



EQUINE STUDBOOKS ASSOCIATION

Representing Horse and Pony Studbooks of the UK

Chair: Celia Clarke (WBSUK), Vice-Chair: Natalie Meredith (AHS), Secretary: Jane Murray (New Forest), Treasurer: Sue McGeever (Exmoor)

MINUTES OF 826 EQUINE STUDBOOKS ASSOCIATION MEETING NO 12

3.00 pm to 5.00 pm on Friday 17 November 2023, via Zoom

Present:

826ESA Committee Celia Clarke (WBSUK and Chair of meeting), Natalie Meredith (AHS), Sacha Shaw (NPS), Catherine Burdock (SHB(GB)), Simon Cooper (Weatherbys), Jane Murray (New Forest, Minutes)

Observers: Gina Dent (CPR),

John Shenfield

Lady Anne Vestey

Defra: Helen Johnston, Wendy Maxim, Frances Adeke

Speakers: Romy Morrin O'Donnell, Weatherbys Scientific; Jane Nixon MRCVS

Studbooks:

Peter Boustead (Fell)

Gemma Bassett-Burr (WPCS), Ed Gummery (WPCS)

Suzanne Kempe (New Forest)

Ruth Staines (Caspian)

Emma Hore (CHAPS)

Laura Peace (SHB(GB))

Tom Brown (Dartmoor)

April Lawn (Dales)

Claire Lindsey, Roselyn Fraser (Shetland)

Jill Robinson (MHCGB)

Andrea Betteridge (TGCA)

Judith Harris (Eriskay)

Kim Sands (AHPUK)

Barbara Smathers (Caspian)

Freya Glansdorp Icelandic)

Mary McBryde (BAPSH)

Gwenan Thomas (STSGBI)

Katy Holder-Vale (Hanoverian)

Rosie Perry-Jones (British Spotted Pony)

R O'Reilly (AQHA(UK))

P Moore (British Appaloosa)

Hollie Sanderson (NPS)

Sue Gillingham (Connemara)

Lynsey Gordon (UKFHS)

Shire Horse Society

NIHB

Apologies for absence

Sue McGeever (Treasurer), Debbie Bailey (Defra), Ruth Sheik (FHAGBI); Katherine Wilkinson (Fell), Sandra Lawrence (BSPA), Tikki Adorian (IMHPS)

Minutes of the last meeting (including 2023 AGM)

Circulated prior to the meeting and taken as read, they were proposed and seconded and duly accepted.

Matters arising from the Minutes for items not covered elsewhere on the Agenda

Ruth Staines reported that a Caspian society is being formed in the Netherlands which will enable EU extensions.

Chair's report

The report had been circulated prior to the meeting and Celia Clarke pointed out that it raised a number of questions which she hoped the Defra representatives would answer. It was duly proposed, seconded and approved.

Accounts: there is little change and subscriptions are up-to-date.

Report from the previous day's WHIRDEC zoom meeting

Celia Clarke (CC) reported that about 100 people were present of which about 90 were in the audience, with the 15 members from the UK forming the biggest country group. Topics discussed were:

- **Registrations.** Here it looked as though UK benefited from being a Third Country as there are many issues with cross-border foalings and registration.
- **Those EU regulations which will come into the Animal Health Law.** This will require a record of residence after 30 days. CC suggested that Defra might consider aligning their proposals with the EU 30 days.
- **The Operator** is the person responsible for recording residence changes and deaths. Only one person can register each yard/centre etc as a residence – so this will usually be the yard owner/manager.
- **Data Exchanges** – mainly concerned with checking eligibility for food chain.
- **Presentation by DataHorse.** This database has been going for about 25 years in various forms and is pushing for WBFSH to revitalise it. It has only reached one million horses worldwide, mainly because the big German studbooks have not uploaded data.

Report by Helen Johnston, head of Defra Equine ID, on latest updates on the Equine ID consultation and new legislation

The Legal Department is leading on the drafting of the SI and HJ could give no date for laying the legislation in 2024, although it is hoped to be late spring or early summer. The policy proposals are subject to ministerial agreement and an Impact Assessment so cannot be confirmed at this stage. The priority is the SI but the Equine ID team is currently depleted, but there is an awareness that the industry needs to know more. Once the SI is laid there will be a transition period of several months to enable preparation and readiness.

Recording of location – HJ thought that for traceability and disease management a period of less than 30 days will be required – it might be as low as overnight stays. Show organisers will have to register the venue and equines will be required to 'log in' on arrival. It was pointed out that many other types of equine events involve more than a one night stay and this will have an impact on voluntary administrators. HJ said there will be a quick and easy method of registering a venue, probably using downloadable QR codes.

Imports to UK – work continues on high health status and the development of digital links. Concern was expressed about how all Connemara ponies imported from Ireland will be checked.

Overstamping of ID-only digital passports for showing purposes – C Burdock asked how this will be done and how it will affect on-the-day entries. HJ said that they have stepped back

from process delivery and concentrating on the legislation, which does not say how items will be delivered. Both C Burdock and E Hore expressed concern that many things like this will need to be in place as soon as the legislation goes live, but HJ said that all timescales are dependent on the lawyers.

Modifications to MOPS? – HJ said no, as there will be a new SI which derives its power from the Animal Health Act, so won't be debated in the House.

Holding Numbers – HJ said they do not want duplication, but CPH can be used. There is still some way to go before equines could be added to Livestock Information Service.

Zootechnics

Wendy Maxim agreed to take back points on how an examination of studbook structures might be carried out.

Welfare of Equines at borders

HJ said that work continues on new border regimes and work is ongoing with APHA and HMRC, whilst acknowledging that there may be welfare concerns if equines are held up while paperwork is being dealt with.

Updates by Jane Nixon

Biosecurity: there has been no equine flu reported since late October. There are changes to the dates for the primary course from 1 January 2024.

Social Licence and threats to horse sport: new research indicates that 1 in 6 UK vets believe that some sport that involves the use of animals should be banned. The analysis, compiled by BVA, found slightly more than half of vets favoured tighter welfare rules on the use of animals in sport. FEI and BEF have Ethics Commissions. For many people, they see one incident then they think it is happening to **all** horses. A forthcoming conference in early December will look at how we can collectively move forward.

Presentation on Recent Developments in SNPs by Romy Morrin-O'Donnell of Weatherbys Scientific, Ireland

Weatherbys has gained 10 years of experience working with SNPs in cattle and other livestock and the equine industry is now beginning the move, which should help in making better breeding decisions. The current parentage verification process for equines has been in use since 2001 and uses 12 agreed microsatellite markers, with the Tokyo Panel used as a back-up. Some sport horse breeds have now moved to SNPs as more information can be gained for EBV and performance. It is necessary to build up a database as a reference population.

Advantages: currently, the microsatellite technology looks at markers on 32 pairs of chromosomes - this can do parentage verification, and it does it well. However, SNP array technology can look at 80,000 markers, giving a lot more data. Not only can it do parentage verification but also parent discovery and allocation, provided that the parent is in the database. It can also be used for: lethal mutations; monitor in-breeding; trait discovery; genomics evaluations; high resolution population genetics; performance traits; breed composition (once you have a reference population). Examining the level of genomic in-breeding in various populations helps breed conservation and making the best mating decisions.

ISAG is currently looking at standardisation of a SNP Panel, which would then enable data exchange. In July 2023 a panel of 381 SNPs was agreed and ISAG will run a SNP comparison test in 2024-25 and then SNP rankings will be calculated.

A typical transition to SNP technology takes 2-4 years. The reference population of sire and dam genotypes needs to be established. Routine SNP parental verification can then be done. The next stage is to survey for genetic traits and then genomic evaluations can be carried out. The microsatellite technology will soon become obsolete so all breed societies will have to think about their strategy for making the move to SNPs. SNPs require good quality samples in order to extract DNA to look at so many more markers, so it is crucial to get the parental samples checked for suitability, re-sampling where necessary.

Presentation on the British Horse Foundation Better Beginnings initiative: Conception to 2 years old by Jane Nixon

This programme gives free access to cutting edge information on breeding and the Advice Notes are now live. One of the aims of the initiative is to reduce wastage of horses as they get older due to poor breeding. The initiative combines evolutionary facts, evidence-based knowledge and research updates. Interestingly, 65% of the devices used to access the flipbook are mobile phones. The first focus has been on weaning and further information will be added throughout 2024 on 2-4-year-olds.

The Chair thanked all the speakers for their excellent and most useful contributions.

Meeting closed at 4.50 pm.