

The rules of equine identification

It is important that all those who own horses, or other equines, are aware of the Equine Identification (England) Regulations 2018 which introduced new rules for identifying equines on 1 October 2018. The regulations followed the introduction of the Central Equine Database, which became fully operational in March 2018. These regulations replace the Horse Passports Regulations 2009. It is an offence to keep a horse, or other equine, unless it is identified in accordance with the 2018 regulations.

The regulations require:

- All horses, apart from wild ponies, to be identified with a microchip and passport, regardless of age. Under the previous rules the requirement to microchip horses only applied to those born after 2009. Owners have until 1 October 2020 to get any equine born before 30th June 2009 retrospectively microchipped if it is not already.
- Owners to apply to one of the Passport Issuing Organisations (PIOs) for an ID. For new-born equines this must be within 6 months of birth or by 30 November of that year, whichever is the later.
- PIOs to issue and record details about horse passports. PIOs are required to update their records held on the Central Equine Database within 24 hours of creating or amending a record.
- Owners to keep the details held by the PIO up to date. Owners can check that their horse's details are up to date through Chip Checker at the [Equine Register website](#).
- A person who buys a horse, or whose horse is lost, stolen, dies, is euthanised or signed out of the food chain to inform their PIO within 30 days.
- Horses imported into the UK to be registered with a PIO within 30 days of arrival.
- That where a horse is being treated by a veterinary surgeon, the owner or, if the owner does not have primary day-to-day responsibility, the keeper, must provide the veterinary surgeon with the ID upon reasonable request and without delay.
- Horses must be accompanied by their ID, or a smartcard if available, whenever moved or transported.

N.B. The derogation from the full identification requirements continue to apply to wild ponies living on Dartmoor, Exmoor, New Forest and Wicken Fen, but certain rules must still be complied with under the 2018 regulations.

Offences and Enforcement

- Breach of the regulations by an owner or keeper is an offence, punishable on conviction by an unlimited fine.

- The regulations give local authorities new enforcement powers. Previously local authorities could only bring prosecutions. From 1 October 2018, they can now issue civil sanctions and may issue compliance notices, recover enforcement costs and fine offenders up to £200.

[The Regulations can be found here.](#)