

Firstly, I will give an update on Equine ID and traceability in Northern Ireland.

DAERA officials continue work to bring forward domestic legislation which will provide enforcement powers in respect of new obligations under the EU Animal Health Law (the “EU AHL”), which Northern Ireland must implement in full, as it is listed in Annex 2 to the Windsor Framework. This means that in 2025 we intend to bring forward mandatory registration of equine establishments for all keepers, including new record keeping obligations for those establishments. We intend to bring forward enforcement provisions for all of the mandatory obligations under the EU AHL, however, certain obligations will take longer to make operable.

For example, it will take some time until we are able to roll out the requirement to record habitual residence (that is when an equine moves from one registered establishment to another, for a period exceeding 30 days). Although we will have the legislative powers to enforce this from next year, it is going to take some time for DAERA to develop a digital solution to facilitate this. Provisions within the EU AHL which are not mandatory – such as the derogation relating to the use of digital applications to support equine identification, will be considered at a later date.

It would be remiss of me to not mention the RTE Programme called “Horses: Making a Killing” which aired on RTE1 in June this year. The programme reported on a number of serious breaches of animal welfare in the Republic of Ireland, as well as incidences of alleged horse smuggling across the EU. The programme also specifically referred to a DAERA-authorized, Northern Irish PIO, which allegedly had issued passports to a number of horses which were later found to have been misidentified prior to being exported. Officials in DAERA have fully investigated the claims made by the programme in relation to the NI PIO. Since the programme aired, we have worked closely with all three DAERA-authorized PIOs to ensure that they are complying in full with their statutory obligations.

Secondly, I would like to give an update on the Supply of Veterinary Medicines to Northern Ireland

- These veterinary medicine matters relate to the UK Government's own commitments on implementation of the Windsor Framework, and questions about Government decision-making on those issues should be directed to the Defra Secretary of State.
- Minister Muir is committed to continuing to do all within his powers to ensure the continued supply of veterinary medicines to Northern Ireland.
- The Minister is hopeful that the UK Government will act in good faith to improve EU/UK relations and work towards the possibility of an SPS

Veterinary Agreement, which may resolve a range of issues for the future supply of and access to veterinary medicines in Northern Ireland.

- The UK Government has advised they are progressing work on this issue as quickly as possible. The latest meeting of the Veterinary Medicines Working Group took place on 21 November and was attended by the Chief Veterinary Officer for Northern Ireland. This Group will advise the UK Government on solutions that agricultural and pharmaceutical industries, as well as private animal owners and keepers, need to ensure the continued future availability and supply of veterinary medicines into Northern Ireland.

Lastly I will give a brief update from the Ports. There are no changes in terms of requirements for certification but Portal Staff would like to issue a reminder to all GB certifying vets to complete **Section I.11 Place of Dispatch** correctly. The Registration Number for the place of dispatch **must** be entered here. Full details of how to complete the certificate can be found in the Notes for Guidance. EHCs are scrutinised by Inspectors from the EU Commission.

Full documentary, identity and physical checks, including welfare checks on equines are required on arrival in Northern Ireland. New facilities for inspection and detention will be in place by 01/01/2025.

That concludes the DAERA update.

Charlotte Smith 13/12/2024