



Keeping your clients' horses traceable and stopping horse smuggling – information for vets

Horses are smuggled across borders, into and out of the UK, more easily and more commonly than you might expect. Vets are extremely well placed to spot some easily missed signs that show a horse may have been caught up in this illicit trade and can also help to ensure owners are aware of how they can make their horse as traceable as possible.

- It is not uncommon for horses to have more than one microchip – so don't stop scanning when/if you find a one - log the details and keep scanning, taking note of any other microchip numbers you may find.

Did you know?

Although there are legitimate reasons for horses to have multiple microchips, it could also be a sign that a previous owner is attempting to hide that horse's past so encourage owners to check any additional microchip numbers using the Central Equine Database Chipchecker ([National Equine Microchip & UELN Lookup | Equine Register Ltd](#)) and report it to their PIO and any other linked PIO to investigate. Or contact the PIO yourself on behalf of your client if you feel it appropriate.

- When checking a horse's description and silhouette on their passport – if there are any anomalies, as long as you are confident that the passport does belong to the horse (e.g. the presence of other identifying features such as whorls, hoof markings, or other markings) then explain to the owner the benefits of contacting their PIO to update any of the details.

Share the link to [World Horse Welfare's "Traceability: what does it mean for your horse?"](#) with owners so they can read all about the simple steps they can take to make their horses more traceable.

- If you have concerns that a passport may have been tampered with or may not be the correct passport for the horse, then either advise the owner to inform the declared PIO or contact them yourself.

It is not always easy to know whether a passport has been tampered with, especially when there are a lot of different PIOs all with slightly different designs to their passports. However, a PIO will easily be able to advise as to whether their passport has been altered in any way and will help you and/or the owner decide on the best course of action.

Did you know?

Vet stamps have been fraudulently copied and used to forge duplicate or replacement passports.

Visit the RCVS website for more information on equine identification and microchips - [30. Equines and microchips - Professionals \(rcvs.org.uk\)](#)

If you would like any more information or support on how to deal with identity fraud or passport issues then please contact publicaffairs@worldhorsewelfare.org.