

Zootechnical & UKGLE Update

We are currently conducting a project to ensure that all breed societies are fully compliant with the relevant Zootech legislation and at the turn of the year, we turned our attention to the equine societies only to discover that the majority of them had been unknowingly and unintentionally registering part-bred equines incorrectly, in violation of the Regulation (EU) 2015/262 (UK assimilated law). Please see the below excerpt taken from the guidance document we sent out to the Equine societies earlier this year:

As the competent authorities for the UK, Defra and the Devolved Governments have obligations connected to the monitoring of compliance with zootech and equine passport legislation, remediation of non-compliance and prevention of further occurrences of non-compliance.

To ensure continued compliance with UK Zootech law, Defra, working with the Devolved Governments, carries out periodic reviews of both the breeding programmes and studbook structure of all breed societies. Equine breed societies recognised under this legislation (also known as Passport Issuing Organisations – PIOs) are permitted to issue equine passports under GB Equine ID law, and NI Equine ID law in Northern Ireland. Maintaining compliance with the key requirements of the legislation is essential for recognised UK breed societies to retain their status as third country listed breeding bodies by the EU.

Defra is aware that some breed societies in the UK have registered in the main section of their studbook equines whose parents are not already registered in that studbook, or who are not otherwise eligible for entry in that section. Defra is also aware that registered passports have been issued to part-bred horses that were not eligible for, or entered into, the main or the supplementary section of the studbook.

This guidance is being issued to breed societies and PIOs as a reminder of this existing legislation. It does not introduce new legislative requirements.

Since this guidance was issued, we have been in regular contact with stakeholders and are working closely with them to resolve this issue. We are doing this by holding meetings with each society individually and advising them on what changes they will need to make in order to reach full compliance.

We are now roughly a third of our way through the list of Zootech recognised societies, but we are still facing backlash from stakeholders who have concerns about how this will affect their livelihoods and are working very hard to mitigate impacts by tailoring advice to each organisation.

Here is an example of a couple of common themes we have noticed so far when helping people look at studbook structure amendments:

- Classes – a main section of a studbook can have as many classes as you'd like to help differentiate between levels of equines in your main section. Classes aren't defined by the legislation so they're dictated by the rules of the society and can be permeable or impermeable (if for example if your animals had plenty of generations in the main section then they can be your 'gold standard' and in the highest class) as long as at least one of them allows grading up from the supplementary section.

And just a quick point on the supplementary section - the supplementary section is for animals that meet your breed standard but that you don't know the heritage of so don't have a right of entry into the main section. But then you can breed it with an animal in the main section and the progeny have the right of entry into the main section. One generation of grading up is the minimum that's needed to get right of entry. But again, it can be put into a 'lower' class in the main section. (Note: this does not apply to closed studbooks as they have no supplementary section and do not allow grading up)

- Creation of a new breed – this has been mentioned and it technically is an option but, as we've told multiple organisations already, a brand new breed has to be sufficiently unique and the threshold is quite high so the chances of this being approved would be very low.

We encourage anyone with concerns or questions to reach out to us via email where we will be happy to help as best we can - UKGLEsecretariat@defra.gov.uk

Report by Liam Taylor