

British Horse Council – June 2026

Good morning all, my name is Seana Smyth I am part of the equine traceability team in DAERA. Thank you to Jan for giving us the opportunity to provide an update on equine traceability matters in Northern Ireland.

The past number of months our focus has remained on strengthening equine traceability, while continuing to work with stakeholders across the UK and Ireland.

A key priority for Northern Ireland continues to be **improving the accuracy and integrity of our equine traceability system.**

Over the past six months, we have been working on a number of areas-

- The most notable has been the introduction of Equine Establishment numbers (EEN's) which became mandatory on 1st February this year. Anyone applying for a new passport or update to a passport for a horse resident in Northern Ireland must now supply an Equine Establishment number.
- Digital establishment registration was also launched on the 1st February 2026 to make registration as seamless as possible. For anyone not yet aware registration is free and can be done via the DAERA website.
- As of June 2026 there are now approx. 2700 equine establishments registered in Northern Ireland.
- We are also taking close note on developments in the rest of the UK and Republic of Ireland, especially recognising the importance of cross-border data sharing given the movement of horses on an all-island basis between NI and ROI. We have been building and continue to build on a close working relationship with our colleagues in DAFM to ensure consistency in cross jurisdictional issues and our approach to traceability. Thanks to Rosanne, Frances and Richie in particular.
- We also remain focused on compliance with identification and movement requirements. This has included targeted compliance activity linked to equine identification and record-keeping through collaboration with enforcement colleagues where traceability concerns have arisen.
- DAERA are conscious that engagement with the equine sector remains essential. Over the last six months, we have continued to work with industry groups and other organisations across Northern Ireland particularly in regard to equine establishment registration and through the bi-annual equine stakeholder group which we have established to provide a space for stakeholders with statutory responsibilities to collaborate with DAERA on current and emerging issues. Our last meeting was held in April this year with the next scheduled for November.

We value these partnerships highly, as they are critical to delivering effective policy and operational outcomes needed.

- Internally the equine traceability team has been going through a period of change with our previous head Nichola Connery moving to a different role within DAERA and we now have a new head of Branch Wendy Lindsay who is unable to attend today due to other commitments.

Looking Ahead

Looking forward, our priorities include:

- continuing work in the background on enhancing the Equine Identification Database, building on these traceability improvements is in the infancy stages with a lot of work still to do.
- Strengthening compliance and enforcement frameworks through the introduction of new Northern Ireland SI with regard to animal health law.
- Looking at releasing comms on responsible ownership such as ensuring your equine is passported and establishment registered as well as as guidance on what to do with your passport when your equine dies.
- DAERA remains committed to working collaboratively across the UK and Ireland to support a safe, traceable, and well-regulated equine sector.
- Thank you, and I'm happy to answer any questions.