

# Equine owners urged to microchip horses ahead of 1st October deadline

The Chief Veterinary Officer, Christine Middlemiss, has today called on all horse, pony and donkey owners in England to get their animals microchipped ahead of 1 October 2020 as part of a move to tackle horse theft, improve equine traceability and improve animal welfare.

From this date it will be mandatory in England for all equine owners to microchip their animals. The Central Equine Database will mean local authorities and the police can track down owners who abandon their horses, donkeys and ponies, helping to improve animal welfare standards, while also helping prevent horse theft.

Compulsory microchipping will also mean lost or stolen horses can be reunited with their owners more easily. In 2019, the RSPCA received more than 21,000 reports to its cruelty hotline and took 875 horses into care. Around 70% of these were not microchipped, making it difficult for the organisation to trace owners and to hold anyone responsible for the cruelty the animals had faced.

Chief Veterinary Officer, Christine Middlemiss said:

As we have seen with cats and dogs, mandatory microchipping is a hugely important step forward in the speedy identification of abandoned or stolen animals.

Microchipping will not only help the police and local authorities, but also support the UK's efforts to improve traceability and ensure we have better control over any disease outbreaks. This new legislation will also ensure that irresponsible owners are rightly held accountable for any low standards of welfare.

RSPCA equine expert Dr Mark Kennedy said:

We're delighted that it will soon be compulsory for horses of all ages in England to be microchipped, linking each horse directly to an owner. We believe this will go some way towards helping to identify irresponsible owners who abandon or neglect their horses; as well as helping to reunite owners with missing or stolen equines.

All too frequently our officers encounter abandoned and neglected

horses who are often sick, dying or even dead. Equine welfare charities collectively estimate there are 7,000 horses at risk of poor welfare in England and Wales alone and, with the economic fallout of Covid-19, we're extremely concerned that many more will fall into situations of neglect, abandonment and suffering this winter.

Owners are legally required to make sure that their animals' details are up-to-date on the Central Equine Database. This can be accessed online via the [Digital Stable](#) and holds information on all horses in England (as well as other parts of the UK) so owners can be reunited if their animal were to ever go missing.

If equine owners do not microchip their animals by October 2020 they could face sanctions from their local authority including a fine.