



Press Release

For immediate release 07/05/2026

Increased Funding for HBLB Equine Veterinary Science and Education Programme for 2026/27

and

HBLB Veterinary Science Research and Education Awards: 2026 Application Round for grants to start in 2027

The Horserace Betting Levy Board's (HBLB) commitment to the disease surveillance, equine veterinary science research and education programme starting in 2026 is rising to £3.7m (2025/26: £2.76m). The Board is grateful to The Racing Foundation for its contribution of a further £200,000, bringing the total funds available to £3.9m, and to the Thoroughbred Breeders Association (TBA), the British European Breeders Fund (BEBF) and the Gerald Leigh Charitable Trust for their continued support for projects begun in previous years.

Scheduled to start in the year from May 2026, the new activity, which is listed below at the end of this release, includes:

- 4 Major Research Projects
- 4 Small Research Projects
- 5 Research Scholarships
- 3 Post-Doctorate Fellowships

In addition, the Racehorse Owners Association (ROA) and the TBA contribute towards the costs of the Equine Infectious Disease Surveillance activity.

HBLB's Veterinary Advisory Committee (VAC) will continue to manage all ongoing work.

Alan Delmonte, Chief Executive of the Levy Board, said:

“Promoting and supporting veterinary science, disease surveillance and education remains a core objective of the HBLB. The Board's Veterinary Advisory Committee rigorously assesses applications to inform funding decisions that underpin long-term programmes and support early career researchers. The Board is pleased to increase its commitment to £3.7 million for 2026, reflecting the continued importance of this work and the strength of the applications received, as well as maintaining a wider investment



in equine health and well-being. The funding supports a balanced portfolio of major research projects, scholarships and fellowships.

The Board is grateful to The Racing Foundation for its additional contribution, and to our industry partners for their ongoing support.”

Tansy Challis, Chief Executive of the Racing Foundation, said:

"As part of our current strategy and key focus on equine welfare, the Racing Foundation works closely with Veterinary Advisory Committee (VAC) to support impactful equine veterinary research in partnership with the Horserace Betting Levy Board (HBLB).

“We prioritise investment in projects that have the potential to provide demonstrable, practical benefits for Thoroughbred racing and breeding and where findings can be effectively shared. Feedback from the VAC, alongside recommendations from Racing Foundation Trustees with advanced equine welfare expertise, have again ensured that funding is allocated to projects with strong scientific merit and direct relevance to the racing Thoroughbred.

“Following the 2025/26 Equine Science Research Grants round, we are pleased to award £200,000 to the HBLB to support three important research projects. These include work led by the University of Oxford focusing on tendon injuries, the University of Nottingham on injury prevention, and the University of York investigating *Rhodococcus equi*, a bacterial infection affecting young horses.

“With this latest award the Racing Foundation’s total investment in equine science research now exceeds £2 million, displaying our commitment to equine welfare in this context of evidence-based decision making.”

HBLB Equine Scientific and Education Awards 2026

Major Projects	Institute	Project Title
Professor Stephanie Dakin <i>* with £70,000 from Racing Foundation</i>	Oxford	Pro-resolving therapies: A new therapeutic paradigm targeting inflammation in tendon injury
Professor Paul Pryor <i>* with £70,000 from Racing Foundation</i>	York	Understanding the survival of intracellular <i>Rhodococcus equi</i>
Dr Laura Randall <i>*with £60,000 from Racing Foundation</i>	Nottingham	Toward Racehorse Injury Prevention: A Computer Vision Based Approach for Monitoring Behaviour in Stabled



		Racehorses and Early Identification of Musculoskeletal Injuries
Professor John Keen	Edinburgh	Harnessing the potential of advanced cardiac imaging for studying and treating atrial fibrillation and other arrhythmias in Thoroughbred horses
Small Projects	Institute	Project Title
Joseph Neary	Liverpool	Advancing Thoroughbred Welfare and Performance: Real-time, Non-invasive Biomarker Monitoring using Dermal Smartpatches
Professor Mandy Peffers	Liverpool	Evaluating Pomegranate Nanovesicles for Treating Equine Osteoarthritis
James Adams	Surrey	Mixed microbial messages: Exploring the impact of microbial metabolites within the gut-lung axis on equine asthma associated lung inflammation using a lung cell line model.
Sushant Bhat	APHA	Harnessing Mucosal Immunity to Prevent Equine Influenza Virus Spread
Research Scholarship	Institute	Project Title
Dr Ashley Roberts	Lincoln	Developing Equine Herpes antivirals from protein interaction inhibitor peptides
Professor Mandy Peffers	Liverpool	Investigating cellular heterogeneity in tendon homeostasis and ageing using cutting-edge single-cell proteomics
Dr Laura Peachey	Bristol	Start Strong: Understanding How Early-Life Interactions Between the Gut Microbiome, Immune function, and Helminth Infection Influence Long-Term Health and Performance in Thoroughbred Foals
Dr April Lawson	Liverpool	Enhancing Equine Infectious Disease Surveillance with AI and Natural Language Processing
Dr Susan Armstrong	Surrey	Investigating the role of pericytes in Exercise-induced Pulmonary Haemorrhage disease and progression
Post Doctoral Fellowship	Institute	Project Title
Dr Vinothini Prabharakan	Edinburgh	Engineering equine 3D biomimetic tendon macro-tissues for tendon repair
Dr Emily Clarke	Liverpool	Equine Musculoskeletal Biology and Regenerative Medicine



Dr Olivia Curry	Edinburgh	Equine Pain and Welfare
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For further information please contact:

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Notes for editors:

The [Horserace Betting Levy Board](#) (HBLB) is a statutory body operating in accordance with the provisions of the Betting, Gaming and Lotteries Act 1963 (as amended). Its purpose is to assess and collect monetary contributions from bookmakers via a levy, which it distributes for the improvement of horseracing and breeds of horses, and for the advancement of veterinary science and education.

The outcomes of HBLB-funded veterinary science and education projects are published in peer reviewed scientific journals.

About *The Racing Foundation*:

In 2012 the Racing Foundation was established to oversee the distribution of funds to charitable causes within the racing and thoroughbred industry following the sale of the Tote. Since inception it has awarded over £40 million in grants. Equine welfare, racing's people and equine science grants [ESG] are the key areas of focus in its 2025 – 2027 strategy. The Trustees of the Racing Foundation are Julia Budd (Chair), Linda Bowles (Senior Independent Director), Jim Boyle, Rachel Flynn, Alice Page, Hazel Peplinski, Rishi Persad, Claire Sheppard and Algy Smith-Maxwell. The British Horseracing Authority, the Thoroughbred Group and Racecourse Association are the three joint Members of the Racing Foundation, which is registered with the Charity Commission as a charity under the law of England and Wales (no. 1145297).

www.racingfoundation.co.uk

[@RacingGrants](#)

**HBLB Veterinary Science Research and Education Awards: 2026 Application Round
for grants to start in 2027**

The [Horserace Betting Levy Board](#) (HBLB) is inviting applications for equine veterinary research and education grants to start from April 2027. Applications are now open.



IMPORTANT INFORMATION

As part of our ongoing commitment to improving the grants application process, we are in the process of transitioning to a new, bespoke Grants Management System (GMS), which we anticipate will be launched in July.

In the interim period, applications will not be submitted through the previous Equine Grants System (EGS) or Funding Gateway platforms. Instead, applicants are asked to download and complete the relevant application forms, which will be available as digital Word documents on our website.

1. [Research Projects](#)
2. [Small Projects](#)
3. [Equine Post-Doctoral Fellowships](#)
4. [Research Scholarships](#)
5. [Clinical Scholarships](#)

We encourage applicants to prepare their submissions using these documents, so they are ready to upload once the new system goes live. Further details, including confirmation of the GMS launch and instructions for submission, will be provided in subsequent communication.

The HBLB's strategic research priorities are aligned with the outcomes of the Horse Welfare Board's strategic plan for the welfare of horses bred for racing:

- *Best possible quality of life, which include all aspects of healthcare, husbandry and disease control (e.g. improved methods of disease diagnosis, more effective vaccines, biosecurity and disease prevention strategies, antimicrobial and anthelmintic resistance)*
- *Best possible safety and well-being during breeding, training and racing (e.g. enhancement of diagnostic methods and restoration techniques after musculo-skeletal disease and injury, safer training and racing practices, minimisation of fatal and non-fatal injury)*
- *Lifetime responsibility for equine health (e.g. optimal health of breeding Thoroughbreds and youngstock, reproductive efficiency, evaluation of factors affecting transition to post-racing careers)*

All applications will be subject to the normal HBLB review process.

There are five award types:

RESEARCH PROJECT GRANTS Applications by 14.00 Friday 10 July 2026

The HBLB supports scientifically robust research projects to benefit the racing, breeding and rearing of the Thoroughbred. Innovative and novel research approaches are



encouraged, and all applications will be subject to peer review and full evaluation by the Board's VAC.

The application form for research project grants can be found [here](#). Visit the '[Advancing Veterinary Science and Education](#)' section.

SMALL PROJECT GRANTS Applications by 14.00 Monday 14 September 2026

This fund supports research focusing on specific issues of direct and immediate practical importance to the Thoroughbred. The grants are open to individuals employed by veterinary schools, universities and research institutes, veterinary practitioners or elsewhere in the Thoroughbred racing and breeding industry. HBLB is particularly interested in receiving applications from clinicians, farriers and others involved directly in the care of horses. Projects are limited to one year with costs restricted to around £10,000.

The application form for small projects can be found [here](#).

EDUCATION AWARDS Applications by 14:00 Friday 10 July 2026

The two types of scholarships are:

- **Veterinary Research Training Scholarships** offer four-year funding to pursue a PhD programme in any scientific or veterinary field relevant to equines and particularly the racing, breeding or rearing of Thoroughbreds.

Research Training Scholarships are open to veterinary graduates or non-veterinary science graduates. The requirements regarding the subject of the PhD will be the same for graduates in either discipline.

- **Senior Equine Clinical Scholarships** allow veterinary graduates with at least two years' practical experience to train for a higher qualification, such as a European Diploma, over four years. The qualification must be in an equine field with particular relevance to the Thoroughbred.

Applications for both types of Scholarship must be made by the prospective supervisor within an eligible institution, such as a university veterinary school, other university department or research institute. Awards include a tax-free stipend to cover living costs and an expense allowance for research costs and other purposes directly relevant to the scholarship.

The application form for the two types of education award can be found [here](#):



- [Clinical scholarship](#)
- [Research scholarship](#)

EQUINE POST-DOCTORAL FELLOWSHIP Applications by 14.00 Friday 10 July 2026

The HBLB is again inviting applications from recent PhD graduates for a post-doctoral fellowship.

Introduced in 2016, the [Equine Post-Doctoral Fellowships](#) are aimed at exceptional PhDs, with the skills and aptitude to develop a leading academic or clinical academic career in equine veterinary sciences. The area of research must be focused on Thoroughbred racing, breeding or rearing. The fellowship will be tenable for three years.

Equine Post-Doctoral Fellowships are open to veterinary graduates or non-veterinary science graduates.

The application form for equine post-doctoral fellowships can be found [here](#).

For further information, please see the HBLB website Veterinary Science and Education section, or please contact: equine.grants@hblb.org.uk.

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Lizzie Wilson - Veterinary Grants Officer