

BHC Summer Meeting 19/06/2020

With apologies for not being able to speak at the meeting on Friday, there appeared to be a wider problem with the Defra IT system. I hope the note below provides an adequate update and answers at least some of your questions.

'Free Trade Negotiations and preparations for the end of the transition period'

With thanks to a Defra colleague who kindly provided the following. If you have further questions please let us know.

“Negotiations with the EU continue and are expected to pick up speed, there is not going to be an extension of the transition period.

As David Frost, the chief UK negotiator mentioned recently, progress thus far has been limited, but rest assured the UK remains committed to a successful outcome.

The detail of the EU's offer on goods trade (which includes live animals – that is goods as opposed to services) falls well short of recent precedent in Free Trade Agreements it has agreed with other sovereign countries like Canada.

On the so-called level playing field and governance, the UK view is that we won't make progress until the EU stops insisting that it must impose conditions on us which are not found in the EU's other trade agreements and which do not take account of the fact that we have left the EU as an independent state.

Following the High Level Meeting on 15th June, the Parties agreed nevertheless that new momentum was required. They supported the plans agreed by Chief Negotiators to intensify the talks in July and to create the most conducive conditions for concluding and ratifying a deal before the end of 2020.

As you may be aware the government has recently announced a phased approach to applying full third country checks at the end of the transition period.

From January 2021 there will be physical checks at the point of destination or other approved premises on all high risk live animals and germinal products.

From July 2021 checks for animals and their products will take place at GB Border Control Posts.”

Zootechnic Update

Again with thanks to colleagues for providing this; and if you have further questions please ask.

“We applied, in February, to the European Commission for 3rd Country Listing under the Zootechnical Regulation for a number of breed societies/organisations which, if given, will enable the breed society/organisation to continue trading on the same terms as they do now. We hope to reach an agreement before the end of the Transition Period (31 Dec 2020).

We have recently been in touch with all the breed societies/organisations from not just the equine world but also livestock animals, seeking 3rd Country Listing in order to assimilate all the evidence required to show they are compliant with the Regulation, in the event that formal checks should be carried out by the Commission during the 3rd Country Listing application process. We would like to thank these breed societies and studbooks for their cooperation, particularly during the current situation where they are coping with reduced capacity. We would kindly ask any societies who have not yet responded or who have outstanding information, to please get in touch with us as soon as possible.

During the Transition Period the current EU Zootech Regulation still applies. However, as of the end of the transition period, the EU animal breeding rules, and in particular Regulation (EU) 2016/1012 will no longer apply to the United Kingdom. Thus, from the 1 Jan 2021 breeding programme extensions into the EU will no longer be available to UK breed societies.

Animals registered in UK studbooks that are physically in the EU, can remain in UK studbook and studbooks can continue to issue zootech certificates for those animals, as long as we get approval from the Commission on our application for 3rd Country Listing of our breed societies.

If we are not granted 3rd country listing approval, from 1 Jan 2021 no new animals can be registered in UK studbooks if they are physically in the EU. Furthermore, studbooks will be unable to issue Zootech certificates for animals registered in UK studbooks which are physically in the EU. Therefore, we are advising that EU breeders should also register their animals in an EU studbook, in case we don't get the approval. Breeders registering with an EU studbook directly, does not affect their existing pedigree registrations in UK studbooks. Animals can be registered in more than one breeding book.

If there is no equivalent studbook in the EU, it might be that studbooks consider establishing a filial studbook in a Member State.

If you have any other questions these can be dealt with by the Team offline, you can email their shared inbox fangr@defra.gov.uk. Further information can also be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/guide-to-zootechnical-rules-and-standards-from-1-january-2021>

Equine ID

Apologies again for my IT issues, I'm not sure where I was cut off so I hope this isn't too repetitive.

I realise things may have appeared to have gone a little quiet on Equine ID and the Central Equine Database in recent weeks, but I'm sure you appreciate, the prime focus of the Government, has had to be on both dealing with Covid-19 and of course, our ongoing preparations for leaving the EU. It won't surprise you to know, that these have taken up a considerable amount of the time of myself and my Team; as well as colleagues elsewhere in both Defra and other government departments, like DCMS.

However, we have certainly not forgotten, how important having an accurate database is, both to protect the welfare of our national herd; and to be confident, that in the event of a disease outbreak, our traceability system is robust enough to keep any impacts to a minimum. This is clearly the responsibility of all those in the industry, including both owners and PIOs.

Yesterday, I spoke with Lord Gardiner and he was keen that this message be emphasised, that having an accurate database is of great importance.

With the opening up of the Central Equine Database's Digital Stable portal, which Lord Gardiner fully supports, we will have the capacity both to monitor uptake and ensure both owners and PIOs are doing what is required of them (and to take appropriate action if not).

This year we have faced restrictions on government messaging, at first it was due to EU Exit and currently due to Covid-19. Once these restrictions have been removed we will be launching a comms campaign. This will underline the vital importance of owners both updating their ID records in a timely fashion and ensuring their equines are microchipped. Recognising that the deadline for the latter, in England at least, is 1 October. In the meantime, anything you and your organisations can do, to encourage this, would be warmly welcomed.

I realise that vets have had other pre-occupations recently and have rightly prioritised emergency procedures and their own wellbeing. However, as Covid-19 restrictions continue to ease, it should become easier for them to undertake other tasks, like microchipping. Those of you with unchipped horses (or who know of others in this position), should therefore be making appropriate arrangements with their vets (or encouraging others to do so).

Lord Gardiner was also keen, to underline the benefits of new technology, in assisting the process of equine ID and traceability; and we will therefore be actively engaging with the British Horse Council and Equine Register in the coming weeks, to attempt to maximise those benefits...for all of us and all our horses! And he will expect to see, concrete evidence of improvements in the operation of the system, as a result.