



Department  
for Environment  
Food & Rural Affairs

## Summary of Defra update on Equine Studbook Compliance with Zootech Legislation

Defra have recently become aware that some recognised studbooks in the UK may be unintentionally non-compliant with zootechnical legislation, in particular, regarding eligibility for entry into the main section of their studbook, and what is entitled to a registered equine passport.

As a reminder, Zootech is a voluntary regime that facilitates the equivalent trade of pedigree animals and germinal products. It governs what can and cannot be entered into a breeding book (main section and supplementary register).

To clarify, **the Zootech regulations themselves have not changed**. These are the same regulations as before EU Exit. At the time of EU Exit, the UK adopted EU Regulation 2016/10-12 into domestic law through the European Union Withdrawal Act 2018.

However, Defra has recently started to carry out a full review of UK breed societies/organisations, across all species, and whether they are still adhering to the requirements of the legislation, as some were approved a long time ago.

In doing so, we've found that some societies/organisations may not be fully aware of the specific requirements of the legislation or have been interpreting them incorrectly.

Defra, as the Competent Authority, has a legal responsibility to ensure that breed societies comply with the legislation and adhere to the required standards.

### Why does compliance with legislation matter?

Zootech approved studbooks and PIOs must comply with zootech legislation. More specifically:

- Non-compliance could have trade implications. If the European Commission reviewed the UK and found that societies were not following the legislation, those societies would have their third country listing status removed, this could also have a wider impact on other UK listed societies/organisations.
- Losing this listing would prevent UK breeders from trading on equivalent terms with the EU, restricting access to the EU market and reducing the competitiveness of UK breeders. This means UK horses/germinal products exported to the EU would not be able to be registered by any recognised EU studbooks.
- Non-compliance could also risk the genetic integrity and reputation of UK breeds and damage the standing of the UK pedigree livestock sector.

## **Breeding book structure**

The breeding book must be structured to meet the essential requirements of the legislation. The key points include:

- **Main Section:** Studbooks must maintain a main section.
- The main section should include only purebred animals descended from parents that are already recorded in the main section or supplementary section of a studbook for the same breed.
- Animals in the main section are entitled to registered passports and zootech certificates.
- **Supplementary Section:** Societies may choose to establish a supplementary section.
- This optional section allows for animals to be registered that meet the breed characteristics as outlined in the breeding programme, but do not fully meet the pedigree requirements.
- Animals in the supplementary section are only eligible for breeding and production (ID-only) passports, as they are not purebred.

**Grading-Up Policy:** Although it is at the society's discretion as to whether they have a supplementary section or not, if they do, they must allow grading up into the main section.

For equines, grading up can occur in one generation and through both the female and male lines. This means that if an animal has parents in the supplementary section, it has a right of entry into the main section.

**Separate Registers:** Societies may also maintain separate registers outside the zootech framework if they wish.

Animals in these registers cannot be graded up to the main section. They may over generations qualify for entry into the supplementary section if they meet the breed characteristics. Again, these animals would only be entitled to ID only passports.

## **What can go into the main section?**

Under Article 18 of the legislation, animals are eligible for entry into the main section of a studbook if they meet the following criteria:

They are descended from parents that are recorded in the main section of a studbook for the same breed. Where they are imported from another studbook, in line with Article 30, they must be accompanied by a valid zootechnical certificate issued by a recognised UK or international society of the same breed.

Or for equines, animals may also qualify if one or both parents are in the supplementary section of the same studbook.

An animal can also qualify for the main section if the society runs a crossbreeding programme; the society can overstamp animals into the main section if they come from a recognised breed society listed in their breeding programme, and the animal meets the breed characteristics.

If you wish to enter an animal into your main section that does not currently have parents in your studbook, but the parents meet your breed characteristics, you may need to:

- Register the parents in your supplementary section, or
- Over stamp the parents into your main section (if they are of the same breed, or for crossbreeding programmes, the breed is named in your breeding programme)

What is not compliant, is to register a foal that has parents registered in the main section of a different society, where that foal is not accompanied at registration with a valid Zootech certificate.

### **What this means for breed societies**

Some societies may unknowingly have entered animals into the main section that are not entitled to entry.

The society may then be incorrectly issuing registered pedigree passports for animals or may have been issuing pedigree passports for animals outside of the main section.

Registered passports can only be issued for main section purebred equines, and these passports must contain the full pedigree information at Section V, in line with Regulation (EU) 2017/1940 (UK assimilated law).

If an animal has both parents registered in a different pedigree studbook, it should be issued with a valid Zootech certificate from that studbook in order to be entered into the

main section of the new studbook. Again, it must be of the same breed or, for a crossbreeding programme, it must be listed in the breeding programme.

If the animal later wishes to join another society for purposes such as showing, it can apply to be registered in that main section and over stamped. Again, it must be of the same breed or, for a crossbreeding programme, it must be listed in the breeding programme.

A society that is not compliance will need to revise their breeding book structure and registration guidelines with Defra's support.

### **Next steps**

Where Defra is aware of non-compliance, we are already working directly with some societies to help them adjust their breeding book and rules. This includes one-to-one correspondence and, where necessary, face-to-face meetings.

Over the next year, Defra will be carrying out a full review of all recognised breed societies in the UK to ensure they are complying with the legislation in all areas, and to ensure that the UK is meeting the standards to maintain third country listed status for all its societies/organisations.

If you believe your breeding book might need reviewing, please don't hesitate to reach out. We are keen to minimise disruption while ensuring compliance with the legislation.

For further details or to set up a meeting, please email [UKGLESecretariat@defra.gov.uk](mailto:UKGLESecretariat@defra.gov.uk)