

HORSE IDENTIFICATION IN FRANCE

HISTORY

As in other animal breed, horse identification was developed through animal selection, during the nineteenth century. Horse identification is founded on description of natural markings, pedigree registration and an individual stud book number. It's only done on request of the breeder. A law was published in 1966.

The French national data base was created in 1976, for horse (equidae) registration.

In 1989, a new law is published. Identification became compulsory for

- exchanges within the European Community,
- slaughtered horses,
- gathering,
- stud book registration,
- sales.

New epizootic diseases have created new worries to the government which has to organize "sanitary regulations" and traceability. Therefore identification became compulsory in 2001 for every horse in France.

PRINCIPLES

Horse identification is founded on description of natural markings. There are two methods to make this description:

- literal description,
- coded description used as international lexicon, with a new table of coat colours.

These two methods need an identity control, a graphic description and a validation of the passport for horses which will participate at official activities (reproduction, competition...). DNA type is required for identification and pedigree checking of most of the foals registered in 45 stud books. All other EC regulations items are registered too, as brands and tattoos.

In 2004, microchip use becomes compulsory as well; breeders and owners have to ask for an implantation of a microchip before 2008. Nevertheless, microchip stays a complementary tool and doesn't replace the description of natural markings. In any case, it could only replace the graphic description.

Description of natural markings and micro chipping are realized only by veterinarians or Haras Nationaux agents.

The Haras Nationaux are responsible for horse identification. They have created a national and central database "SIRE" where is registered all the information about identification, stud books and genetic indexes.

SIRE issues a passport for each horse, including Universal Equine Life Number, identification, pedigree, stud book registration and all other EC regulations items. The ownership card is issued on a separate form and re-issued at every ownership change ; so the passport remains always with the horse.

SIRE is the basis of an integrated information system linking all other French databases (racing, competition, research centre)

IDENTIFICATION

This part will describe the identification process and tools.

Identification process

Horses can be divided in two groups: foals and horses without pedigree

Foals

- 1) covering registration of the mare
- 2) birth's registration
- 3) description of natural markings (before weaning and before December 31st of the year of birth), micro chipping, DNA type.
- 4) passport edition
- 5) From 1 year of age on and for horses which will participate at official activities (reproduction, competition...) : identity control, graphic description, passport validation, are compulsory.

Horses without pedigree

- 1) the owner asks an approved veterinarian or a HN agent for the identification of his horse
- 2) natural markings description, micro chipping
- 3) passport edition
- 6) for horses which will participate at official activities (reproduction, competition...) : identity control, graphic description, passport validation, are compulsory.

Checking points

- Official activities : systematic checking points which are mentioned on the passport
- Slaughter: systematic checking points
- Police: unexpected checking points during transports

Tools

The HN are looking for new modern tools for improving horse identification management and world-wide communication between databases.

Statistics

From 1999 to 2005, nearly 300 000 unknown pedigree horses were registered in addition to 55 000 annual foals. The French living horse population is now evaluated at 900 000 and SIRE holds more than 2 million horses.