sell a horse?

All horses must be bought and sold with an accompanying passport (apart from young foals, see note above). If you have just bought a horse, you must contact the passport issuing authority and inform them of the new ownership details within 30 days of purchasing the horse.

6. What happens if my horse dies?

If your horse dies, then the passport should be returned to the passport issuing authority.