



Premium Retention Scheme 2026

Horse Sport Ireland (HSI) will re-launch the Premium Retention scheme for breeders of young high merit mares and young performance stallions; aged 5-7 years old. This scheme is funded by the Department of Agriculture, Food, and the Marine (DAFM) under National Breeding Services. It is vital to encourage breeders to retain and breed from high merit performance mares and stallions. The Premium Retention Scheme focuses on the support for breeders to professionally produce mares and stallions which they do not have the capacity to do themselves. This scheme subsidises production costs of young high-performance mares and stallions who can be retained for future breeding.

The scheme is open to mares and stallions who are classified in a DAFM approved studbook. Mares and stallions must meet the specific requirements outlined below. Successful applicants are eligible to receive up to €6,000 towards the retention costs of the horse over a 6-month period. Please see the table below for relevant deadlines.

Pony mares and stallions are also eligible to receive funding under the scheme but must also meet equivalent pony criteria and be classified/categorised in a DAFM Approved Pony Studbook (Appendix 1.)

Stallions entered on the scheme must have initiated the approval process with a DAFM approved studbook and have passed the relevant veterinary screening (stage 1/ approved stallion).

This scheme has two main objectives:

1. To encourage owners and breeders to retain, produce and breed from equines which are of high genetic merit or descended from rare bloodlines.
2. To identify potential premium equines and enable breeders to produce them, and potentially breed from them, and in doing so add value to the animal and the breeder's breeding herd.

Closing	Deadline for submission of receipts
31 st March 2026	9 th October 2026

TERMS AND CONDITIONS – General terms:

- **All applicants must show proof of a completed DAFM Equine Operator profile or EEN (if resident of NI)*. [CLICK HERE](#) to get information on the EOP.**
- All applications must be completed online.
- This scheme will operate on a first come first served basis up to the maximum allocation facilitated by the existing budget allocation. Horse Sport Ireland reserves the right to close the scheme ahead of the advertised deadline.
- Horse Sport Ireland reserve the right to change, amend or update scheme terms and conditions. In the event of same, existing applicants will be notified.



- Horse Sport Ireland reserves the right to use performance equivalents and will consider breeding values from other studbooks on a case-by-case basis.
- Horse Sport Ireland reserves the right to reject any application.
- Incomplete applications will not be assessed, the onus is on the applicant to provide HSI with all the required detail and evidence of verified performance/classification & producer expertise.
- Horse Sport Ireland will provide the results of this scheme, where relevant, to the studbook of origin of the equine in question.
- Applicant and horse application data will be shared with the relevant studbook to confirm breed, studbook, ownership, and any other relevant eligibility for application processing.
- All applications must be submitted before the above stated deadlines. **Invoices after the above deadlines will not be funded.** This deadline will not be extended, and no late submissions will be accepted.
- * - PLEASE NOTE – Where an applicant DOES NOT submit acceptable proof of their Equine Operator Profile, their application WILL be rejected.
The applicant will be welcome to re-apply when they can provide evidence of their Equine Operator Profile.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS – Equine eligibility:

- Mares and stallions must meet the following eligibility criteria:
 - They must be DAFM approved studbook classified (inspected).
 - The horse's sire must be Preliminary Approved/Approved/recognised in DAFM/WBFSH Approved studbook.
 - **5-year-old horses** must have a dam or a sister (dam line) competing up to 3* (Appendix 3) or an estimated breeding value (EBV) >130
OR
2 Double Clears to date in DAFM Studbook Series (show jumping), DAFM Studbook Series Eventing MER/equivalent based on class articles (Appendix 5).
 - **6/ 7-year-old horses** must have competed in the DAFM Studbook Series (show jumping or Eventing/equivalent (equivalent based on the class articles – Appendix 5.) recorded classes in the previous year (2 Showjumping Double Clear/1 Eventing MER)
 - Where mares have been bred from, and are entering their performance career for the first season, they require an EBV >130/ damline competing up to 3*. Their performance requirements will be discussed with the applicant on a case-by-case basis.
 - The horse must be campaigned in **at least two** of the Show jumping/Eventing DAFM Studbook Series or their equivalents (based on class article) over the duration of the funding allocation.
 - Dressage horses will be supported based on their equivalent performance criteria.
 - Trotter/pacer studbook horses will be assessed against the criteria outlined in appendix 1.



- Mares/ stallions that have been funded in the 2026 Schooling I or Schooling II Scheme are not eligible to be funded in the Premium Retention Scheme, and vice versa.
- Mares that have been funded in the 2023 or 2024 Premium Mare Retention Scheme or 2025 Premium Retention Scheme are eligible to take part in the 2026 Premium Retention Scheme if the applicant can provide a veterinary certificate stating that the mare had a successful/had attempted an embryo transfer in 2025 for a foal due in 2026.
 - There will be limited places for mares that received funding in previous years.
- Mares/ stallions must be inspected by a DAFM approved Studbook in 2026 if not already inspected.
 - **Mares & stallions who are approved for the scheme but DO NOT present for inspection/classification, will have their approval rescinded.**
 - **Stallions must provide their studbook veterinary and studbook approval report.**
- Approved mares/ stallions are eligible to receive up to €6,000 towards the mare/ stallion if retained over a 6-month period.
- Video evidence must be provided via the online portal of the mare in one of these production classes in 2026 and a valid record of their result(s).
- If the mare/ stallion is injured or unable to be ridden owing to another welfare reason, HSI must be advised immediately, and the fund will only be paid up to the date of injury. The applicant must provide veterinary proof.
- A hair sample from the mare/ stallion must be submitted for genotyping, if they have not been genotyped.
- Approved mares/ stallions must release permission to their genotype (if not existing in HSI) for the purposes of research into traits and breed improvement.
- Mares/ stallions approved in this scheme will have automatic approval under the x-ray and embryo transfer (Mares only) schemes.
 - If x-rays have been previously taken, they must be labelled to identify the horse and submitted. Otherwise, the age criteria in the x-ray scheme does not apply to mares/ stallions approved under this scheme and they gain entry for screening. The x-ray screening would be funded through the x-ray screening scheme allocation.
 - Mares are not obliged to complete an embryo transfer but are encouraged to do so via the ET scheme. In future, an embryo or foal from the mare may be a requirement of the scheme.
 - Mares on the Premium Retention Scheme will only be approved for the ET Scheme provided the application is made before the ET Scheme reaches capacity.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS – Applicant:

- Applicants must be the registered breeder and owner of the animal at the point of application and must reside on the island of Ireland (inc. Northern Ireland).
 - For inclusion of equines registered in dual ownership/breed partnership permission in written or email correspondence must be received by HSI from the non-applicant owner. Scheme approval will not occur in the absence of this written or email permission.
- Horses must be residing on the Island of Ireland
- IBANs provided for scheme payment **MUST** be the IBAN of the applicant, **not** the producer or any other applicant.



- Receipted expenses for the retention costs of the mare must be submitted to HSI **before the 9th October 2026**. This deadline will not be extended, and no late submissions will be accepted.
- Eligible expenses may include but are not limited to:
 - Professional production livery
 - Feed/supplement costs
 - Dentistry/farrier/veterinary/chiropractor
 - Entry fees/Schooling Fees
- Payment will not be issued until receipt of valid copy of the invoices, receipts and video evidence of the young horse's progress.
- **All receipts/invoices must clearly indicate:**
 - **Company/supplier name and address,**
 - **recipient name and address,**
 - **date of issue,**
 - **date of payment,**
 - **horse details (name/UELN/Chip number)**
 - **itemised breakdown of services including unit prices and the amount paid.**
- Invoices must be supplied to Horse Sport Ireland in Euros.
 - Mares/ stallions approved on the Premium Retention Scheme who are based in Northern Ireland and supply an invoice in Sterling, will have that figure paid in Euros (up to €6,000 maximum).
 - Horse Sport Ireland will not calculate any currency exchanges.
- If videos are not submitted and/or the horse is not progressing to a sufficient standard Horse Sport Ireland reserve the right to withhold/refuse payment.
- Applicants may apply for up to two horses and can select a producer of their choosing with experience as per Appendix 3. The nominated producer must produce the mare/ stallion, not another rider.
- Ownership of the animal cannot be changed between family members for the purpose of entering the scheme.
- Where the breeder of a mare/ stallion is deceased, but the mare/ stallion is retained within the breeder's family, they are eligible to apply for this scheme.
- **Approved applicants in ROI and in NI must submit a Tax clearance certificate** to HSI as the sum of the grant exceed €5,000 or more. If a tax clearance cert cannot be furnished on request, grants cannot be provided. [CLICK HERE FOR INFORMATION ON HOW TO APPLY.](#)



TERMS AND CONDITIONS – Producer Criteria:

- Applicants must be satisfied as to the skills, knowledge, experience and facilities of their selected producer to care for their horse appropriately and to produce it in an appropriate manner.
- Producers must be based on the island of Ireland.
- The producer cannot be a nuclear family member/employee of the applicant or operating from the same premises as the applicant OR have the same address, they can be a co-owner with the breeder
 - Nominated producers must produce the horse, no other rider/producer is acceptable.
- Nominated Producing professionals' qualification must meet one of the following criteria:
 - Riders that have qualified a horse for the final in RDS SJ 4-, 5-, 6- or 7-year-olds in the last 3 years;
 - Riders that have qualified a horse for the final day of any leg in the HSI Studbook Show Jumping Series in the last 3 years;
 - Riders that have competed a horse for the final in RDS Young Event Horse class in the last 3 years;
 - Riders that have recorded a MER at CCI2*L or EI115 in the last 3 years;
 - Riders that have recorded a MER in the HSI Studbook Eventing Series /age class equivalent in the last 3 years.
 - Riders that have qualified a horse for the World Breeding Championships for Young horses in Lanaken or Lion d'Angers;
 - Producer and underage rider combinations that have qualified a pony for the RDS in the last 3 years.
- The applicant and producer are responsible for all insurance costs and liability for both horse and producer i.e. to cover any personal accident/injury and or horse accident/injury. Horse Sport Ireland will not be liable for any damages or losses incurred by applicants or producers during the training period.
- Horse Sport Ireland will not be party to any contracts or agreements entered or between breeders/owners and producers.
- Horse Sport Ireland will have no role to play in the event of any disputes between breeders/owners and producers arising from participation in this scheme.
- I confirm that I have reviewed Horse Sport Ireland's Data Protection and Privacy policies (available at www.horsesportireland.ie or on request) and I note that HSI only process personal data for legitimate business purposes and/or where required by law. All processing will have due regard to the DPA 2018 and GDPR 2016. I note that this personal data may include sensitive personal data, as defined within the DPA and GDPR, the processing of which requires my explicit consent. I note that HSI and selected/approved veterinary clinics will honour the rights and freedoms of the data subjects at all times, as long as there is no other overriding law which limits those privileges.



By submitting an applicant to this scheme, I declare that:

- I understand and agree to the terms and conditions of this scheme in their totality
- I provide my informed consent to participate in this scheme
- I understand that the drawdown of funding is subject to the completion of scheme feedback.
- I understand that HSI will publish a list of awardees (forename, surname, county and mare/ stallion name) on the HSI website
- I am satisfied as to the skills, knowledge, experience and facilities of my selected producer to care for my horse appropriately and to produce it in an appropriate manner and I understand that I, the applicant, accept liability and responsibility for any damages or losses occurring to i) the producer ii) the horse(s) during or related to the funded period.
- I understand and provide consent for my equine's data to be used for research and studbook purposes, including but not limited to publication
- I understand that if I do not adhere to the scheme's terms and conditions, I will not receive funding, even if my horse has been ridden by my chosen producer.
- I agree to indemnify and keep indemnified Horse Sport Ireland/ DAFM against all liabilities, losses, costs, demands, orders, recommendations, determinations, judgments, damages, actions, expenses, fines, penalties, interest, reasonable legal costs and expenses and all claims howsoever and whenever incurred by the Company:
 1. relating to any income tax, PRSI, levies, contributions and any other liability, deduction, contribution, assessment or claim arising from or made in connection with either the provision of the Services; and/or any payment or benefit claimed or received by any person engaged by me (or associates) in connection with the performance of the Services, where such recovery is not prohibited by law;
 2. as a consequence of any allegation or claim related to employment or alleged employment, transfer or employment, worker status or worker remuneration brought by me, or by any person or persons procured by me in the provision of the Services whether under contract, in equity, at common law or pursuant to statute (including, without limitation pursuant to the Unfair Dismissals Acts 1977 to 2007), or otherwise;
 3. relating to injury, loss or damage caused by an act or omission by me or by any person or persons procured by the me in the provision of the Services;
- I/we understand that pursuant to the Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2016, customer consent is required by the data controller, Horse Sport Ireland, to process personal data which it may have in its possession **including direct disclosure** to third parties (data processors) such as, but not limited to selected/approved producers for the purpose of the Premium Retention Scheme 2026.



- I/we understand that selected owners are responsible for administration services relating to the Premium Retention Scheme on behalf of HSI and are responsible for the processing of any information relating to that scheme, either contained within the application form or otherwise. I note that selected producers will only process this data for the purpose of administration of the Premium Retention Scheme 2025.
- I confirm that I have reviewed Horse Sport Ireland's Data Protection and Privacy policies (available at www.horsesportireland.ie or on request) and I note that HSI only process personal data for legitimate business purposes and/or where required by law. All processing will have due regard to the DPA 2018 and GDPR 2016. I note that this personal data may include sensitive personal data, as defined within the DPA and GDPR, the processing of which requires my explicit consent. I note that HSI and selected/approved producers will honour the rights and freedoms of the data subjects at all times, as long as there is no other overriding law which limits those privileges.

Appendix 1. Irish Trotter/Pacer Criteria

- For mares/ stallions aged between 3-6 years old.
- Mares/ stallions must be the progeny of Sires that have raced with the following minimum mile rate race time (Pacers: Under 2.00- UK/Ireland, 1.55- USA/Canada/ Southern Hemisphere or have progeny that have won races. Trotters: Mile rate of 1.14 or have progeny that have won races).
- 3-4-year-old pacers must have finished 1st or 2nd in a stakes race or won in a time of 2 minutes and 2 seconds or under.
- 5-6-year-old mares/ stallions must have won a race in a time of 2 minutes and 1 second or under.
- 3-4-year-old trotters must have been 1st or 2nd in a time of 2 minutes and eight seconds or under (mile rate).
- 4-6-year-old trotters must have won in 2.05 or under (mile rate).
- The dam must have raced and won at least one race.
- Mares/ stallions qualify for x-ray and embryo transfer (mares only) schemes in the future.

Trainer/Producer:

- To be selected by the owner of the horse.
- Must be a public trainer licensed with the IHRA.
- The Applicant must also be licensed with the IHRA.



Appendix 2. Pony Performance equivalents

Equivalent pony performance criteria including but not limited to:

- Two own DC/top 10% performance in at an officially recorded class/event as follows:
 - 128A - 1- 1.10m
 - 138A – 1.10m - 1.20m
 - 148A – 1.20m - 1.30m
 - CCIP
 - CCI1*
- Four DC/top 10% performance of the dam/sister (dam line) in at an officially recorded class/event as follows:
 - 128A - 1- 1.10m
 - 138A – 1.10m - 1.20m
 - 148A – 1.20m - 1.30m
 - CCIP
 - CCI1*

Appendix 4. Mare star rating performance classifications

Sport Horse Mares				
Minimum Performances Required for each Rating Level				
Rating Type	5*	4*	3*	2*
Mare performance – Showjumping	2 double clear rounds at CSI/CSIO 4* level (Grand Prix or Nations' Cup class or equivalent ²) or higher	2 of the following: Double clear rounds at CSI/CSIO3* level ⁶ or Double clear rounds in FEI competitions at a fence height of at least 1.45m at CSI/CSIO level or Top 4 placings in FEI speed classes at a fence height of at least 1.45m at CSI/CSIO level or higher	2 double clear rounds at National 1.30m level ⁵ or higher	Be entered in Select class and Jump 4 double clear rounds at National 1.20m level ⁷ or higher



Sport Horse Mares				
Minimum Performances Required for each Rating Level				
Rating Type	5*	4*	3*	2*
Mare performance – Eventing	2 MERs ¹⁵ at: CCI 3* level ¹¹ up to 2018 or CCI4*-L level from 2019 or higher	2 MERs ¹⁵ at: EI120 level or CIC3* level up to 2018 or CCI4*-S level from 2019 or higher	2 of the following: MER at CCI2*/EI115 Top 25% finishes at CCI 1* level ¹³ up to 2018 or Top 25% finishes at CCI 2* level ¹³ up to 2018 or Top 25% finishes at CCI2*-L level ¹³ from 2019 or Top 25% finishes at CCI3*-L level ¹³ from 2019 or Top 10% finishes at EI115 level or Top 10% finishes at CIC2* level up to 2018 or Top 10% finishes at CCI3*-S level from 2019 or higher	Be entered in Select class and have 2 of the following: MER at CCI1*/EI100 Top 10% finishes at CIC 1* level up to 2018 or Top 10% finishes at CCI2*-S level from 2019 or higher
Mare performance – Dressage	2 placings at CDI/CDIO4*level (big tour or equivalent) with a score of 65% or higher	2 placings at CDI/CDIO3*level (big tour or equivalent) with a score of 65% or higher	2 placings at National Advanced level with a score of 65% or higher	Be entered in Select class and have 2 placings at National Medium level with a score of 65% or higher

Sport Horse Mares				
Minimum Performances Required for each Rating Level				
Rating Type	5*	4*	3*	2*
Mare progeny – Showjumping	1 progeny with 2 of the following: Double clear rounds at CSI/CSIO 3* level ⁶ or Double clear rounds in FEI competitions at a fence height of	2 progeny with 2 of the following: Double clear rounds at CSI/CSIO 2* level ⁹ or Double clear rounds in FEI	2 progeny with 2 double clear rounds at National 1.30m level ⁵ or higher	Be entered in Select class and have 2 progeny with 2 double clear rounds at National 1.20m level ⁷ or higher



	at least 1.45m at CSI/CSIO level or Top 4 placings in FEI speed classes at a fence height of at least 1.45m at CSI/CSIO level or higher	competitions at a fence height of at least 1.40m at CSI/CSIO level or Top 4 placings in FEI speed classes at a fence height of at least 1.40m at CSI/CSIO level or Double clear rounds at National 1.45m level ³ or higher		
Mare progeny – Eventing	1 progeny with 2 MERs ¹⁵ at: EI120 level or CIC3* level up to 2018 or CCI4*-S level from 2019 or higher	2 progeny each with 2 of the following: Top 25% finishes at CCI 2* level ¹² up to 2018 or Top 25% finishes at CCI3*-L level from 2019 or higher	2 progeny each with 2 of the following: Top 25% finishes at CCI 1* level ¹³ up to 2018 or Top 25% finishes at CCI2*-L level from 2019 or Top 10% finishes at EI115 level or Top 10% finishes at CIC2* level up to 2018 or Top 10% finishes at CCI3*-S level from 2019 or higher	Be entered in Select class and have 2 progeny each with 2 of the following: Top 10% finishes at CIC1* level up to 2018 or Top 10% finishes at CCI2*-S level from 2109 or higher
Mare progeny – Dressage	1 progeny with 2 placings at CDI/CDIO3* level (big tour or equivalent) with a score of 65% or higher	2 progeny each with 2 placings at CDI2* level (big tour or equivalent) with a score of 65% or higher	2 progeny each with 2 placings at National Advanced level with a score of 65% or higher	Be entered in Select class and have 2 progeny each with 2 placings at National Medium level with a score of 65% or higher



Appendix 5. Class articles or equivalents

All classes must be officially recorded, and applicants must provide proof of same.

Age	Discipline	Article (art.)	Height
5 YO	SJ	(Art. 238.1.1)	1m10+
6 YO	SJ	(Art. 238.1.1) OR “ with jump off OR (Art. 274.5.3) If performance in 5YO year, art/height is as per 5YO.	1m25+
7 YO	SJ	(Art. 274/ 5.3) OR (Art. 238/2.2, Table A with one jump-off) If performance in 6YO year, art/height is as per 6YO.	1m30+
5 YO	EV	EI 100 – MER	1m
6 YO	EV	EI 110 - MER If performance in 5YO year, art/height is as per 5YO.	1m10
7 YO	EV	EI 115 – MER If performance in 6YO year, art/height is as per 6YO.	1m15