



## Starting Scheme 2026

Horse Sport Ireland are delighted to re-launch the Starting scheme for owners of future breeding performance sport horses including fillies, young mares, and stallions. This scheme is funded by the Department of Agriculture, Food, and the Marine (DAFM) by National Breeding Services.

This scheme is open to breeders/owners with young horses intended for breeding aged 3 or 4 years of age. Breeders may apply for up to two horses to participate in the scheme but only one option (starting or schooling) may be selected for each horse per annum.

Breeders/owners will have the opportunity to apply to participate in the scheme by completing an online application only. **Successful applicants are eligible to receive up to €1,000 in receipted training and associated expenses over a 6-week period** following receipt of a valid application which is subsequently approved prior to the training period.

Horses must be studbook registered with a breed recorded (main or supplementary section). This scheme includes breeders and owners of Native Rare Breeds (Irish Draughts, Connemara Ponies and Kerry Bog Ponies), aiming to purpose these equines, incentivise their production and retention as future breeding horses. This initiative supports identifying target populations and purposes for which to market their horses and ponies and adds overall a value and appeal to Native Rare Breeds in Ireland.

SCHEME DEADLINES		
	Application closing	Return of invoices
DATE	31 <sup>st</sup> March 2026	23 <sup>rd</sup> July 2026 OR 2 weeks post completion of schooling (whichever is earlier)
*Subject to availability under the maximum budget allocation, this scheme may close earlier owing to demand.		

### TERMS AND CONDITIONS – General Terms

- Applicant hereafter pertains to the breeder/owner of the horse(s) funded under this scheme.
- Horse hereafter pertains to both horses and ponies.
- Training must begin within 10 days of receipt of approval email.
- This scheme may be closed ahead of the advertised deadline if the maximum allocation facilitated by the existing budget allocation has been reached.
- All applications must be submitted before the above stated deadlines.
- **Invoices received thereafter will not be funded.** This deadline will not be extended, and no late submissions will be accepted.
- All ROI applicants must show proof/screenshot of their/keeper Equine Operator profile. [CLICK HERE](#) to get information on the EOP.
- All NI applicants must provide a valid EEN. [CLICK HERE](#) for website.
- Horse Sport Ireland reserves the right to use performance/classification equivalents as appropriate.



- Horse Sport Ireland reserves the right to reject any application and amend the scheme terms and conditions at any time.
- Horse Sport Ireland reserves the right to permit veterinary equine identification and welfare spot checks for any scheme approved horses at producers yards onsite to ensure that the horses entered into the scheme are the same horses present for training.
- 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.
- Horse Sport Ireland will provide the results of this scheme, where relevant, to the studbook of origin of the equine in question.
- All information and videos provided to HSI may be retained by HSI for research and studbook purposes.
- **Please see page 6 for applicant checklist.**

#### **TERMS AND CONDITIONS - Equine Eligibility:**

- Mares/fillies and entire colts/stallions must meet all of the following eligibility criteria:
  - born in 2022 or 2023 to avail of the starting option.
  - Horses must be studbook registered (main or Supp sections) with a breed recorded
  - Native Rare Breeds must be registered in the Connemara pony, Irish Draught or Kerry Bog Pony studbooks with a full recorded pedigree.
  - Sires must have an Approved/Preliminary Approved or Recognised/Preliminary Recognised or Class 1 classification in a DAFM-WBFSH Approved studbook; or equivalent in their breeding programme (i.e. height categorised).

#### **OR**

In rare breed studbooks, the animal subject to the application has attended an inspection and been designated either Class 1 or Class 2. The applicant must provide proof of classification.

- Stallion/colts applications must be accompanied by a letter from a veterinary surgeon to confirm that they are entire.
- Horses started on the 2026 Starting Scheme are not eligible to be schooled under the 2026 Schooling Schemes.
- Approved equines must release permission to access equine genotype (if not existing in HSI) for the purposes of research into traits and breed improvement.
- Animals must be in the applicant ownership and ownership of the animal cannot be changed between family members for the purpose of gaining entry onto the scheme.
- Have not yet been registered to compete with an affiliated sport organisation.

#### **TERMS AND CONDITIONS – Applicant:**

- Applicants and producers must be resident in Ireland (including Northern Ireland).
- Applicants must be the registered owner of the animal at the time of application.
- 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.



- Applications must be submitted and approved before the start of the training period.
- Application numbers are limited to two horses per applicant.
- Horses who were broken under the 2024 or 2025 scheme are not eligible for funding under the 2026 starting (breaking) initiative.
- IBANs provided for scheme payment **MUST** be the IBAN of the applicant. The producer, partner or any other IBAN is not permitted for payment.
- For inclusion of equines registered in dual ownership, permission in written or email correspondence must be received by HSI from the non-applicant owner. Scheme approval/ payment of prize funds will **not occur** in the absence of this written or email permission.
- 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.
- Applicants must select their own producer, HSI cannot provide or recommend producers.
- HSI will reimburse the pre-approved costs of six weeks of training up to a maximum of €1,000. This may include training, livery and associated equine health/management costs (dentistry, saddle fitting, farriery and feeding costs) and associated livery costs (producer fee, entry fees, arena hire, etc.) all receipts must be submitted with the invoice.
- Video evidence must be submitted to the online portal by the applicant to HSI and should include one video in the first week of training showing the horse's starting point and one video towards the end of the training showing the horse's progress.
  - Minimum progress to be demonstrated in the second video: Under saddle, halt, walk, trot and basic steering.
- **The three videos submitted must be geotagged and dated videos via the 'Timestamp Camera Basic' App from Apple's App Store to take Geotagged videos or via the suitable application on other devices. One identification video and two videos' showing the progression of the horse must be uploaded.**
- 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.
- **Payment will not be issued until receipt of valid copy of the paid invoices, receipts, producer feedback, SNP genotype and video evidence of the young horse's progress.**
- Grant payments are made in respect of costs already incurred. Invoices (marked with proof of payment) **must** include the following:
  - Name and address of person receiving invoice (owner)
  - Name and address of person giving invoice (producer)
  - Date of Invoice (must be dated within scheme dates)
  - Invoice Number
  - Name and UELN/Microchip of equine the invoice refers to, which must be the same as the approved equine for the scheme
  - Description of services provided
  - A total figure for the invoice, provided in €
  - Only a physical, PDF or scanned copy of paid invoice will be accepted, photographs of invoices on screens will not be accepted
  - **Proof of Payment-** invoices not marked as paid or accompanied by proof of payment are not accepted.



**Invoices that do not include the above will not be accepted.**

- Invoices must be itemised and supplied on headed paper, in Euro. For invoices given in Sterling, HSI will not calculate the exchange rate, the figure supplied will be paid in Euro.
- In 2026, the drawdown of funding is subject to the completion of scheme feedback.
- Applicants must be prepared to provide Horse Sport Ireland with a Tax clearance certificate should the sum of their approvals and or prize money equal €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**

- The selection of a producer is at the discretion of the applicant; Horse Sport Ireland accept no liability for potential damage arising during or related to the funded period.
- Producers must not be the owner/close family members of the applicant/breeders/co-owners of the young horse/employees of the applicant or operating from the same premises as the applicant.
- Nominated producers must produce the horse, no other rider/producer is acceptable.
- Producers for ponies and Native Rare Breeds will be selected based on their skill set in specific discipline (i.e., pony size, driving, showing etc) and must have relevant producing and competing experience (Kerry Bog Pony Society showing and Dublin Horse Show equivalents for Irish Draught and Connemara Ponies)
- HSI reserve the right to refuse an applicant/producer based on the information provided. Incomplete applications will not be accepted.
- 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.
- Horses cannot be produced at the same address as the owner.

**By completing an online application, 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 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 started by my chosen producer.**
- **I agree to indemnify and keep indemnified Horse Sport Ireland 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:**
  - i. **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:**
  - ii. **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;**
  - iii. **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 Starting Scheme 2026.
- I/we understand that selected owners are responsible for administration services relating to the Starting 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 Starting Scheme 2026.
- I confirm that I have reviewed Horse Sport Ireland's Data Protection and Privacy policies (available at [www.horsesportireland.ie](http://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.



### **CHECKLIST for Starting Scheme**

- Please ensure that the producer invoice includes the following information:
  - Name and address of person receiving invoice (owner)
  - Name and address of person giving invoice (producer)
  - Date of Invoice (must be dated within scheme dates)
  - Invoice must be for **6 weeks**
  - Name and UELN/Microchip of equine the invoice refers to, which must be the same as the approved equine for the scheme
  - Description of services provided
  - A total figure for the invoice, provided in €
  - Proof of Payment- invoices not marked as paid or accompanied by proof of payment are not accepted.

**Invoices that do not include the above will not be accepted.**
- Video evidence must be submitted to the online portal by the applicant to HSI. One video must be provided from the first week of training showing the horse's starting point and one video towards the end of the training (week 6) showing the horse's progress. **The two videos submitted must be geotagged and dated videos via the ' [Timestamp Camera Basic](#)' App from Apple's App Store to take Geotagged videos or via the suitable application on other devices.**
- A video showing the horses identification must be uploaded to the online portal. [CLICK HERE](#) to see an example of an identification video.
- Stallion/colts applications must be accompanied by a letter from a veterinary surgeon to confirm that they are entire.
- [Producer feedback form](#) (linked) must be completed and returned to HSI.
- Equine Operator Profile (for NI applicants a valid EEN) screenshot must be uploaded. [CLICK HERE](#) on where to find your EOP. [CLICK HERE](#) for EEN website.
- IBANs provided for scheme payment **MUST** be the IBAN of the applicant. The producer, partner or any other IBAN is not permitted for payment.
- SNP genotype – if not existing in HSI (please return a DNA sample in an envelope). The DNA sample must be in the form of 30-50 dry hairs taken from the tail of the animal with the follicle still attached. You do not require a vet to pull the hairs.
- [CLICK HERE](#) for FAQ document for all schemes.



## **Appendix 1 Kerry Bog Pony Criteria**

### **Kerry Bog Ponies Criteria**

- Ponies to be 4 to 6 years old.
- Mares, colts/stallions, and geldings are permitted.
- Inspections may be required from 2027.
- Sires must be classified as KBP1.

### **Ridden Ponies**

- To be ridden in a safe manner.
- Walk, trot, canter, stand still and back. Jump cross poles.
- Pony to attend and compete at a show or take part in pony club activities.
- Video evidence of above necessary.

### **Driven Ponies**

- To stand still unattended. To walk, trot a figure of eight, stand still, back and walk forward answering to voice commands.
- To be safe in traffic and at a show.
- Video evidence of above necessary.

### **Trainer/Producer**

- To be selected by the owner of the pony.
- Should have experience in producing young ponies.

Ponies to be selected by HSI based on applications and adherence to the criteria for qualification. Ponies to be assessed by HSI based on video evidence prior to payment