

The Vaccination Check Challenge

Association of Shows (ASAO) representative and McTimoney Veterinary Chiropractor, Jenna Payne, presented her first-hand experience of carrying out vaccination and identity checks at Devon County Show; an experience that has since gained national attention and sparked industry-wide discussion. *Shining a Light on a Vaccination*

Problem

Over three days on the horse-gate checkpoints, she witnessed repeated patterns of non-compliance: identity mismatches, pony smuggling, horses arriving within the prohibited seven-day post-vaccination window and in some cases, deliberate attempts to deceive officials. More than thirty lorries were turned away from the show for incorrect paperwork. Yet alongside the challenges, many compliant exhibitors expressed relief and gratitude that checks were being taken seriously; a clear sign that the majority of competitors want safer, fairer rings.

Jenna also highlighted the significant operational burden placed on show organisers, including the need for overflow facilities, staff redeployment, timetable adjustments and visitor management. Despite this, the impact was undeniable: by day three, non-compliance had dropped to zero. Word had spread: behaviour changed.

Her presentation emphasised that this issue sits against the backdrop of the largest equine influenza spike in years, with shows acting as natural amplifiers of disease due to the movement and close proximity of horses. She highlighted that vaccination record checking is a duty of care.

Two practical models were outlined for shows wishing to strengthen their biosecurity:

- Gate checks - the gold standard, ensuring non-compliant horses never enter the showground.
- Checks when collecting exhibitors numbers - a workable alternative for shows with limited space or staffing.

She also addressed a common misconception: passport checking does not need to be carried out by a vet. ASAO is now exploring training pathways for stewards, including online learning and shadowing opportunities, to help build a national pool of competent passport-checking personnel.

Her closing message was clear: Vaccination checking must become the new normal at shows. The industry already has the will, the exhibitor support and the operational models. What is needed now is consistency and accessible training for show teams.

The ASAO are looking for support to develop training for stewards to check passports, if you are able to help, please contact Jenna at jenna@asao.co.uk

Jenna Payne

Chief Executive Officer

Association of Show & Agricultural Organisations