

Recommendations of the Task Force for the Irish Draught Horse Breeding Policy Review



HORSE SPORT IRELAND



Department of
**Agriculture,
Food and the Marine**

An Roinn
**Talmhaíochta,
Bia agus Mara**

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Foreword

This report documents the findings of the 2013 review of the Irish Draught Horse Breeding Policy. This review was conducted by a task force convened by the Breeding Sub-Board of Horse Sport Ireland (HSI) that met between October 2013 and May 2014.

Over 30 submissions were received from individual breeders and interested organisations from Ireland, UK, Canada and the United States, including the Irish Draught Horse Breeders Association, the Irish Draught Horse Society of Northern Ireland, the Irish Draught Horse Society of Great Britain and the Irish Draught Horse Society of Canada. All submissions were gratefully accepted and given detailed consideration. The Irish Draught horse stud book inspection panel also met and a report on its views was presented to the task force.

The breeding policy adopted for the *Irish Draught Horse Stud Book* in 2010 altered the breeding objective and introduced a classification system to the *Irish Draught Horse Stud Book*. This breeding policy took specific steps to conserve genetic diversity within the breed (through the classification system) whilst maintaining the quality of the breed (through the redesigned inspection process) and to collect critical information about each and every horse inspected (through linear profiling). This new policy paved the way for the harmonisation with the IDHS (GB) and *IDHS Canada Stud Books*. The full impact of these changes is only starting to be understood: 2013 was a milestone year seeing the first progeny of horses inspected in 2010 attaining Class 1 status.

Many of the 2010 strategies to encourage breeding and increase the population of Irish Draughts were unfortunately challenged by the continued poor economic climate and contraction of the horse industry. Stud book statistics have shown that the breed population is reducing, with fewer coverings, fewer registrations and fewer animals presented for inspection.

Thanks to steps taken in 2010, the task force was able to take a facts-based approach in reviewing the breeding policy for the breed. All concerns raised in submissions were given careful consideration, and where appropriate, were addressed.

Neil Henry
Chair

About the Task Force

The following organisations and groups were invited to nominate representatives to the task force:

- HSI Breeding Sub Board
- Irish Draught Horse Society of Ireland Limited [IDHS]
- Irish Draught Horse Breeders Association [IDHBA]
- Irish Draught Horse Society of Great Britain [IDHS(GB)]
- Irish Draught Horse Society of Canada [IDHSC]

HSI also nominated representatives from the panel of Irish Draught Horse inspectors. IDHS declined to participate in the task force.

The task force met in person and via teleconference over a period of eight months. Members of the task force were:

HSI Breeding Sub Board	Neil Henry (Chairman), Pat McCarthy and Dr Jack Murphy
IDHBA	Kitty Cotter and Damian Kenny
IDHS (GB)	Gaynor Mitchell/Sue Benson
IDHSC	Cheryl Anderson/Jennifer Brownlow
Inspectors	Michael Kirwan and Dr Charlotte Moore

Context

The task force formed its recommendations based on the following understanding of the composition and characteristics of the Irish Draught stud book of origin.

The Irish Draught horse breed is designated as endangered by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine. The difficult economic climate of the past few years has seen reductions in the number of coverings, foal registrations and inspections. In 2013, 580 purebred Irish Draught foals were registered in Ireland, with less than 50 registered abroad in daughter stud books. The 580 registrations in Ireland are down from their peak of approximately 1,200 in 2008 and 2009. It is hoped that this represents a stabilisation in numbers and that the large declines seen in recent years have come to an end. It should be noted that foal registrations have returned to the level recorded in 2004 and remain higher than the registration levels seen in much of the 1990s and early 2000s (approximately 460 per year). Similar declines in foal registration numbers have been seen in other stud books with overall registrations in the Irish Horse Register in 2013 also at approximately half of the 2008 levels.

Recent years have also seen a decline in the number of Irish Draught mares breeding pure-bred Irish Draught horses. Since 2010, the number of Irish Sport Horse foals out of Irish Draught mares per year has increased from 181 to 408. The number of Irish Sport Horse foals per year by Irish Draught stallions has declined from 767 in 2010 to 478 in 2013, affecting the viability of standing of an Irish Draught stallion. The number of Irish Draught horses slaughtered each year is also a cause for concern. In 2013, 302 Irish Draught horses are recorded as slaughtered, with 52% of these being mares under 15 years of age.

The breed is facing two main challenges. The first challenge is to preserve/conservate the breed by maintaining numbers and genetic diversity in the face of diminishing economic returns. *In vivo* conservation of populations *in situ* is the preferred conservation method worldwide (FAO, 2007).¹ Genetic diversity within the breed can be quantified by monitoring inbreeding. Inbreeding is unavoidable in breeds with small populations as common ancestors will invariably be found. Consequently, the rate of inbreeding, i.e. the change in inbreeding per generation, is a more appropriate measure of genetic diversity than the average level of inbreeding. In Ireland, the average level of inbreeding in active broodmares is 0.92%. The rate of inbreeding is approximately 0.5% per generation, well below the threshold of 1% that is advised by FAO for highly endangered breeds in need of pure conservation breeding programmes. This indicates that based on current population statistics, it would be appropriate to develop a breeding programme that generates genetic improvement while maintaining genetic diversity.

The second challenge is to maintain the traditional characteristics of the breed. Traditionally, Irish Draught horses had to be multifunctional – they were needed to plough a field, be ridden under saddle, hunt with the hounds and pull the family trap to church on Sunday. This versatility remains crucial to the breed's future and is defined within the breed standard. Breed inspections provide the opportunity to determine how well horses meet the breed standard and are specifically designed for Irish Draught horses concentrating on the traditional conformation, type, movement and athletic characteristics appropriate to the breed.

Information from breed inspections also provides insights into the breed. Since the introduction of the classification system in 2010, 131 stallion and 969 mare inspections have been completed. Of these, 22% of stallions and 53% of mares have been awarded Class 1 status, 67% of stallions and 40% of mares have been classified as Class 2 and 11% of stallions and 7% of mares have been classified as Class 3. The introduction of a system based on classifying horses instead of a pass–fail system has broadened the genetic base of the breeding population and has allowed additional horses (progeny of Class 2

¹ [FAO] Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. 2007. The Global Plan of Action for Animal Genetic Resources and the Interlaken Declaration. Rome, Italy: FAO.

horses) to come forward for inspection, while continuing to protect the breed from defects. Disappointingly, 17% of stallions and 16% of mares inspected do not meet the minimum requirements in any area. It is unusual for horses to miss Class 1 in only one area, with 75% of stallions and 18% of mares not meeting the minimum requirements in more than one area (excluding pedigree bonus points). Contrary to popular belief, only 3% of stallions from 2010 to 2013 (four stallions) are classified in Class 2 because they did not meet the requirements for athleticism (loose jumping at a maximum height of 1.00 m) while meeting all the other requirements. Results from inspections also highlight that some variation in type is possible within the breed standard, reflecting the traditional versatility of the breed and the individual preferences of breeders.

An analysis of the linear profile scores of mares at inspections demonstrates the strengths and weaknesses of the breed. The main strengths displayed in mares were their correctness in conformation and straightness of movement and their adherence to breed type (over 80% of mares exhibited these traits). The most common weaknesses are in movement – 40% of mares exhibited an obviously poorly balanced, weak canter. Approximately 20% of mares were found to have an obviously light substance of legs, sloping croup, poor muscling of the neck, excessively straight shoulder and weak hindquarters and gaskins. Preliminary analyses demonstrate that the traditional characteristics of the Irish Draught breed are moderately heritable and that significant scope to improve the breed through selection exists. It should be noted that the requirements of Class 1 represent a higher standard for mares than was the case with previous inspection systems and that the impact of this raised standard will be seen in their progeny coming forward for inspection in subsequent generations.

Next Steps

This report has been prepared at the request of the Breeding Sub-Board of Horse Sport Ireland and is being submitted in anticipation that it will be accepted and will form the basis for the 2014 Irish Draught Horse Breeding Policy.

The report has been structured with the understanding that it is of interest to the Irish Draught horse community worldwide, whether part of the harmonised stud book or not. It is hoped this report will lead to positive and collaborative discussion throughout the worldwide Irish Draught community on how to continue to preserve and conserve the Irish Draught horse and give the necessary confidence to enable further Irish Draught breed organisations to harmonise.

Recommendations

This section lists the recommendations of the task force. The recommendations are not listed in any particular order other than they have been organised into topic areas to assist the reader. Cross-references have also been provided in cases where the recommendations affect or rely on others.

Breeding Objective and Breed Standard

1. Replace the breeding objective and summary with: “The breeding objective of the Irish Draught stud book is to breed sound Irish Draught horses with correct conformation, type, movement and action, calm and willing temperaments and sufficient athleticism that conform to the Irish Draught breed standard. These animals will serve one or more of the following three functions by:

- participating in preservation and ongoing breed improvement programmes;
- performing as pleasure, leisure or performance horses;
- contributing to cross-breeding programmes with other breeds.”

In order to clarify the intent of the breeding objective and breed summary, this new wording focuses attention on the critical components of the breed standard and highlights the intended use of the breed.

2. Modify the breed standard.

- Change “action” to: “should be straight and free, not heavy or ponderous.”
- Add “movement”: “should be active and strong, with sufficient athleticism showing good flexion of joints and freedom of the shoulders.”

Action is part of movement. Athleticism is shown through movement. The proposed changes clarify the requirements in the breed standard and align it better to the proposed Breeding Objective. Movement and athleticism are both evaluated in the inspection process.

Classification system

3. Retain current classification system (Classes 1, 2, 3 and 4)

The current EU compliant classification system is slowly becoming understood by breeders. While it is recognised that more education is needed within the breeder community, no compelling reason to change the system was identified. To change the system now would introduce significant confusion within the community with little or no benefit to the breed. The current system permits animals which do not fully meet Class 1 standard to be retained within the breeding population, thus retaining access to their genetics within the herd.

4. Rename “Class 4” to “uninspected”

Class 4 is for horses that have not yet been inspected and those that are not eligible to be inspected. Breeders requested this change as “Class 4” was often interpreted to mean “worse than Class 3”. Note: Class 3 horses are veterinary unsound. By changing the name of the class, confusion and devaluation of stock will be avoided.

5. Add a short narrative description to each class title

Adding a short description to each class title will further clarify the intent for each class. Suggested narratives are:

Class 1: Meets the breed standard.

Class 2: Has not met all criteria for Class 1 – Exercise caution if breeding.

Class 3: Failed veterinary examination – Not recommended for breeding.

Uninspected: Foals and adults not yet presented for inspection.

6. Retain eligibility for inspection of progeny of Class 2 stallions and mares

The eligibility of the progeny of Class 2 stallions and mares for inspection broadens the genetic diversity of the breed. Based on inspection results, it is clear that certain Class 2 stock can be improved upon through crossing with Class 1, producing progeny that meet the requirements for Class 1 status. As a result, it is recommended that 2010 rules on inspection eligibility of progeny of Class 2 be retained permanently.

7. Retain current eligibility requirements for grade-up mares

Many of the more popular stallions of the past and a large number of today's Class 1 stallions have AID or grade-up register mares in their back pedigree. Pedigree requirements for the AID/grade-up register have varied from as little as "one RID parent" to today's relatively stringent requirement of 3 RID/Class 1 grandparents with the fourth grandparent being TB, Connemara or a mix of TB, Connemara and/or ID. It is unclear how the improvements brought by the AID/grade-up mares are influenced by the requirements for their pedigree as the effect of the new criteria adopted in 2010 cannot yet be ascertained.

The task force notes that the breeder community is interested in preserving genetic diversity, and, in the absence of evidence, could perceive a reduction in the proportion of Irish Draught horses required for grade-up mares as an attempt to transition the breed toward a sport horse breed. Equally, the task force is not interested in putting ID Type at risk. As a result it was decided to request research in this area and to recommend a review of this topic in the next policy review. See also recommendations 8, 11, 54, 66, 68 and comments G and N.

8. Retain eligibility for inspection of both male and female progeny of grade-up mares

At this time, there is insufficient information to draw conclusions on the effect of the changes brought about to the classification system in 2010. As a result, it was decided to continue with the 2010 policy and eligibility for inspection should be discussed again in the next policy review.

Inspection process

9. Encourage owners to bring geldings forward for inspection

This is one of a number of recommendations specifically intended to help sellers add value to their geldings in the sales market. The inspection process adds value to a gelding by providing an independent assessment of the horse's conformation, type, movement and potential athleticism. Further, through inspection, the stud book gains valuable information about progeny that to date has not been available. The task force also believe that HSI should consider running inspections at a greater variety of venues, perhaps including breed shows, to make it easy for owners to bring their horses out for inspection.

10. Encourage owners to bring older mares, geldings and stallions forward for linear profiling

The stud book gains valuable information about horses and their families through the linear profiling process. Linear profiling of older horses increases the reliability in the analysis of back pedigrees of current stock. Presenting older animals for linear profiling does not affect their classification, e.g. the classification of existing RID and Class 1 horses would remain unchanged.

11. Advise owners who have mares eligible for inspection for the grade-up register and encourage them to bring their mares forward for inspection

The task force acknowledges that throughout the history of the breed, the use of AID/grade-up register mares been a successful strategy to promote the spread of desirable characteristics within the breed. There are many eligible Irish Sport Horse mares that have not been presented for inspection for the grade-up register. Finding the best of these mares will help continue this strategy within the breed. See also recommendations 7, 8, 55, 65 and comments G and N.

12. Establish a protocol for measuring bone to be used in all harmonised stud books

A consistent approach to measuring bone immediately below the knee in all countries will result in measurements that can be reliably compared from horse to horse and will build information that can be reliably studied for trends in bone loss (or gain). See also recommendation 53 and comments A, B, F and H.

13. At inspection, abolish the use of pedigree bonus points for genetic diversity and provide inspectors with mean kinship statistics which clearly identify genetically diverse horses

The Irish Draught preservation/conservation objectives are clear: genetically diverse horses must be clearly identified and promoted for breeding. Submissions were clear, however, that horses must achieve Class 1 status in their own right at inspection. Six stallions qualifying for pedigree bonus points for genetic diversity were inspected from 2010 to 2014. Four of these stallions were awarded Class 1 status. Three of these stallions needed pedigree bonus points to bring their scores up to the minimum requirements for Class 1. One genetically diverse stallion achieved Class 1 status without using pedigree bonus points. Twenty-eight genetically diverse mares were inspected in the same period, and of these thirteen were awarded Class 1 status, with five of these needing pedigree bonus points to meet the minimum requirements for Class 1. Inspectors have indicated they prefer to know if the horse is genetically diverse so that they can assess the potential importance of a stallion or mare within the breed. See also recommendations 19, 36, 37, 46, 47 and comments A, C and M.

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14. At inspection, abolish use of pedigree bonus points for gold merit sire and/or dam but continue to include merit status alongside the pedigree published in the inspection catalogue

Submissions were clear that horses must achieve Class 1 status in their own right at inspection. Six stallions and forty-eight mares met the minimum requirements for Class 1 using pedigree bonus points for a gold merit parent. The catalogue will indicate the merit status of the sire and the dam.

15. Continue to allow portions of the stallion veterinary examination to occur prior to the day of inspection
The veterinary portion of the inspection process, although necessary, is expensive and time-consuming. Allowing owners to complete portions ahead of time speeds up the inspection process on the day and reduces costs for those conducting inspections. It reduces the number of unsound animals presented. It is noted that some portions of the veterinary examination will continue to be required on-site on inspection day.

16. Retain use of linear profiling and upper beam scores

The task force recognised the need to quantify how well horses meet the key components of the breed standard (type, conformation, movement and athleticism [for stallions]) and to classify them accordingly. This is the purpose of the upper beam scores. By assigning (and communicating) the scores, the stud book provides breeders with information about every horse that will help when making breeding decisions.

The stud book gains valuable information about horses and their families through the linear profiling process. Through analysis of linear profiling results, the stud book and breeders gain information on how well horses are conforming to the breed standard, and can identify trends if horses are beginning to stray from the standard.

However, within the community, there is a lack of understanding of how the upper beam scores are derived; more education is needed. See also recommendations 39, 41 and 42.

17. At stallion inspections, abolish the use of the triangle to evaluate movement, but retain in-hand walk and trot gait assessment

Inspectors commented that the triangle did not contribute significantly to the inspection results. Eliminating the triangle speeds up the inspection process on the day.

18. Offer Class 1 and Class 2 mares and geldings the option to be assessed for athleticism.

Assessment for athleticism of all mares and geldings could add value to horses. Athleticism assessments may also assist in decisions regarding the future use of the animal, could help to guide breeding decisions, and may be useful in future genetic evaluations. Assessment will be on a voluntary basis.

19. Standardise the inspection panel chair's statement to identify horses that are genetically diverse

Including this information in the chair's statement (which is to be published on CapallOir and/or in the stallion book) provides breeders with information on each and every horse and helps in making breeding decisions. See also recommendations 12, 34, 35, 44, 45 and comments A, C and M.

20. Encourage the chair of inspection panels to describe the horse in relation to the variation in type seen within the Irish Draught breed standard.

Following a lot of consultation and discussion on this point, it was felt that the terms traditional and modern which had been suggested in submissions do not accurately describe the variation seen in Irish Draught horses meeting the breed standard. For example, traditional means many things to many people and may imply poor movement to some. The task force acknowledges that there is variation in type within the breed standard as seen since the formation of the stud book and that such variation should be reflected in the chair's comments.

21. Inspector decision-making should be a team approach

The task force believes that this approach gives the horse the fairest possible assessment.

22. Irish Draught horses should be inspected by a panel made up solely of Irish Draught horse inspection panel members
The task force recommends that Draught inspectors should inspect Draught horses, rather than relying on the advice of a sport horse inspector. Inspector training, selection and continued development should continue to include all aspects of assessment of athleticism, including input at training sessions from members of the sport horse inspection panel or other individuals with suitable expertise.

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23. For inspections outside of Ireland, the composition of arena parties should be at the discretion of the inspector panel
There is no formalised training for arena parties outside of Ireland. As a result, inspectors should be allowed to approve minor modifications to the inspection process with regard to arena parties available at inspections outside of Ireland.

24. Bring representatives from veterinary panels from all harmonised stud books to meet to ensure veterinary examination procedures are standardised and that there is agreement on the list of defects
It is critical that veterinary inspections be conducted to the same standard across all stud books. However, stud books outside of Ireland fall under different laws in terms of veterinary practice; veterinarians in different countries use different diagnostic procedures and have different opinions about which defects are unsuitable. Bringing the veterinary panels together allows the countries to determine how best to make sure all horses are inspected to the same standard.

25. (Ireland and GB): The task force recommends that HSI and IDHS (GB) contact their respective Department of Agriculture to seek approval to retain passports after inspection to allow for their updating, and to provide owners with a letter/certificate authorising travel in the interim
HSI and IDHS (GB) would like to hold the passports of inspected horses to update inspection and other horse information. Under Irish and UK law, however, horses are not legally permitted to travel home from the inspection without their passports. A letter/certificate provides a possible solution.

Merits

26. Lifetime achievements to be accrued toward merits
The purpose of merits is to recognise exceptional horses and to provide information to breeders seeking to select horses for specific breeding purposes. The task force believes that whether the performance occurs before or after inspection is not important, nor is the age at which the horse achieves the criteria. If a Class 1 horse achieves a superior standard of performance, it should be recognised through an awards scheme.

27. Silver merit stallions will continue to be granted approved status for breeding in the Irish Sport Horse stud book
One of the main purposes of the breed is to “contribute to cross-breeding programmes of other breeds”. Endorsement of Silver Merit stallions in the Irish Sport Horse stud book as approved stallions demonstrates Ireland’s strong support of this important historical use of the Irish Draught horse.

28. Adopt merits for geldings based on mare merits
Many Irish Draught geldings go on to successful careers in the show ring and/or competition arena. Recognising these achievements showcases the breed as a “pleasure, leisure or performance horse”.

29. Modify mare eventing merits to:

Gold own performance: A mare that has completed 2 events at CNC* with a clear round SJ and clear jumping XC or on completion of one CNC* and one CCI*/CIC* with a clear round SJ and clear jumping XC	Gold progeny performance: A mare that has produced 1 progeny that has completed 2 events at CNC* with a clear round SJ and clear jumping XC or on completion of one CNC* and one CCI*/CIC* with a clear round SJ and clear jumping XC
Silver own performance: A mare that has completed 2 events at EI100 with a clear round SJ and clear jumping XC	Silver progeny performance: A mare that has produced 1 progeny that has completed 2 events at EI100 with a clear round SJ and clear jumping XC
Bronze own performance: A mare that has completed 2 events at EI90 with a clear round SJ and clear jumping XC	Bronze progeny performance: A mare that has produced 1 progeny that has completed 2 events at EI90 with a clear round SJ and clear jumping XC

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The current requirement for mare eventing merit does not distinguish between gold and silver. This recommendation corrects this situation. The current requirement is for two progeny to meet performance requirements. By the time a mare can produce two qualifying offspring in the discipline of eventing, it is likely that she will no longer be of breeding age. By lessening the requirement to one progeny, the mare will be recognised earlier in her life and breeders will have the information at hand to select the mare.

30. Modify showing merit requirements to accept combinations of in-hand and riding results
Recognising the growing popularity of ridden and performance classes for Irish Draught, the task force recommends combining the two classes into a single merit. This also recognises individual animals who were successfully shown in-hand and then go on to be successful under saddle.

31. The classes eligible for own merit or for progeny merit for showing will be specifically named and agreed upon in the harmonised stud books, with the intent of ensuring equivalent standards in granting merit. The criteria for these classes will be standardised and the list will be updated periodically.

The following classes will be eligible for showing merits:

- In Ireland: Championship classes held at the RDS, RUAS, national ISA Championships and the two national breed societies' shows.
- In Great Britain: Classes held at the IDHS (GB) National Breed Show, the Great Yorkshire Show, the Royal Show (up to 2009), Horse of the Year Show (HOYS) and the Three Counties Show

The shows and classes in shows are constantly changing. There is a need to ensure "wins" in one country are equivalent to "wins" in another. As a result, the classes eligible for merit will be assessed against standard criteria identified prior to the start of each showing season. Additional classes could be eligible upon application to the harmonised stud books by the show and breed society, e.g. ISA regional championships such as the Bantry Show, Irish Draught Foal Munster Championships or all-breed shows abroad.

32. Class 2 mares and stallions should be eligible for merit based on the performance of their progeny (only)
To underline the point that the progeny of Class 2 horses, when crossed carefully with Class 1 horses can result in Class 1 progeny, and to recognise that certain Class 2 horses can produce exceptional progeny when crossed with suitable individuals.

Harmonisation

33. Continue in efforts to strongly pursue and encourage other ID stud books to harmonise
Recognising the importance of a global approach to herd management and the need to ensure genetic diversity, the task force encourages HSI to continue its efforts to secure harmonisation of the remaining stud books.

Publications and CapallOir

34. Make all inspection results (chair's comments, linear profile and upper beam scores) for Class 1 and Class 2 horses available in the public domain; stallion information in the stallion book, all information on CapallOir. Indicate on CapallOir when horse has been assigned into Class 3.

The first responsibility of a stud book is to capture and safeguard information about the breed. A second responsibility is to make this information available to help breeders make informed breeding decisions. Many of the recommendations made are based on the assumption that all inspection results will be made available to all members of the Irish Draught community.

35. On CapallOir, clearly differentiate between uninspected horses which are eligible for inspection and those which are not

An uninspected (Class 4) horse's eligibility for inspection will greatly affect its value. Making this information available will ensure fairness in the marketplace.

36. Continue to publish the list of rare bloodlines stallions

The list of rare bloodline stallions is extremely useful in helping breeders maintain genetic diversity within the breed. Over time, as certain stallions are used, the information can change. As a result, this list should be published on an annual basis and posted on the HSI website. See also recommendations 13, 19, 37, 38, 48, 49 and comments A, C and M.

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37. Publish mean kinship statistics for stallions in the stallion book

Mean kinship provides a measure of genetic diversity of a stallion. This information is extremely helpful to helping breeders maintain genetic diversity within the breed. See also recommendations 13, 19, 37, 38, 48, 49 and comments A, C and M.

38. Add test mating functionality to CapallOir

Test mating capabilities are commonly used in pedigree databases such as allbreedspedigrees.com and IDHS Australia's online stud book database. If CapallOir is to be the main source of information about Irish Draughts, then it needs to meet (or exceed) the functionality of other sites.

39. Publish a list of inspectors on HSI website

In the interest of transparency, the list of approved inspectors should be published and maintained on the HSI website.

40. Make HSI website compliant with standards for mobile devices

The HSI website and particularly CapallOir will be much more useful if it is accessible through mobile devices.

Continuing professional development for inspectors

41. Ensure sufficient inspector training, pre-inspection preparation, post-inspection review and ongoing quality assurance of inspectors to ensure consistent results

Many submissions indicated a perception that inspection results were not consistent. Inspectors commented that if they are to address recommendations made in this document and continue to ensure continued consistency in their evaluations of horses, inspectors will need to meet more regularly.

42. Open inspector training and ongoing quality assurance to representatives from outside of Ireland

Inspections are increasing in harmonised stud books outside of Ireland. These inspections are run with very little funding; travel costs for inspectors from Ireland are increasing significantly each year. Training and approving inspectors from different countries will help other countries to control inspection costs.

Education

43. Create materials and hold meetings to educate breeders on recommendations made by the task force and resulting changes to the breed policy

Like the 2010 breed policy, these recommendations and resulting changes to the breed policy need to be explained and discussed throughout the Irish Draught community. Explanation and discussion will meet many of the educational recommendations and will help to reduce misunderstanding and ensure acceptance within the community.

44. Create materials to educate breeders on linear profiling and its relationship to upper beam scores. The task force recommends that explanatory videos and documents focusing on the breed standard, the linear profiling process and upper beam scores would be very informative for breeders.

Many of the submissions sought better understanding of the relationship between the linear profile and the upper beam inspection scores. Some suggest the linear profile should mathematically generate the summary scores. Others state there is no relationship between the two and so one or the other should be eliminated. The best answer for the breed lies somewhere between these two opinions, and more explanation is needed. It will be critical that the designated group of experts in evaluation of Irish Draughts – the inspectors – participate in the development of the requested materials. See also recommendations 16, 34 and 41.

45. Create materials to educate breeders on stud book rules and processes

Many of the submissions showed a lack of understanding of the stud book rules, the inspection process and the relationship between the linear profile and the upper beam inspection scores. These misunderstandings led to many comments that could have been avoided, and are thought to contribute to pockets of resistance to harmonisation.

46. Educate breeders on use of the term “conservation” with a view to replacing references to “preservation” with “conservation” in the next policy review

Historically, the Draught community has held “preservation of the breed” as a primary objective. The task force has learned that “preservation” (and all its alternate forms) is, in fact, the incorrect term – it should be “conservation” (and all its alternate forms). However, the task force recognises “preservation” is an extremely important word in the community; to change it without concerted effort to educate the community could lead to significant misunderstandings. As a result, the task force has purposely retained the word “preservation” in the breeding objective, but strongly recommends it be replaced by “conservation” over time.

47. Promote awareness of Irish Draught Horse Semen Bank project funded by RDS and Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine

The Irish Draught Semen Bank project makes semen from certain stallions available to breeders in Ireland. This project is not well known in the community. The project should be better publicised within the Irish breeder community. See also recommendations 13, 19, 37, 38, 48, 49 and comments A and M.

Monitoring and research

48. Monitor and report on inbreeding levels across the harmonised stud book and in each stud book

The breeding policy aims to preserve/conserv genetic diversity, whilst limiting any increase in inbreeding levels and maintaining quality in the breed. This is a delicate balancing act under the best circumstances. Irish Draught breeders understand the importance of selecting for diversity. Given falling breeding numbers, inbreeding values require close monitoring and reporting. See also recommendations 13, 19, 37, 38, 49 and comments A, C and M.

49. Review and monitor bloodlines to ensure retention of stallion lines (top line of pedigree) and mare lines (bottom line of pedigree)

To ensure preservation of genetics of the Irish Draught breed, the retention of both the stallion lines and the mare lines needs to be ensured. The task force recommends that HSI monitor and report on preservation of stallion and mare lines on an ongoing basis. See also recommendations 13, 19, 37, 38, 46 and comments A, C and M.

50. Monitor the mare population being bred and identify, in collaboration with the branches of the breed societies, exceptional mares that are not being bred.

The task force recommends that HSI monitor and report on trends in the use of Class 1 and Class 2 mares in breeding.

51. Review and confirm access to stored DNA materials for horses in the harmonised stud book

Enquiries confirmed that all DNA hair samples used to confirm parentage of Draught horses across the harmonised stud books have been retained by the organisations providing DNA analysis; if the DNA is released by the owners of the samples, it could be made available for research purposes. The various DNA banks need to be contacted to confirm the holdings and the conditions under which the DNA samples could be released for research

52. Investigate reproductive technologies, including semen bank, ovum pick-up and intracytoplasmic sperm injection, and their role within endangered native breeds

In recognition of the endangered/maintained status of the breed, a study needs to be conducted on current and future reproductive technologies with a view to advising on how best to preserve genetics of the breed for future use.

53. Research on bone and height and growth trends up to maturity

Bone loss is a topic frequently discussed within the Irish Draught community. To date, studies have documented a reduction in bone measurements over time but each study has encountered gaps in data, e.g. no information on the age at which bone was measured, measurements only recorded for RID stallions. Further data is needed to determine trends in bone measurements and how they change over the lifetime of a horse by measuring classified older horses at shows etc. If information is not available to draw defensible conclusions, recommendations need to be made on changes to enable ongoing monitoring of bone measurements in the breed. See also recommendation 12 and comments A, B and H. An emerging topic in the community is the size of Draughts. Are they getting too big? A study needs to be undertaken to determine trends in the height of Draughts.

54. Research into the effect of pedigree requirements for grade-up mares on approval of Class 1 stallions and mares
As a follow on to recommendation 8, further data is needed on: (a) the impact of grade-up mares in the Breed; and (b) whether changes in pedigree requirements for AID/grade-up mares has had an impact on the influence of these mares. The results of these studies should be used to inform discussions on pedigree requirements for the grade-up register in the next policy review.

55. Continue to observe research findings on genetic markers for Hoof Wall Separation syndrome in Connemara ponies
Hoof wall separation syndrome (HWSS) is being discussed in the Connemara breed. Given the close relationship between the Irish Draught and the Connemara, the Irish Draught breed should monitor research findings into this syndrome and any future impact for the Irish Draught breed.

56. Monitor the incidence of sweet itch
It appears that sweet itch (seasonal recurrent dermatitis) is becoming more common in Irish Draughts. This undesirable allergy to insect bites is thought to possibly have a genetic component. If indeed sweet itch is emerging in the Irish Draught population, monitoring of its incidence and possible identification of genetic markers would be helpful in developing a strategy to contain, if not eradicate, the condition.

Marketing

57. The marketing of Irish Draughts should be promoted and developed
The task force recommends that an Irish Draught marketing strategy be developed specifically for the breed focusing on both pure-bred and part-bred Irish Draught horses. This approach should link in with the new HSI marketing strategy.

58. Actively promote show and competition classes for Irish Draughts.
- Sponsor national performance class for IDs and hold finals at a suitable venue e.g. Ballindenisk or Punchestown or Tattersalls.
 - Encourage Irish Draught classes at hunter trials, working hunter, dressage, endurance and other disciplines.
 - Request RDS to move Irish Draught performance class into the afternoon.
 - Liaise with HOYS to investigate the feasibility of a reciprocal arrangement whereby any Irish Draught winner at HOYS would receive an invitation to the RDS and the winner of the RDS Irish Draught performance class would receive an invitation to HOYS
 - Sponsor national Irish Draught mare with a pure-bred foal at foot class.
 - Investigate if a performance class confined to inspected Irish Draught geldings could be held at a national breed show, perhaps in conjunction with on-site inspections

With more opportunities for Irish Draughts to be seen in show and competition classes around Ireland, the more they will be recognised for their value as adult amateur and competition horses. The Irish Draught performance classes increase in popularity every year. The task force recommends a national performance class for Irish Draughts be sponsored, with finals separate from the RDS Dublin Horse Show. Similarly, Draughts are being entered into hunter trials. Having classes only for Irish Draughts would showcase the breed's versatility as an adult amateur competition horse. The RDS Irish Draught performance class begins at 8:30 a.m. on Wednesday, before the show even opens at 9:00 a.m. This class is very popular with the crowds, yet they miss much of the class. The task force recommends approaching the RDS to suggest the performance class be moved to a later start in the day.

To further underline the growing popularity of the Irish Draught in riding classes, last year the HOYS supreme champion was an Irish Draught. To promote the success of Draughts, the task force recommends approaching HOYS and the RDS to automatically invite winners of the RDS Irish Draught performance classes to HOYS and vice versa for Irish Draught winners at HOYS.

Showing can also be used to promote the production of young stock. To encourage breeding of pure-bred foals in Ireland, the task force recommends sponsorship of a national class for Draught mares with pure-bred foal at foot.

59. HSI should investigate having stands to promote the stud book at:

- | | |
|--|------------|
| • Irish Horse Festival | • Burghley |
| • Traditional Irish Horse Association festival | • Rolex |
| • AIRC championships | • RDS |
| • HOYS | |

There are a number of opportunities where the Irish Draught could be promoted within Ireland and the UK at relatively little cost. There is also scope to promote the stud book at other locations where the ISH is being promoted e.g. Rolex.

Recommendations of the Task force for the Irish Draught Horse Breeding Policy

60. Investigate the possibility of an Irish horse and pony breed village at the RDS and other shows
There would be a significant advantage to having the stands for all Irish stud books and breed organisations gathered together at shows such as the RDS Dublin Horse Show.
61. Seek opportunities to coordinate promotion of the horse industry/Irish horse with Tourism Ireland
Tourism Ireland spends significant amounts of money to promote Ireland. Until recently, this promotion typically included reference to the horse industry. The task force recommends Tourism Ireland be approached to again promote the Irish horse and Irish horse tourism.
62. Promote Irish Draughts directly to riding clubs, including those in Northern Ireland
Given the Irish Draught's suitability as a pleasure/leisure horse, it should be directly promoted to the members of riding clubs. The task force recommends that contact be made with the liaison committee of Northern Ireland riding clubs.
63. Investigate potential for sales of Irish Draughts in emerging markets worldwide
There is a potential market for sales of the Irish horse to emerging leisure and pleasure equine markets, given the Irish Draught's tractability and temperament. The task force recommends steps are taken to identify such markets and to investigate potential for marketing of Irish Draughts to these markets.
64. Develop or support a centre of excellence for production of Irish Draughts for sale
The market for Irish Draughts appears to be shifting from selling young stock to selling horses already under saddle with basic jumping skills. This is a significant shift for breeders in Ireland, who might benefit from assistance to identify centres using best practices for the production of Irish Draughts for sale.
65. Develop materials on the role of the Irish Draught in successful eventing and showjumping horses
Irish Draughts are often in the back pedigree of successful eventing and showjumping horses. Top riders will say they like having "a bit of Draught" to add steadiness and brains to their mounts. The task force recommends materials specifically discussing the role of Irish Draughts in breeding successful eventing and showjumping horses are developed for use by all harmonised stud books.
66. Encourage sales companies, buyers and breeders to use information on CapallOir
CapallOir should be the main source of independent, accurate information on stud book information related to Irish Draught horses in the harmonised stud books. Sales companies, buyers and breeders should see CapallOir as an indispensable tool.

Stud book policy review

67. Review the stud book policy at a minimum of every 6 years
The task force recommends the breed policy be reviewed every 6 years. This means the next review would occur on or before 2019. Annual reports on the stud books should be produced to monitor and report on the state of the breed worldwide.
68. Annual meeting of breed societies convened by HSI
HSI should convene a meeting to include representatives of all harmonised stud books, their inspection panels and their breed societies at which herd statistics and a progress report on the task force's recommendations will be presented. This meeting could coincide with the annual meeting of the harmonised stud books.
69. At the next review the following should be discussed:
- pedigree requirements for grade-up mares;
 - inspection/pedigree requirements for all ID horses (consideration of allowing the progeny of Class 3 and uninspected Irish Draughts to come forward for inspection);
 - replacement of references to "preservation" with "conservation".
- Elsewhere in this document, the task force has specifically recommended that the next policy review address specific topics.*
70. The harmonised stud book should continue to be managed with reference to FAO guidelines as outlined in the *Global Plan of Action for Animal Genetic Resources* and related publications.
FAO Global Plan of Action for Animal Genetic Resources is available at <http://www.fao.org/docrep/010/a1404e/a1404e00.htm>

Suggestions Not Adopted

The submissions contained a number of suggestions that could not be adopted. The most frequent reason was that the suggestion was based on a misunderstanding of the rules or on the current status (population statistics) of the breed. Other suggestions could not be adopted as they were inconsistent with suggestions from other submissions and, as a consequence, with the recommendations adopted.

The task force greatly appreciated the time and effort taken by those who prepared submissions, and respectfully offer the following explanations for why some of the more common suggestions were not adopted.

A. The inspection process should be abolished as it removes valuable genetic lines from the breeding pool
The United Nations standard for management of rare breeds considers the Irish Draught horse to be “endangered-maintained” which means the breeding pool is of sufficient size to survive and a breeding programme is in place to ensure survival of the breed. Using the same standard, genetic measures show there is sufficient diversity within the stud book to support programmes focused on preserving traditional characteristics within the breed, meaning there is room within the genetic population to promote certain horses for breeding over others. There are certain characteristics within the breed that are generally agreed to be undesirable and outside of established breed standards (e.g. lack of depth of quarters, lightness of hock, lightness of bone), which need careful management. The inspection process is a critical tool through which the stud book introduces and monitors measures to manage breed genetics and to monitor breed characteristics. As a result, this suggestion was not adopted.

B. The inspection process is too subjective, and so should be abolished entirely
Inspections are a critical tool in the overall breed management strategy and prevent further erosion of traditional breed characteristics. Further, it is important to understand that the only way the stud book can encourage and measure progress in monitoring improvements to the breed (e.g. maintaining bone, continuing to eliminate a weak shoulder) and to identify emerging conformational issues is through the inspection process. It is noted that within the breed standard, a range of types are possible reflecting the traditional versatility of the breed and the individual preferences of breeders. As a result this suggestion was not adopted.

C. The inspection process is skewed against traditional type; athleticism should be a merit not a mandatory component of the inspection process
If this statement were true, there would be a number of stallions failing to meet standards for Class 1 in athleticism only. To the contrary, statistics show that the vast majority of Class 2 horses have not met inspection standards on two or more criteria, most frequently type and conformation. Almost all Class 2 stallions that did not meet requirements for athleticism also did not meet the standard for either conformation or type. It is also important to note that athleticism is not a requirement for mares. The task force concludes that there is no evidence that the inspection process is skewed against “traditional types”. As a result this suggestion was not adopted.

D. ‘RID’ has considerable market recognition and should be reintroduced into the classification system
Across the harmonised stud books, the term ‘RID’ can mean many things, ranging from an uninspected gelding to a horse that successfully met stringent conformation, performance and veterinary inspection requirements. To suggest that all these horses have met the same inspection criteria is unfair to those that met the more stringent criteria and misinforms potential buyers. The new classification system has been standardised across all harmonised stud books; Class 1 means the same thing in Ireland, the UK or Canada i.e. the horse has met the same standard. Reverting to “RID” would introduce significant confusion and undo significant steps taken to date. As a result this suggestion was not adopted.

E. Class 2 should be split to separate the “almost Class 1” horses – in other words suitable for breeding under certain circumstances – from the rest
The task force has recommended a number of actions to improve access to information about Class 2 horses, including publishing inspection results in the stallion book and on CapallOir. This information should enable breeders to make informed breeding decisions. As a result this suggestion was not adopted.

Recommendations of the Task force for the Irish Draught Horse Breeding Policy

- F. Give bonus points to traditional type horses with at least 9½" of bone at 3 years of age (to be applied to conformation or movement if needed to bring a horse into Class 1)

The task force agreed with the many submissions that included strong recommendations to abolish the use of bonus points entirely. It is hoped that by having mandatory statements recognising 'traditional type' Draughts in the chair's inspection summary statements (which should be published on CapallOir) breeders will be able to identify 'traditional type' horses when making breeding choices.

- G. Change the name of the grade-up section of the stud book

The current classification system is still new; the benefit of changing names needs to be carefully balanced against the danger of introducing confusion among the community. In the case of the grade-up register, it was felt that any benefit to changing the name would be outweighed by the resulting confusion among breeders. As a result this suggestion was not adopted.

- H. The breed standard should be clear: Class 1 horses must have a minimum of 9" of bone

Statistics show much of the bone loss in the breed occurred in the 1980s and that the loss has been slowed significantly, if not stopped. However, there are acknowledged issues with these statistics; horses were measured at different ages and measurement protocols have not been standardised. As a result, the task force does not have a solid foundation on which to set direction in this matter other than to recommend that research is needed in this area. In the meantime, Inspector feedback is that it is much more important that a horse's bone be proportional to its build, which, for a 2- or 3-year-old, may mean less than 9". Keeping in mind these horses may still grow (and add bone), a strict minimum measurement would eliminate otherwise perfectly acceptable horses from Class 1. For diversity reasons, and as a general principle, the task force believes it is best to give horses the benefit of the doubt. As a result this suggestion was not adopted.

- I. The minimum age for stallion inspection should be raised to 4

It is difficult for an owner to sell coverings for stallions that have not been inspected. Given the decreasing numbers of coverings and stallions being presented for inspections, the task force felt it would be unwise to impose an extra year of cost related to keep on the stallion owner. As a result, this suggestion was not adopted.

- J. The minimum age for mare inspection should be raised to 3 years

The owner chooses at what age to present a horse for inspection, whether it is a mare or a stallion. Immature horses have a higher risk of being classified as Class 2 so owners are strongly encouraged to not present a horse until it is sufficiently mature. However, sales or showing reasons may encourage owners in some countries to have their mare classified as soon as possible (e.g. ISA classes limited to ID Class 1). As a result, this suggestion was not adopted.

- K. Progeny of Class 3 and Uninspected (Class 4) should be eligible for inspection

Class 3 horses have a recognised veterinary fault so the stud book, in good conscience, cannot recommend Class 3 horses to be used for breeding.

Statistics show Class 4 horses are only occasionally used as breeding stock within the ID stud book. Allowing progeny of Class 4 to be eligible for inspection would encourage this undesirable activity and remove a critical incentive to have the horses inspected at all. This would dramatically reduce the stud book's ability to inform or influence breeder decisions. This is not in the best interest of the breed. As a result, this suggestion was not adopted.

- L. Inspectors should come to their assessments and final scores separately, not through discussion and consensus

It was thought that this approach gives the horse the fairest possible assessment. As a result this suggestion was not adopted.

- M. Inspectors should not be permitted to see the pedigree of a horse prior to or during inspection

Inspectors indicated that they believe knowledge of the horse's pedigree improves their ability to fairly assess the horse through the inspection process. Further, it allows the identification of genetically diverse horses for inspectors, improving these horses' chance of attaining Class 1 status. As a result this suggestion was not adopted.

Recommendations of the Task force for the Irish Draught Horse Breeding Policy

- N. Eligibility for the grade-up register should be expanded to include mares with 50% RID/Class 1/Class 2 parentage (with the remaining 50% being any mix of TB, Connemara and Irish Draught)

To date, there has not been sufficient data on whether having more stringent pedigree requirement has resulted in greater retention of desired breed characteristics. However it is generally accepted that the AID/grade-up register is producing very successful breeding stock.

Statistics show that there are 512 Irish Sport Horse mares born between 2006 and 2010 that meet pedigree requirements for inspection for the grade-up register, yet only 34 have been presented, with 13 being accepted in to the grade-up register. There clearly is a large pool of mares that potentially could be added to the grade-up register. The task force has recommended the owners of eligible mares be encouraged to present these for inspection, and that this recommendation be reviewed again. The task force has also recommended research into the impact of pedigree requirements for grade-up mares on inspection results for progeny. As a result this suggestion was tabled until the next policy review.

- O. Class 2 horses should be promoted to Class 1 if they (or their progeny) meet performance standards
While some IDs can be performance horses, performance is not the main focus of the ID stud book and therefore should not be justification for a horse to improve on its classification. Class 2 ID stallions that meet silver merit performance requirements can seek Approved status in the Irish Sport Horse stud book, which is a stud book structured to recognise performance. As a result this suggestion was not adopted.

- P. Owners of Thoroughbred mares with good bloodlines should be given a premium to breed their mares to Class 1 stallions, to produce top quality half-bred foals. These foals would help promote the Irish Draught as a foundation breed for performance horses.

Unfortunately, EU State Aid rules specifically prohibit such premiums. However, if other incentives could be devised then this should be revisited.

- Q. Standardise the chair's statement to identify horses as traditional or modern

Following a lot of consultation and discussion on this point, it was felt that the terms traditional and modern suggested in submissions do not accurately describe the variation seen in Irish Draught horses meeting the breed standard. For example, traditional means many things to many people and may imply poor movement to some. The task force acknowledges that there is variation in type within the breed standard and that this should be reflected in the chair's comments. As a result, this suggestion was not adopted.



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