



**HORSE SPORT
IRELAND**

2026

Irish Cob Report



**Prepared by Jennifer Doyle PhD
and Sonja Egan PhD**



HORSE SPORT IRELAND

**Priority 2: Excellence in Breeding and
High Performance Sport**



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Authored by Jennifer Doyle PhD and Sonja Egan PhD

Foreword



The Irish Cob is one of Ireland's native breeds, recognised worldwide for its strength, versatility, excellent temperament and distinctive bone and feathering. As operators of the Irish Cob Studbook, Horse Sport Ireland is committed to supporting breeders, safeguarding genetic diversity and the long-term sustainability of the population. This report provides an evidence-based overview of the current status of the Irish Cob Studbook and highlights the progress being made through breeding programme implementation, breeder engagement and the application of emerging genomic technologies.

The success of any breeding programme is ultimately dependent on breeder participation, and I am delighted to see the strong and growing engagement of Irish Cob breeders with the studbook. Since 2022, participation in the Irish Cob and Irish Part-Bred Cob inspection system has increased by 150%, with 2025 representing a record year, maintained into 2026. This growth reflects breeder confidence in the inspection process and the value it delivers through breed assessment, veterinary examination, SNP genotyping, validated trait recording and transparent publication of results. This remains one of the most important knowledge transfer tools available to breeders, providing practical guidance to support informed breeding decisions while ensuring horses entering the studbook meet the Irish Cob breed standard.

Horse Sport Ireland continues to work closely with breeders to ensure that the breeding programme remains relevant, practical and responsive to industry needs. Through ongoing breeder consultation, continual refinement of classification systems and a structured process for considering breeding programme amendments, we remain committed to continuous improvement. We also continue to engage with the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine regarding the application for rare breed status, reflecting the importance placed by breeders on the conservation and recognition of the Irish Cob.

I hope that the findings presented will provide valuable insights and support informed decision-making as we continue to build a sustainable future for the breed.

Best wishes,

Sonja Egan, PhD

**Head of Breeding Innovation
and Development,
Horse Sport Ireland**

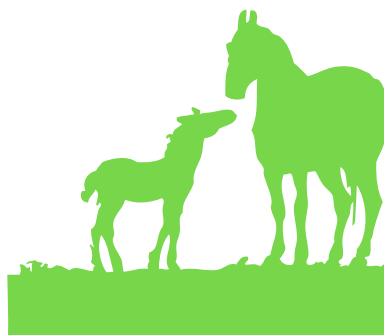


Key Takeaways



89

Number of IRC foals
born in 2025



14

Number of IRCPB
foals born in 2025

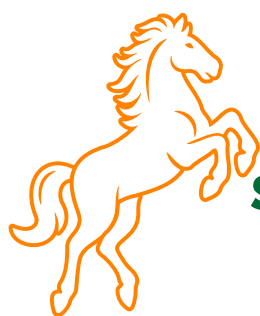
92% of IRC
foals were
born to IRC
stallions since
2016

12.5%
Maximum level of
inbreeding observed
in an IRC foal

Mares from 15
different
breeds/studbooks
have contributed
to the IRCPB
population in last
10 years



Pedigree
Completeness of
IRC foals is
increasing over
the years



83 IRC stallions and 5 IRCPB
stallions have had foals since
2015





Introduction

The Irish Cob is a native Irish breed and, although it has a long history, the Irish Cob and Irish Part Bred Cob studbooks were only officially founded in 1998 with Horse Sport Ireland maintaining the studbooks since 2013. Prior to this, cob lineages were passed down verbally from generation to generation. The breed is referred to worldwide by many different names such as Gypsy Cob, Gypsy Horse, Gypsy Vanner and Irish Tinker. The overall aim of the breeding programme for the Irish Cob is the preservation (conservation) of the breed and the improvement of individual horses within the breed towards the breed standard while the aim of the breeding programme for the Irish Cob Part-Bred is the improvement of the breed.

Numbers of Irish Cobs and part-bred Cobs being registered each year is small with on average, a combined 105 foals being born into both studbooks. However, the number of horses being registered late or being registered on identity documents before being inspected into one of the studbooks makes this difficult to accurately assess until several years past the year of birth. Foals are legally required to be registered within 12 months of birth under EU Regulation 2015/262, and foals not registered within this time frame have an increased registration cost and are automatically stamped out of the food chain. With a breeding objective focused on conservation, it is important that breeders abide by these timelines to enable accurate assessment of Irish Cob population statistics.

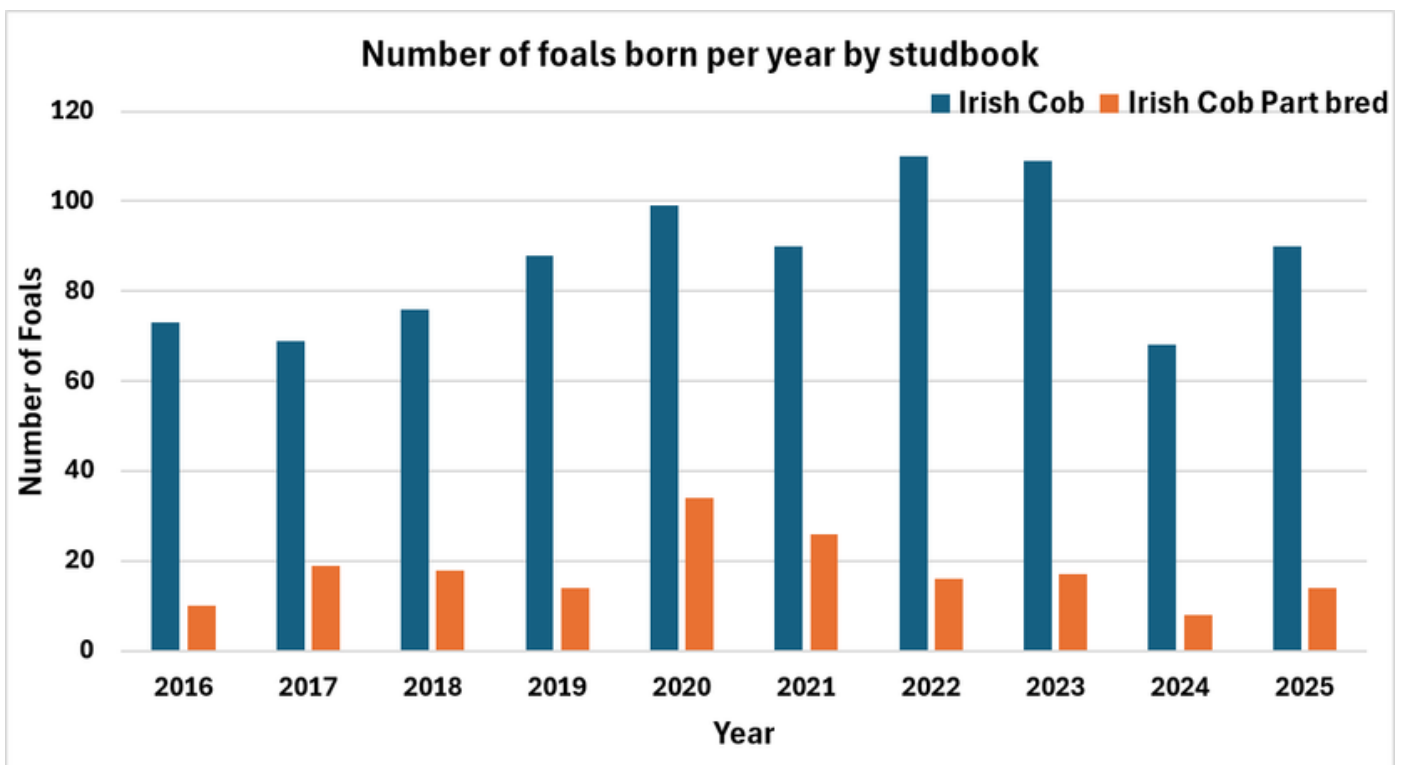
Irish Cob and Irish Cob Part-Bred studbook inspections for mares and stallions are carried out annually in the spring and autumn. Equines must be a minimum of 3 years of age to be presented for Irish Cob and Irish Cob Part-Bred studbook inspections. At Studbook inspections Irish Cob and Irish Cob Part-Bred stallions are assessed on their conformance to the breed standard and their conformation and their movement in hand in walk and trot. Conformation is assessed through a 13 trait profile on a (poor) 1 - 5 (strong) scale, with an additional 3 scores for Excellence of Breed Type, Presence and Movement. The scale details the minimum scores required for the presented animal to achieve Class 1 and the minimum scores required to enter the Studbook through breed type (3 or higher).

The full breed standard of the Irish Cob and Irish Part Bred Cob are outlined in their relevant breeding programmes, available on the HSI [website](#). Irish Cobs have an imposing appearance with a stout, powerful body. They are noted for their high knee action, excellent temperament and natural distinctive feathering, mane and tail. Their wide short backs make them comfortable under saddle and they are suitable for a wide range of riding and driving disciplines.



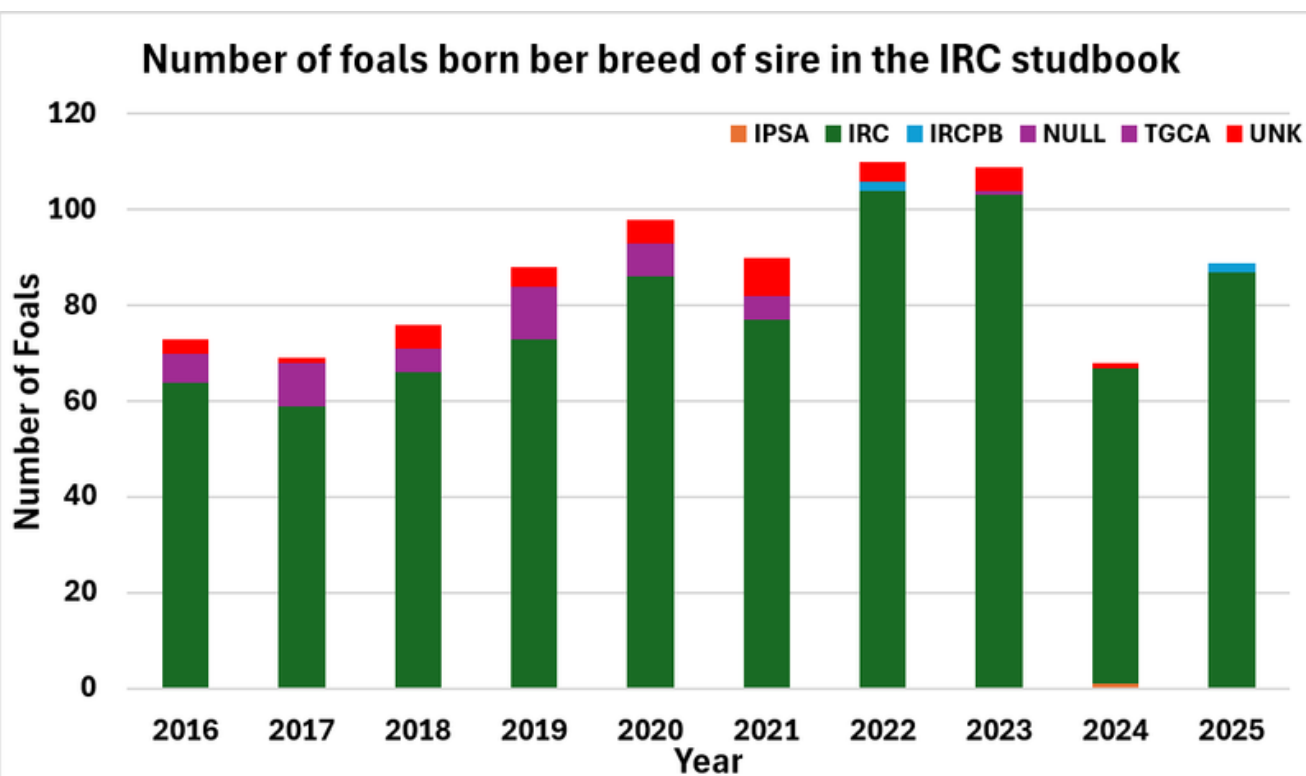
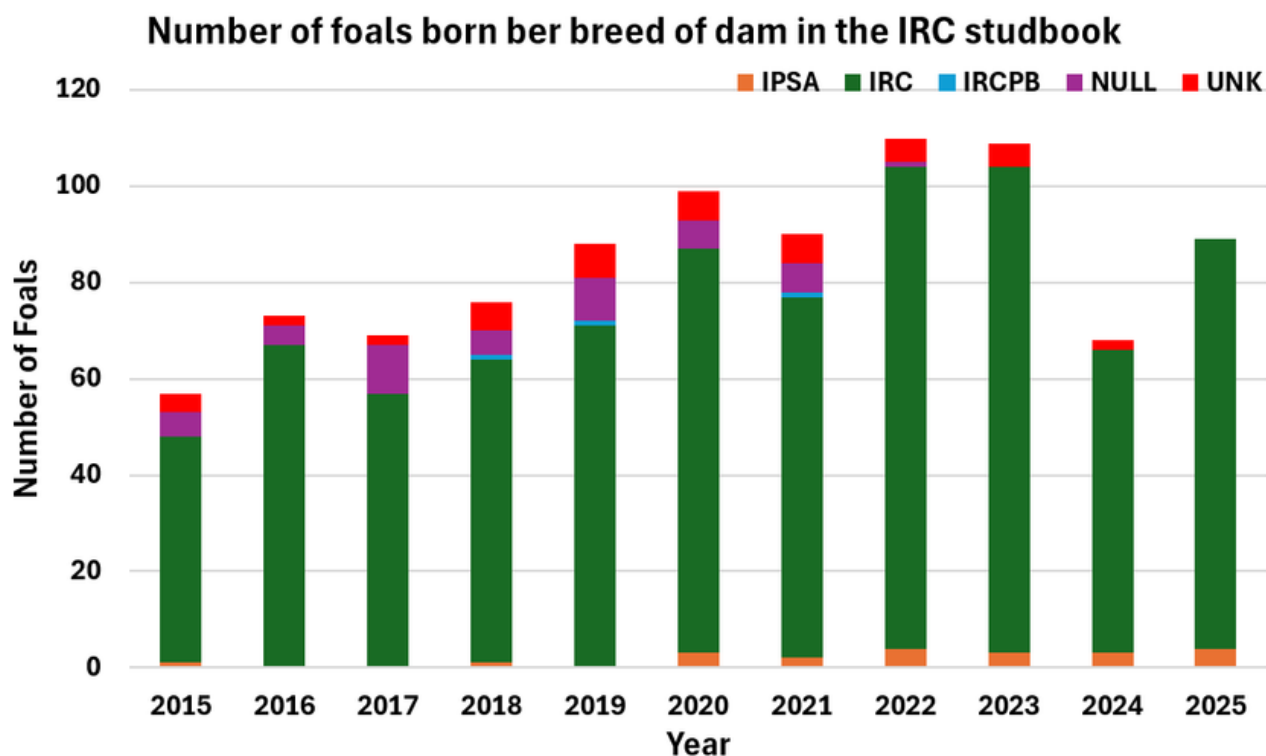
Population Statistics

In the last decade, the Irish Cob (IRC) studbook has 87 foals registered on average per annum, while the Irish Cob Part Bred (IRCPB) Studbook registers 18 foals per year on average. In general, the number of foals being registered in the IRC studbook is trending upwards and we would still expect the numbers of foals born in 2024 and 2025 to increase as late registrations are common.



The IRC studbook is not a closed studbook and allows males and females from several studbooks which meet specific criteria to enter the crossbreeding program. Males and females registered with Irish Piebald and Skewbald Association (IPSA), the Gypsy Cob Association (TGCA), or as a Coloured Horse, or Tinker are eligible to enter the main section of the Irish Cob Studbook. Females from the IRCPB and Welsh Cobs can also enter the crossbreeding programme upon presentation for inspection.

In comparison, there is no limit to the horse and pony studbook breeds which can be used to cross with the Irish Cob to produce a horse registered in the IRCPB studbook. Animals that are registered in a studbook recognised by their relevant Competent Authority can take place in the crossbreeding programme and shall be classified in the Main section of the IRCPB. Dam breeds that have contributed to the IRCPB include the Irish Draught, Connemara Pony, Thoroughbred, and Irish Sport Horse.





The active number of stallions producing an IRC or IRCPB foal varies widely within year. In 2023, there were 31 stallions active within the IRC studbook but this had been as low as 15 active stallions in 2017. The number of stallions active in the IRCPB studbook is much lower, as expected with the foal registrations being lower. In 2021, 16 individual stallions contributed to the IRCPB studbook but this has been much lower in other years. The average number of IRC/IRCPB progeny per stallion is very low with the average number of foals per stallion always below 3.93 in the IRC studbook and 2.83 in the IRCPB studbook.

Table 1. The number of stallions producing an IRC and IRCPB foal per year with the average and maximum number of progeny per stallion within year

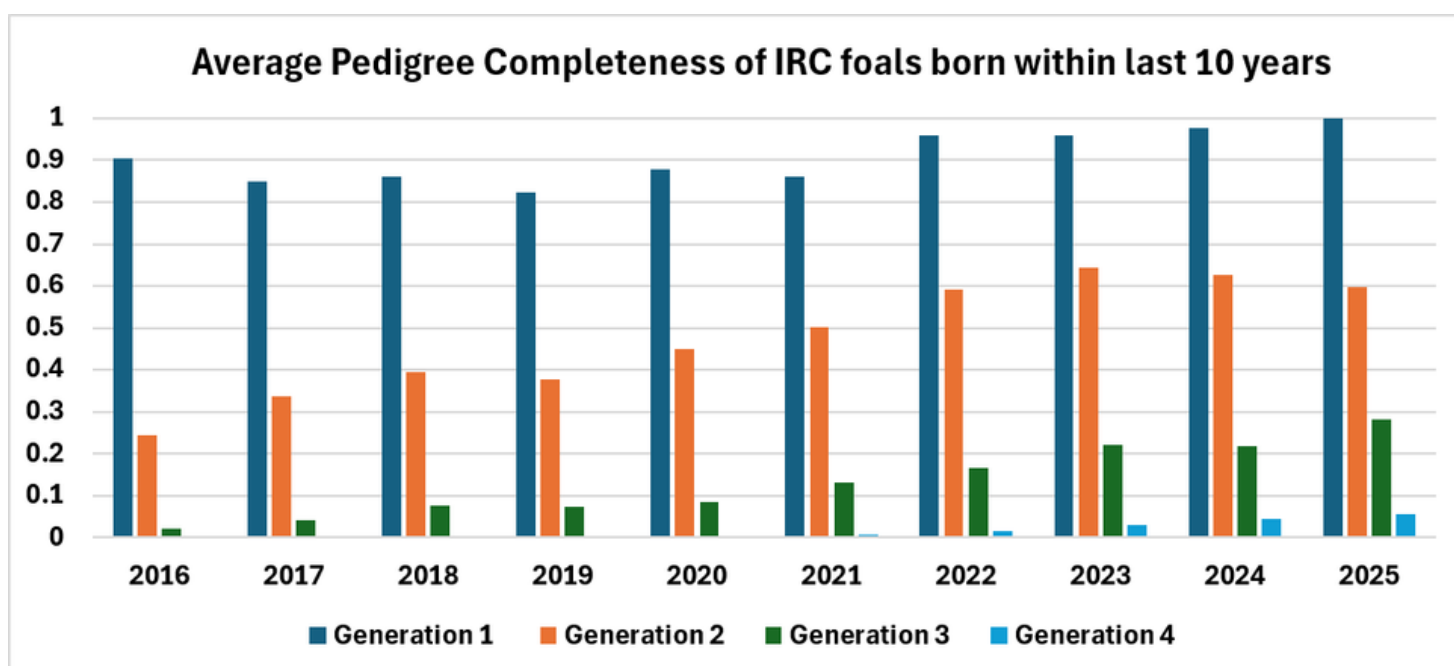
	IRC			IRCPB		
Year	Number of active stallions	Average progeny per stallion	Maximum number of progeny	Number of active stallions	Average progeny per stallion	Maximum number of progeny
2016	23	2.83	11	5	1.80	4
2017	15	3.93	11	11	1.64	3
2018	22	3.00	11	7	2.43	8
2019	22	3.33	9	11	1.27	3
2020	20	3.44	11	13	2.83	7
2021	19	3.43	11	16	1.73	5
2022	24	3.50	10	8	1.88	5
2023	31	2.91	10	12	1.42	3
2024	19	3.13	7	8	1.00	1
2025	20	3.77	10	13	1.08	2



Pedigree Completeness

The Pedigree Completeness Index (PCI) measures the proportion of known ancestors in an individual's pedigree over a given number of generations. It is a vital quality control metric in animal breeding programmes as the completeness of an animal's pedigree affects other important metrics in conservation genetics such as pedigree inbreeding calculations and kinship estimations. Inbreeding coefficients rely on knowing both maternal and paternal ancestors and if one or both of these ancestors are unrecorded, standard pedigree calculations of inbreeding will assume the ancestors are unrelated and that the inbreeding is 0.

As the PCI measures the proportion of known ancestors in an individual's pedigree over a given number of generations a PCI of 1 at generation 1 means both parents are recorded, a PCI of 0.5 at generation 1 means only one parent is recorded, a PCI of 1 at Generation 3, where an animal has 8 ancestors (great-grandparents) means all 8 ancestors are recorded, a PCI of 0.875 at generation 3 means one ancestor is missing, and a PCI of 0.75 at generation 3 means two ancestors are missing, and so on. In other breeds, we regularly see an average PCI at generation 3 of close to 1. However, in the IRC studbook the average PCI at generation 3 is down at 0.28 as horses with unknown breeding can be inspected in to the studbook to produce progeny. The PCI at all generations has been trending upwards showing an increase in pedigree registrations for this breed.





Inbreeding

Inbreeding, also known as linebreeding, is the production of an offspring from the breeding of closely related individuals. While inbreeding can make it easier to predict what traits will be passed on to the offspring, it also makes it more likely that the offspring will inherit negative characteristics including certain health defects and diseases.

The inbreeding coefficient is the measurement of the degree of inbreeding and is usually given as a percentage. Typical inbreeding percentages, assuming no previous inbreeding between any parents, are as follows:

- Sire/daughter or Dam/son mating → 25%
- Full sibling mating → 25%
- Half sibling mating → 12.5%
- Grandsire/granddaughter or granddam/grandson mating → 12.5%
- Uncle/niece or aunt/nephew (aunt/uncle and parent are full siblings) → 12.5%
- Parents have a common grandsire/granddam (First Cousins) → 6.25%
- Parents have a common great-grandsire/great-granddam → 3.125%

In the IRC and IRCPB, it can be difficult to get a complete picture of the true pedigree inbreeding as many horses registered in these studbooks do not have much pedigree recorded. For the purpose of the calculating the inbreeding coefficients below, all horses included in the calculation had a PCI at generation 2 of 1. While most horses had an inbreeding coefficient of 0%, the maximum inbreeding calculated for an IRC foal was 12.5%.

Table 2. The average inbreeding coefficient of IRC foals within year with the standard deviation of the average, and the minimum and maximum observed inbreeding coefficients per year.

Year	Average (%)	Standard Deviation	Minimum (%)	Maximum (%)
2020	1.56	3.31	0.00	12.50
2021	0.82	2.15	0.00	6.25
2022	0.76	1.92	0.00	6.25
2023	1.36	2.33	0.00	6.25
2024	1.41	3.27	0.00	12.50
2025	1.83	3.42	0.00	12.50



Classifications

In 2024, HSI updated the Irish Cob and Irish Part Bred Cob breeding programme rules to reflect a new classification system for the IRC and IRCPB studbooks. The previous system was deemed overly complicated and was confusing for the studbook community.

The main section of the IRC and IRCPB studbooks are divided into four classes in accordance with the standard a horse meets. All foals are entered into Class 4 on registration into either of these studbooks. Upon presentation at a selection day, these horses are upgraded to either Class 1, Class 2 or Class 3 depending on the veterinary and inspection requirements they meet.

The supplementary sections of both studbooks is divided into very similar classifications, these are Supplementary Class 1 and Supplementary Class 2. Mares and stallions are encouraged to come forward and present at studbook selection days to gain classification and to ensure they have no veterinary conditions deemed unsuitable for a breeding mare or stallion by the Irish Cob Studbook breeding programme.

Classification	Definition	Historical equivalent
Class 1	Meet the veterinary requirements and studbook selection requirements outlined in section	Main Elite Class
Class 2	Meet the veterinary requirements but do not meet the studbook selection requirements	Main Basic Register
Class 3	Do not meet the studbook veterinary requirements and are not recommended for breeding	N/A
Class 4	Entered in the main section and have not been presented for selection.	1A, 1B, 2A, 2B
Supplementary Class 1	Ineligible for the main section but meet selection and veterinary requirements	Supplementary Elite Class
Supplementary Class 2	Ineligible for the main section and do not meet selection and but do meet veterinary requirements	Supplementary Basic Class



Stallions

A total of 83 IRC stallions and 5 IRCPB stallions have had at least 1 foal registered in the IRC or IRCPB studbooks in the last 10 years. These stallions are listed below by studbook and in alphabetical order.

IRCPB Stallions

IHR number	Name	Studbook Classification	YOB
10013556	ATHLEAGUE BLONDIE	PBS3B	2013
10598398	BEHYBEG LAD	ICSC2	2022
20317943	PEBBLES MCGUIRE	PBS3A	2018
10025733	SHANNON VALLEY RED ROVER	SBR	2007
20643421	STORM RED	SBR	2018

IRC Stallions

IHR number	Name	Classification	YOB
20186580	ATHLOMAN TOBY	SBR	2016
10044557	BALLYDANGAN KHAN DO	ES	2009
10042716	BUFFALO KING	SES	2007
5802942	BYRNES GUINNESS	SBR	2011
7002022	CAIRNVIEW COOL DUDE	SBR	2012
10068505	CAIRNVIEW EVAN	C1B	2014
20161574	CAIRNVIEW FAMOUS	SBR	2015
20470848	CAIRNVIEW FOREST	M1B	2015



IHR number	Name	Classification	YOB
20470875	CAIRNVIEW IKON	M1B	2018
20470812	CAIRNVIEW INVICTUS	M1B	2018
20470824	CAIRNVIEW IRISH GOLD	M2B	2018
10068480	CAIRNVIEW JACKPOT	ES	2014
10377818	CAIRNVIEW JERONIMO	C1B	2019
10312785	CAIRNVIEW JUMANJI	M2B	2019
10393796	CAIRNVIEW KIND OF MAGIC	ICC1	2020
10536724	CAIRNVIEWSTUD KOCHISE TAN	SES	2020
21199808	CAIRNVIEWSTUD MONT BLANC	ICC1	2022
10037385	CASHELANE LITTLE ROBERT	M1B	2005
10239715	CASHELANE MURPHY	M2B	2016
10288378	CHAMPAIGNE SILVER	SBR	2009
10020052	CLASS ACT (IRC)	SES	2008
20256462	CLONFAD BOWIE	SES	2017
10047851	CLOUGHAVOULA WARRIOR	SES	2005
5785686	CURNAMUCKLA KLOUD	ES	2012
10521520	DE BADGER	SES	2015
6042870	DENVER	C1B	2015
5624464	DIVINE ELLIOT	ES	2010
21194312	DIVINE FINDERS KEEPERS	ICC1	2022
20335581	DIVINE INTERVENTION	C1B	2017
10364688	DUKE (IRC)	SBR	2007
10057765	FIRTOWN BOY	SES	2006



IHR number	Name	Classification	YOB
10261810	GOLDEN EURO	SES	2009
5988718	GOLDEN LEGEND	SBR	2010
20090740	GOLDEN MOONE	ES	2016
10261558	GOLDEN TREVOR	C1B	2018
10381220	GRANGEMORE BLUE EYE KLOUD	M1B	2019
10150276	GYPSYFARMS JACKPOT	C1B	2015
10534658	ICONICCOBS BORIS THE BELGIAN	M2B	2019
10417954	IRONMAN	SBR	2012
20612274	KATIES ECLIPSE	M1B	2020
20270727	KATIES KING LIR	M1B	2018
10377075	KATIES SAOIRSE DUN	M1B	2020
20428482	KATIES TIR NA NOG	M1B	2019
5804997	LIBERTYS JUST IN TIME	ES	2015
20301168	LIBERTYS KHAN DOS KARMEN	C1B	2017
10043395	LIBERTYS LAMENT	ES	2006
20301171	LIBERTYS LAW	ES	2017
20271761	LIBERTYS LIMITED EDITION	ES	2018
20212408	LIBERTYS SUN DANCE	C1B	2017
6040862	LIBERTYS WELL DUN	ES	2012
10020013	LLEWELYN	ES	2004
5581093	MAJOR TOMS	M2A	2013
5700877	MORSTACK CREAM KING	SBR	2012
5028008	MR JOHNNY CASH	SES	2006



IHR number	Name	Classification	YOB
5593353	ORLAITHS BOY	SES	2011
3101464	PETERS BOY	SBR	2005
10392820	QUIDS IN	SES	2004
10033951	RAVANNY GOLDRUSH	SES	2003
10018897	ROCKY MCGUIRE	SBR	2009
10146577	RYEHILL LEADER	SES	1996
20205978	SALTY OF CONFY	SBR	2016
10033987	SANTANA	SES	2008
10087474	SD BLUE BOY	SES	2011
10018901	SHAMBO	SES	1991
10433400	SHANNONVALLEY ASLAN	SBR	2021
5915144	SHANNONVALLEY FLASH	ES	2010
20346957	SHANNONVALLEY PEGASUS	M1A	2018
20172156	SILVER MOONE	C2B	2016
10047066	SIR JACK OF CONFY	SBR	2002
10252000	SUNSHINE KID	SBR	2015
10093836	THE BLUE BISCUIT	SES	2011
5846164	THE COMANCHE	C1B	2012
20075008	THE GENERAL OF CONFY	SBR	2015
10562786	THE KERRYMAN III	ICSC1	2016
10123388	THE LOUGHFORTS BLACKJACK	ES	2008
10057738	THE MONK (IRC)	SES	2004
20267838	THE PEARL MOONE	SBR	2017



IHR number	Name	Classification	YOB
10014760	THE ROAN STAR	SBR	2010
20115680	THE SERGEANT	SBR	1900
10044793	TOBY (IRC)	SES	2002
7035580	TYERSAL WARLORD	SBR	2010
10137370	URAGAN DE BOHEME	SES	2008
20248935	WRS THE ATM MACHINE	C1B	2017



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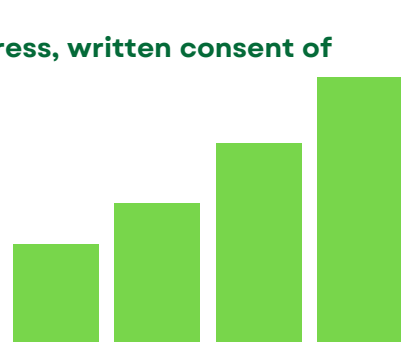
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