



HORSE SPORT
IRELAND

THE BUSINESS OF BREEDING





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HORSE SPORT
IRELAND



An Roinn Talmhaíochta,
Bia agus Mara
Department of Agriculture,
Food and the Marine

ifac



CEO Foreword

One of my first intentions on taking up the role of CEO at Horse Sport Ireland was to engage with Irish breeders and the wider equine sector on additional focus areas for Horse Sport Ireland. It was very clear from the outset that Irish breeders wished for greater leadership and support for inclusion of equine under the Targeted Agriculture Modernisation scheme II (TAMS II) under the 2023 – 2027 Common Agricultural Policy (CAP).

We recently welcomed Minister McConalogue's announcement regarding the inclusion of equine farming under TAMS II. We know the task is not over yet, and the purpose of this report is to quantify the equine specific infrastructure required by the sector.



Denis Duggan, Chief Executive, Horse Sport Ireland

We would also like to acknowledge the work carried out by breeder's groups such as the Irish Farmers Association (IFA) Horse Project Team and the Equine Farming Taskforce. They have done trojan work representing Irish breeders and the potential value of equine inclusion in TAMS II. This has generated a groundswell of support and made 'TAMS' a buzzword in Irish breeding families nationwide.

Horse Sport Ireland have and will continue to support knowledge transfer initiatives for Irish breeders and the wider equine sector. Most recently the coaching and education department spearheaded a collaboration between Horse Sport Ireland and Macra Agricultural Skillnet in the delivery of seminars in communication with Nollaig Heffernan, sustainable farming practices at Godolphin, Kildangan and effective marketing with Emma D'Arcy.

It is important as a sector, that we engage with external expertise to obtain fresh insights into novel methods which are effective in other areas of farming, climate change, or digital transformation. Each of these focus areas will allow Irish breeders to grow their enterprise, increase market reach, improve scheme engagement, and implement sustainable farming practice.

The addition of equine in TAMS II will serve to support breeders to make these investments, driving a shift in the role and position of the equine sector. Ultimately, surpassing the estimated €1 billion in contribution to the economy that the sport horse sector makes annually.

Our aim in Horse Sport Ireland, is that this report provides a pathway for the Department of Agriculture to determine the type and quantum of investment for equine breeders who wish to be supported under TAMS II. We look forward to working with the Department of Agriculture, Food, and the Marine in making this a reality.

Many thanks to all those who have made contributions to this report, including the team in Horse Sport Ireland led by Sonja Egan and geneticist Jennifer Doyle, those that have provided case studies, the team at *ifac* and the Department of Agriculture, Food, and the Marine for supporting its undertaking,

Denis Duggan
Chief Executive
Horse Sport Ireland



Introduction

Irish breeders are the bedrock of a successful equine sector. Ireland is the land of the horse and there is a desire both nationally and internationally to own an Irish bred horse. These are of significant export value with 69% of breeders having sold at least one horse outside of the Island.

53% of equine breeders have five or less horses and 52% do not run any other farming enterprise in parallel with their breeding business. Meaning that over half of Irish breeders were not previously eligible for TAMS II. This has slowed progress and the potential for additional return from the multi-million sport horse industry; estimated to be worth in excess of €1 billion.



Sonja Egan, PhD, Head of Breeding, Innovation and Development, Horse Sport Ireland

This industry remains of vital importance to rural Ireland. Responses were spread across Leinster (38%), Munster (27%), Connacht (22%) and Ulster (13%). The sport horse industry and related investment stimulate local economies through employment, local expenditure, tourism, and foreign investment.

Breeders have made considerable effort to upgrade their farm and facilities in recent years. The additional support offered through a defined TAMS II support scheme for the equine sector will only further enhance many equine farming enterprises. However lack of TAMS support has impacted on investments of over €10,000. 78% of breeders stated that recent increases in running costs are their greatest challenge, most notably in feed, fuel, and fertiliser. Irish breeders are conscious of their environmental responsibility and 78% have implemented at least one sustainability measure on their farms.

The top five most requested items for equine under TAMS II are:

- fencing,
- all-weather turnout,
- young stock housing,
- arenas,
- and stables.

Infrastructure supports funded through TAMS II will encourage breeders to retain and produce their youngstock, in doing so adding value and profit margin to their breeding products. Horse Sport Ireland's objective for equine inclusion in TAMS II is to improve the viability of equine breeding and facilitate Irish breeders with greater flexibility to invest, innovate and sustain their business.

We wish to express our gratitude to survey respondents, breeding groups and societies as well as Department approved studbooks. We would like to thank the team at *ifac* for their survey input, design, and report compilation expertise. HSI wish to acknowledge the support of the Department of Agriculture, Food, and the Marine in the delivery of the 2022 Business of Breeding report.

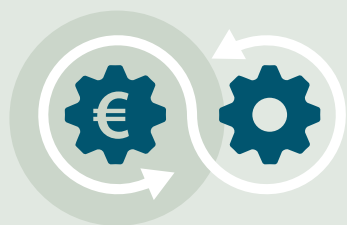
Finally, we would like to thank our colleagues in Horse Sport Ireland for their collaboration on our various schemes and incentives, with special mention to the breeding team who go above and beyond for Irish breeders every day.

We hope you find this report both interesting and informative.

Sonja Egan, PhD
Head of Breeding, Innovation and Development
Horse Sport Ireland



Key Takeaways



€342million

is the estimated investment planned by breeders in infrastructure over the next 3 years



57%

are somewhat or very optimistic about the future of the equine breeding sector.



55%

estimate their equine income will stay the same or increase in 2022.

Increasing costs (**78%**) is the greatest challenge facing equine businesses with the most significant cost increases seen across feed, fertiliser, and fuel.



69%

have sold a horse outside of the Island (ROI & NI).



78%

have at least one environmental measure on farm.



83%

have less than 10 horses.

48%

have another farming enterprise.



79%

of breeders who did not have a second farming enterprise either hadn't heard of TAMS II or had a limited understanding.





On average, equine breeders farm
65 acres of land.



81%

believe that BREXIT has affected
the transportation of horses.

8%

do not use any digital business
services.



73%

are using artificial
insemination reproductive
techniques.



Equine breeders value experience **(80%)** over qualifications **(26%)** when hiring.

56%

say TAMS availability would
encourage them to invest more.



The **top 5** areas breeders
would like support in are:

- fencing,
- all weather turnouts,
- youngstock housing,
- arenas,
- stables.

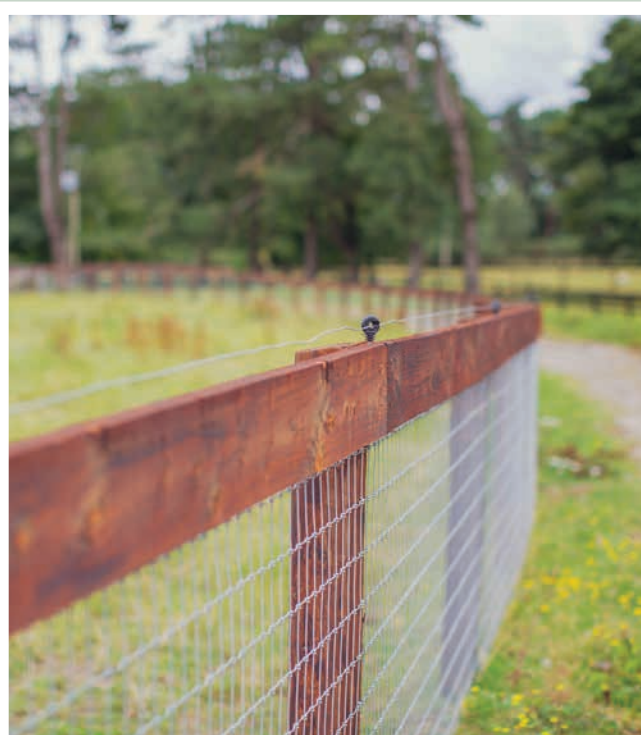


TAMS II

The Targeted Agricultural Modernisation Scheme II (TAMS II) provides grants to farmers to build and/or improve a specified range of farm buildings, infrastructure and machinery on their farm. According to the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) TAMS II documentation, the definition of farming includes “*the training of horses and the rearing of bloodstock*”.

Despite this, the only equine specific item previously funded under TAMS II was Equine Veterinary Stocks. The DAFM have recently announced further support for equine farmers in TAMS II.

In this section of the survey we review how breeders have invested in their business and what their investment plans are for the coming years.



INVESTMENT AREAS FOR TAMS II SUPPORT

The most popular potential TAMS II supports for equine breeders are fencing (51%), all weather turnout (49%), young stock housing (39%) and arenas (38%).

The inclusion of these items in TAMS allows breeders to maintain their equine infrastructure. Investment in infrastructure, supported by TAMS II facilitates breeders to retain and produce equine young stock. This ultimately adds value to their stock.

These supports will improve safety, welfare and specific purposing of equine farms.

Sustainability and environment remain at the forefront of Government policy. Support for permanent muck heap (20%) and water infrastructure (10%) will promote a reduction in chemical fertiliser use and appropriate water management.

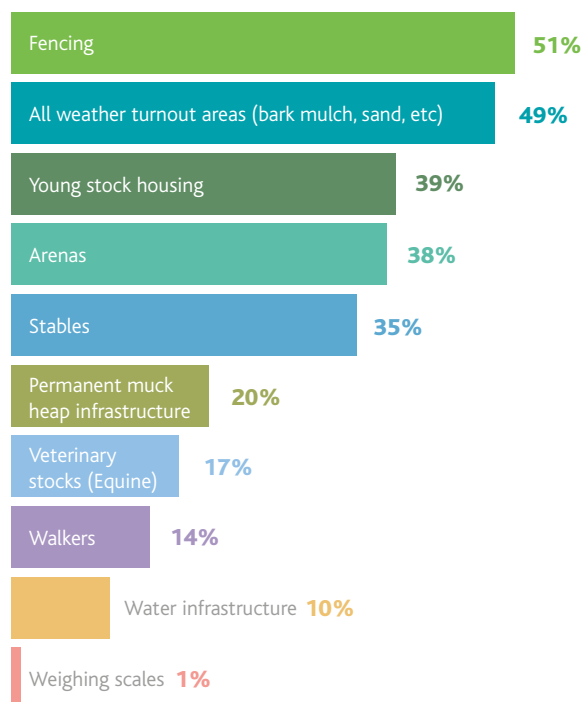
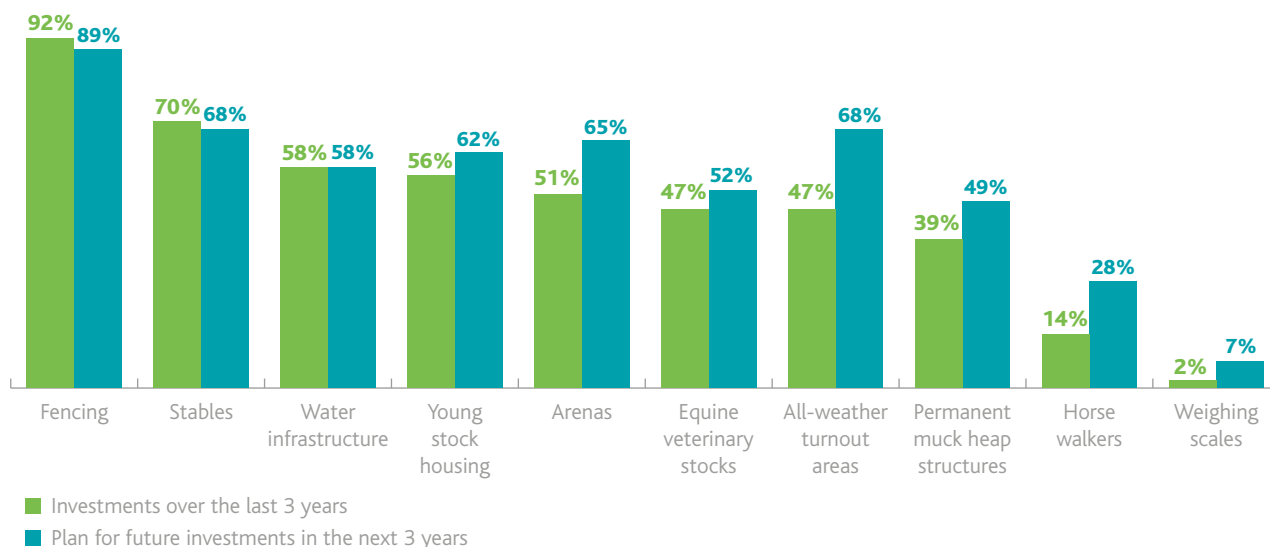
Only 2% of breeders have invested in weighbridges over the last 3 years and only a further 7% of breeders are planning to invest in these in the future. Visual estimation of body weight tends to be underestimated by 10 – 20%. Weigh tapes aren't always accurate and are not recommended for use in foals under 6 months old. Knowing the accurate weight of all horses, including performance horses, breeding stock, and foals is important to monitor growth rates and the effect of exercise, and to ensure accurate administration of anthelmintics and medications.



51%

seek fencing support





INVESTMENTS OVER THE LAST 3 YEARS

Breeders have invested in the following areas:

- **92% invested in fencing.** The majority invested less than €5,000 (62%) with 16% investing between €5,000 and €10,000, a further 15% invested more than €10,000.
- **70% invested in stables.** The majority invested less than €5,000 (39%) with 15% investing between €5,000 and €10,000, a further 17% invested more than €10,000.
- **58% invested in water infrastructure.** The majority invested less than €5,000 (53%) with 4% investing between €5,000 and €10,000, a further 1% investing between €10,000 and €20,000.
- **56% invested in young stock housing.** The majority invested less than €5,000 (27%) with 15% investing between €5,000 and €10,000, a further 14% invested more than €10,000.
- **51% invested in arenas.** The majority invested less than €5,000 (23%) with 10% investing between €5,000 and €10,000, a further 17% invested more than €10,000.

 **€342m**

is the estimated investment planned by breeders in infrastructure over the next 3 years.

This is an estimate based on intentions expressed by survey respondents applied to 9,043 unique breeders. This figure reflects breeders in the Irish Horse Register and does not include the potential investment from the Thoroughbred sector.



PLANS FOR FUTURE INVESTMENTS

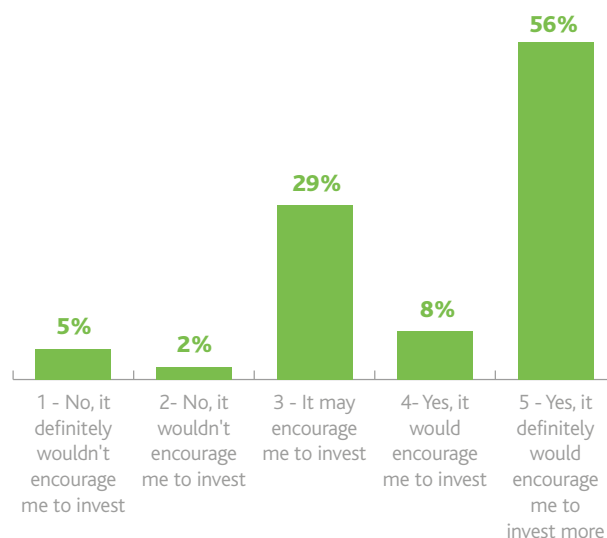
Equine breeders will continue to invest and their plans for the next 3 years include:

- **89% plan on investing in fencing.** The majority plan on investing less than €5,000 (72%) with 11% intending to invest between €5,000 and €10,000, 6% plan on investing more than €10,000.
- **68% plan on investing in all-weather turnout areas.** The majority plan on investing less than €5,000 (46%) with 14% intending to invest between €5,000 and €10,000, a further 8% plan on investing more than €10,000.
- **68% plan on investing in stables.** The majority plan on investing less than €5,000 (32%) with 16% intending to invest between €5,000 and €10,000, a further 20% plan on investing more than €10,000.
- **65% plan on investing in arenas.** 27% intend to invest less than €5,000 and a further 26% intend to invest more than €10,000. 12% plan on investing between €5,000 and €10,000.
- **62% plan on investing in young stock housing.** The majority plan on investing less than €5,000 (30%) with 14% intending to invest between €5,000 and €10,000, a further 18% plan on investing more than €10,000.
- **58% plan on investing in water infrastructure.** The majority plan on investing less than €5,000 (54%) with 2% intending to invest between €5,000 and €10,000, a further 2% plan on investing more than €10,000.
- **52% plan on investing in veterinary stocks (equine).** The majority plan on investing less than €5,000 (50%) with 2% intending to invest between €5,000 and €10,000.



SCHEMES WILL ENCOURAGE INVESTMENT

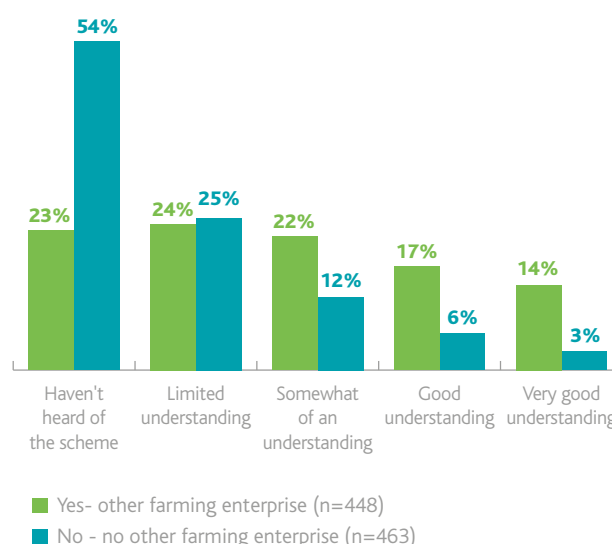
56% of respondents stated equine inclusion in TAMS II would definitely encourage greater investment in their breeding business.



KNOWLEDGE OF TAMS II

This survey indicates there is a considerable difference in the awareness of TAMS II between those with another farming enterprise compared to those who solely breed equines. 79% of breeders who did not have a second farming enterprise either hadn't heard of TAMS II or had a limited understanding. Where a second farming enterprise was in place, the number of breeders who hadn't heard of TAMS II or had a limited understanding dropped to 47%.

This highlights the value of appropriate promotion and communication to improve breeder awareness and uptake of TAMS II.









Breeder Profile:

John Carey, Co. Dublin

John Carey began his career in ponies, going on to set up the Kinsealy Riding Centre in North Dublin, as a riding school and livery yard in 1984. Carey competed successfully up to 1.45m claiming it was his age and waistline that stopped him. It looks as though the passion and skill he, and his wife Sarah, have for breeding the best in sport are the real reason for this shift in focus.



"We kind of fell into breeding. Sarah was always interested and always had a mare, we started with 2 or 3 and got to 11 or 12 even. We closed the riding school in 2008, focused on livery and then on breeding."

Carey acknowledged that breeding is tricky business, for two reasons. It's a learning process which requires a bit of luck and a lot of knowledge. Firstly, the stallion must be selected to complement the dam line. Carey is using a lot of the latest in cutting edge reproductive techniques to support his mares and has been quite successful. The second, the backing of good owners. Carey is quick to acknowledge the support he has

had throughout his breeding career in the form of many top international riders and producers. He credits their support on the quality of his breeding programme, and access to top good mares.

"The breeding side of things? In the early days we may not have always chosen the right stallions. We worked with Maggie Dobby and their mare, Utah Van De Bucxtale. She jumped up to 160 level coming back here in foal and we bred from her since. Some good some bad, maybe it was the stallion selection, but she wasn't always easy to get in foal.



We're now working with Vanessa Mannix and Conor Swail. Their Flower is back here now, and we are hoping to do ICSI this winter with her. We have done a good bit of embryo transfer pregnancies with the other two mares, Valerie FS and Carolien VH Scheefkasteel. Carolien jumped 160s and had already bred a 150 and a 160 before Vanessa got her; she's bred a Big Star, and a Zirocco Blue and she's in foal to Conthargos this year.

Another exciting partnership we have is with Stephen Macken, and his mare Quintara 14. She's a half-sibling to two 160 horses. We did ET with her last year, and she currently has three foals on the ground, two by Conthargos and the other by Untouchable. There's an Emerald embryo implanted in a recipient now for 2023.

The AI, ET, and the ICSI which is new to us but is fairly successful. It is expensive but if you have a mare that's 25 or a mare like Valerie FS that won't carry a full-term pregnancy, or like Quintara 14 that you want to keep competing, you have options. Their lines are strong so the hope is that you will breed something a little bit special.

Breeding is front and centre, but Carey is mindful of his space and infrastructure needs to have a safe and successful breeding programme – the care of their horses is paramount.

"We're farming 75 acres and honestly need every bit of it. There's huge re-investment of earnings through breeding and sales. We put in three massive mare and foal boxes with cameras, proper big thick mats - you can have two foot of bedding and next thing the foal is on concrete because of the mare moving. The stocks, the fencing and pathways over the road that we did just for safety; making sure that other horses aren't coming up against the mare and foal.

A natural stream runs through most of the land so that helps with watering and saves a lot of time. With the price of fertiliser, we have started to put horse manure from shavings on the land – it seems to be quite successful. When your hand is forced, you have to be innovative, but certainly TAMS would be significant for Irish breeders."



Breeding

Irish equine breeding is a dynamic and vibrant sector of Irish agriculture. It is represented by multiple sport horse breeds, native and rare in nature. These horses and ponies are of significant export value to the Irish economy.

Irish bred horses are globally renowned for their athleticism but also the value they represent as a leisure equine partner due to their excellent temperament and rideability.

The breeding element of this survey maps breeders planning for prospective foals; the level of investment in sire selection and the breeding techniques employed.

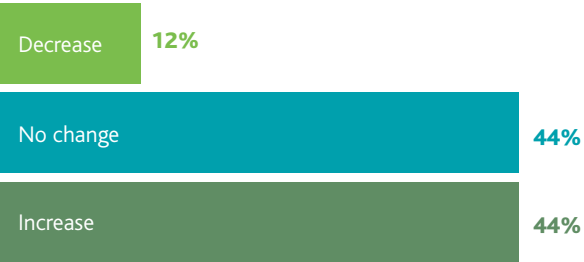


The breeding environment is largely represented by broodmare herds of less than ten, where over 50% of breeders do not farm any other kind of livestock. Equine breeding is a significant economic stimulus for Irish rural communities, representing an important revenue stream.

BREEDING PLANS FOR THE NEXT 3 YEARS

Breeders displayed strong optimism for the future of their breeding programmes. Of the 903 responses, 88% will continue to breed the same number or increase the number of foals produced through their breeding programmes. This is a reflection of the strength of the national and global market for well-bred Irish horses.

Only 12% of respondents stated that they will decrease the number of foals produced.



n=903

INVESTMENT IN STALLION FEES

Typically, stud fees for Irish bred performance sport horses, pony sires and Irish Draught sires, fall within the range of €200 - €1,000. To reflect this, the majority of breeders (57%) have spent between €200 and €1,000. This suggests that accessibility to stallions and fresh semen is important to Irish breeders.

41% of breeders have invested over €1,000 in stallion covering fees. Likely due to the accessibility of continental sires through artificial insemination (AI).

17% have invested over €2,000 in sire fees. Fees above €2,000 are generally associated with private sire covering applications and for the top deceased sires who are only available through the reproductive technique Intracytoplasmic Sperm Injection (ICSI).

The studbook inspection and approval processes in Ireland and other European studbooks under the World Breeding Federation for Sport Horses (WBFSH) often increase the value of a stallion and therefore his stud fee. From the perspective of a sports performance breed, this would include the Irish Sport Horse Studbook and the Warmblood Studbook of Ireland Stallion and Mare inspections. The inspection process identifies equines who meet the breed standard and eligibility criteria for inclusion within a studbook breeding programme. The inspection process rewards horses for existing and future career accolades under a merit system for superior performance or athleticism.



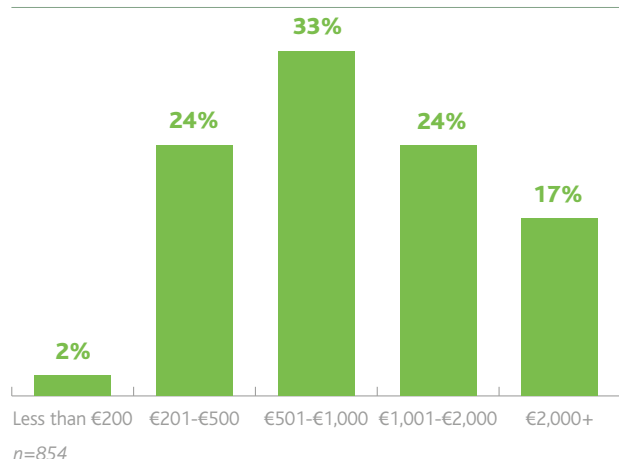


88%

of breeders plan to maintain or increase foal numbers

Irish rare and native breeds i.e. Connemara pony, Irish Draught and Kerry Bog Pony, apply a classification system where Class 1 is awarded to equines who meet the breed standard and associated athleticism/functional characteristics.

Studbook approval typically increases the value of stallions in particular, as it includes expert radiographic assessment, venereal disease screening and a conformation and athleticism assessment. Approved or Class 1 status gives breeders confidence that the stallion they have selected to cover their mare is a quality stallion who has successfully passed the inspection process.



REPRODUCTIVE TECHNIQUES

The reproductive techniques applied by breeders is linked to:

- the needs of the mare
- availability of the stallion
- type of cover suitable
- fertility of the mating pair

The use of AI has increased exponentially in recent times; a study on the use of AI in German Sport Horses found that AI coverings have increased from 1.4% of coverings in 1985 to nearly 90% in 2012¹. AI increases semen accessibility, is safer for mares and stallions and facilitates accurate insemination in line with the mare's stage of cycle. However, it places an additional cost burden on the standing stud for training and

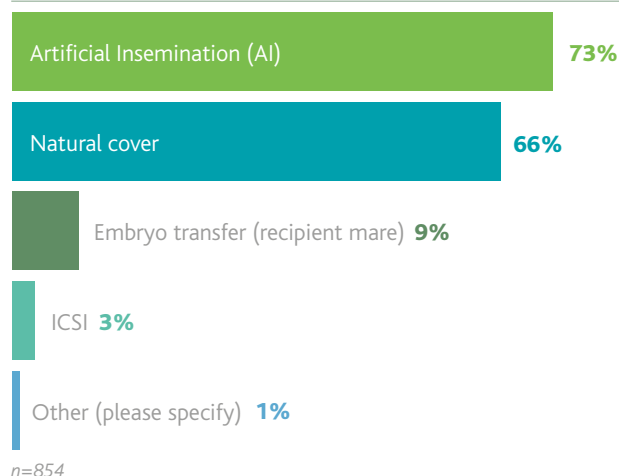
specific collection equipment required, therefore increases the stud fee and general associated veterinary costs.

Natural cover is utilised by 66% of breeders and is most common in Irish traditional native and rare breed populations. Horse Sport Ireland strongly recommend screening for venereal diseases in advance of the breeding season and maintaining a clear receipted record and contract for all breeding transactions. Please see Horse Sport Ireland's [voluntary code of practice for mare and stallion owners](#) and suggested [breeding contract](#).

The embryo transfer technique, employed by 8% of respondents is an effective method of breeding from high value performance mares, where the breeder/owner wishes for her to remain competing. Horse Sport Ireland currently offer an Embryo transfer incentive up to the value of €1,500 for performance and Traditional Irish Horse (TIH) mares.

ICSI is increasingly being used (3%) but has limited availability in Ireland. It has been effectively used to breed from less fertile and deceased equines. However, it is an invasive procedure so careful consideration should be given to widespread use of this technique.

Irish breeders have made it clear that they employ techniques that are most suited to their mare and selected stallion; this may mean that for certain horses the breeder will choose based on the mating pair rather than reluctance or dedication to either natural covering (66%) and/or AI (73%).



KEY TAKEAWAYS

- 41% of Irish breeders spend over €1,000 on stud fees
- AI is becoming more popular than traditional covering methods
- 50% of Irish breeders are interested in a reproduction knowledge transfer program

1 Aurich, J. E. 2012. Artificial insemination in horses—more than a century of practice and research. Journal of Equine Veterinary Science. 32:458–463.



Breeder Profile:

Patrick Curran, Galway

Glencarrig Connemara Ponies in Moycullen, Co. Galway, a family run farm where the enthusiasm for breeding quality Connemara ponies has been passed down from generation to generation. The family will be celebrating 60 years in Connemara breeding next year. Patrick Curran, the grandson of the founder, is passionate about continuing the Glencarrig legacy of breeding quality traditional Connemaras with good bone and movement that excel in the show ring.



"The main thing with us with the Connemara ponies is that to try and get quality and bone together because a lot of ponies nowadays either have one or the other, you know it's hard to get the right mix."

Our biggest market is the English showing market; a nice, kind of quality moving type - a real traditional looking pony. A lot of ponies nowadays are going 'light', losing their bone and maybe their structure. Perhaps people are too concerned about performance, that they need a lot of blood to perform. The breed is losing a bit of their originality. We want to keep that going and hold on to it within the breed."



There are two stallions standing at the Co. Galway farm, Glencarrig Knight and Glancarrig Douvan, with Douvan being the son of Knight. Patrick has expressed an interest in purchasing an outcross colt to cross back to the daughters of these stallions that go on to become broodmares.

There are between 15 and 18 broodmares and while the resident stallions may be the most convenient to use on these mares, Patrick has stressed the importance of picking stallions based on the what the mare herself needs. He states that a lighter more refined mare may benefit from being crossed to a stronger stallion with more bone. Stallion coverings in Glencarrig are mostly natural coverings but AI is often used on the older mares that may find it more beneficial.

Late last year, the Curran family invested in a new stabling area on farm with six new stables and an area to store hay and machinery. They have also recently updated their outdoor sand arena with new fencing and a new surface. Future investment will be made to update the fencing around the whole farm.



The Business

The Irish horse is big business. This survey was issued following several COVID-19 lockdowns and during the war in Ukraine. We are experiencing increasing inflation rates and a push towards improved climate action and sustainability measures. These factors have increased the price of the three F's: Feed, Fuel and Fertiliser.

Despite this, the Irish equine market remains resilient and continues to grow in strength with significant prices received for Irish horses at sales nationwide. An optimism scale has been devised around prospective income and for the future of equine breeding.

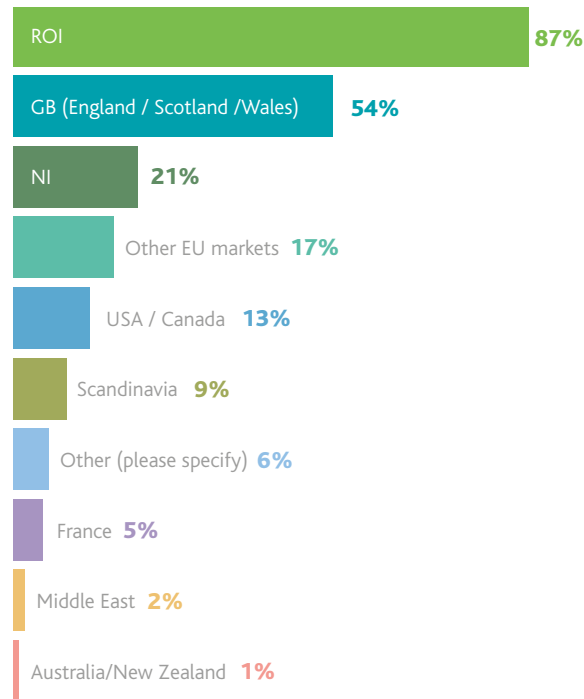


The business section examines the sales markets to which Irish horses have been sold, places the Irish breeder's perspective of Brexit under the lens, and asked breeders to quantify the financial impact of recent global events.

IRISH HORSE SALES

The Irish equine market is as active internationally as it is nationally. 87% of breeders have sold horses in the Republic of Ireland. It is no surprise that exports to the United Kingdom (Great Britain and Northern Ireland) are almost as prevalent with 75% of breeders selling horses to this market in the last three years. The range of international markets available to the Irish horse show a valuable, in demand and exportable product.

- 58% ROI and international
- 31% only ROI
- 11% only sold internationally



n=875



INCOME AND OPTIMISM

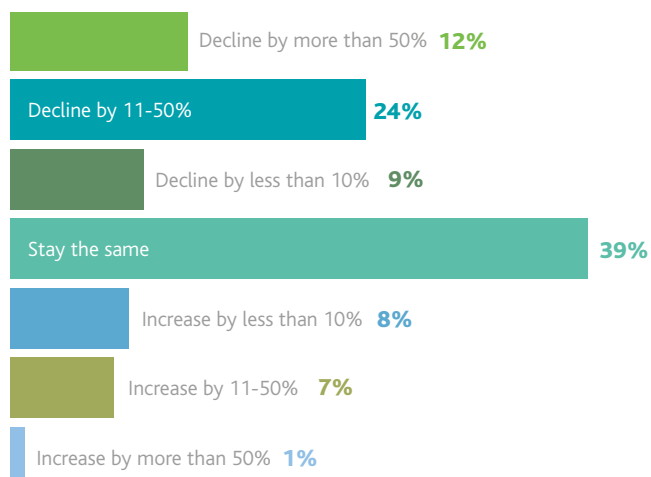
54% of all breeders are somewhat or very optimistic about the future of their equine breeding business, with 24% tending towards pessimistic and 22% neither pessimistic nor optimistic. This comes at a time when 45% of breeders expect their income to decline this year versus last year. Only 16% of breeders expect their incomes to increase this year.

When optimism levels are further examined we see that the larger the operation the more optimistic the breeder. There is confidence in numbers for Irish breeders. Those with more than 10 broodmares have better security, and confidence, for a return on breeding investment versus those with less horses.

- **Breeders with 5 horses or less**
51% are somewhat or very optimistic
- **Breeders with 5-10 horses**
62% are somewhat or very optimistic
- **Breeders with 10 horses or more**
65% somewhat or very optimistic

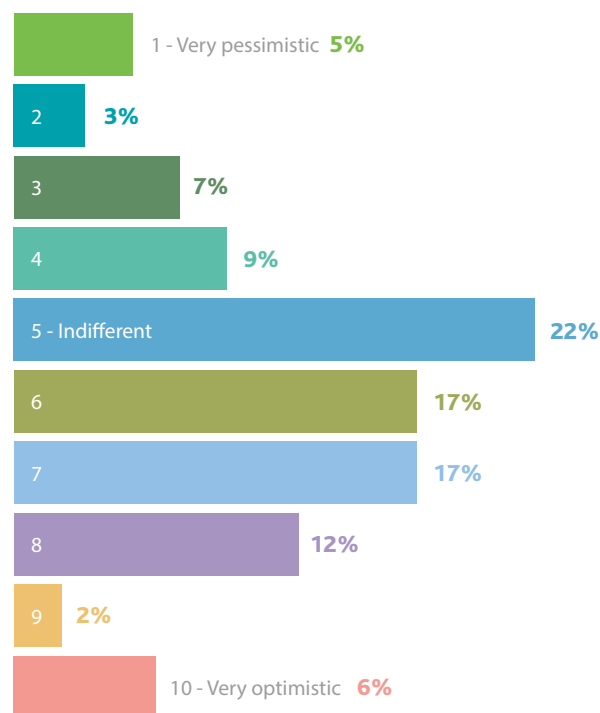
When asked to consider the future of the equine breeding sector, 57% of breeders stated they were somewhat or very optimistic. Interestingly, those with more mares were less optimistic about the sector than they were about their own business. While 62% of breeders with 5-10 horses were optimistic about their own business, only 53% were optimistic about the future of the sector. Similarly, while 65% of breeders with more than 10 horses were optimistic about their own business, only 53% of these were optimistic about the future of the sector. Smaller breeders were less optimistic (51%) about their own business and more optimistic about the sector (59%).

INCOME



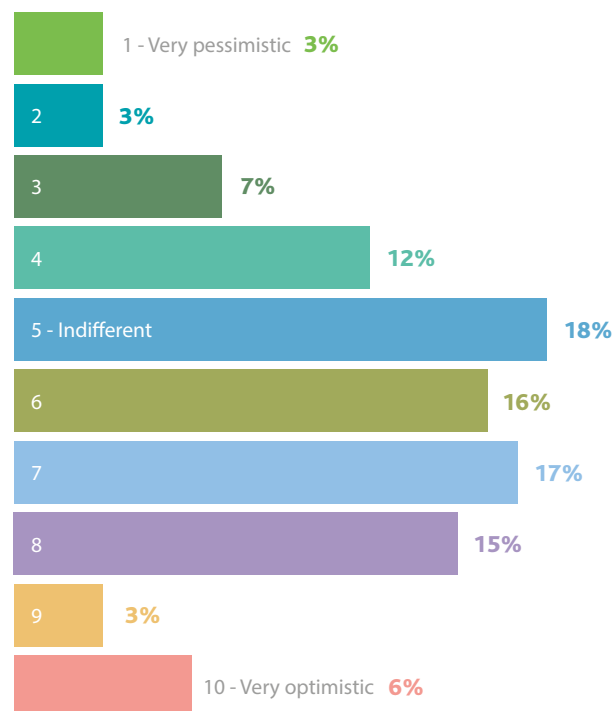
n=1,021

OPTIMISM – OWN BUSINESS



n=1,023

OPTIMISM – SECTOR



n=1,023



COSTS INCREASING

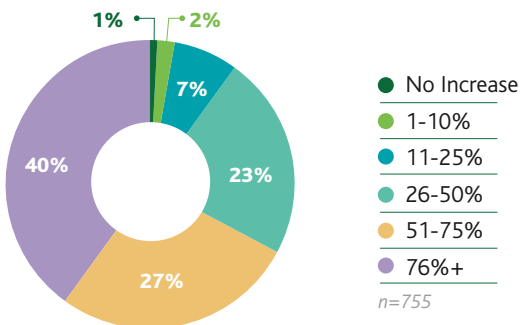
Essential farming expenditure

Breeders were asked to provide an estimate of cost changes over the previous 12 months across a range of essential equine farming expenditure. It is evident that breeders have and will continue to face cost increases, most significantly for fertiliser, diesel, and equine feed.

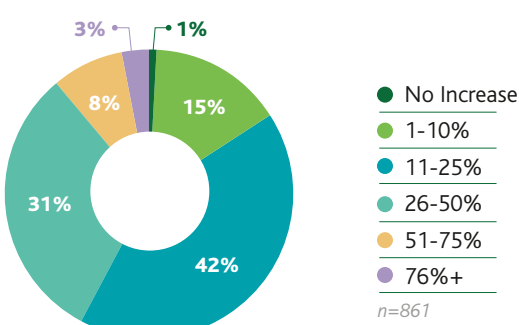
Increases are also evident in overall insurance costs with 47% of breeders experiencing insurance increases between 11-50%. There were generally lower cost increases associated with equine bedding, livery and land rental costs, the majority coming below 25%.

Overall, these cost increases are a significant burden on Irish breeders. In the absence of TAMS II support these costs will challenge their ability to invest in farming infrastructure.

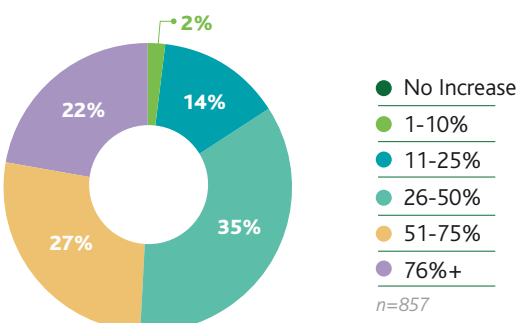
FERTILISER



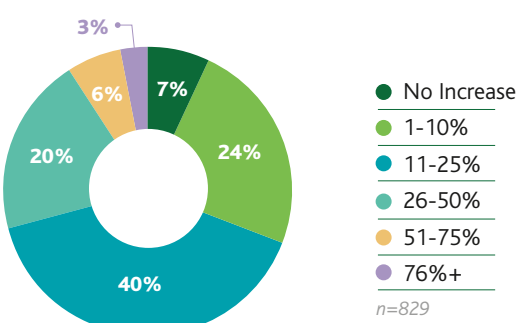
FEED – CONCENTRATE



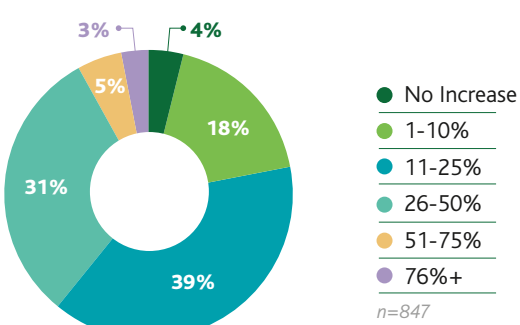
DIESEL



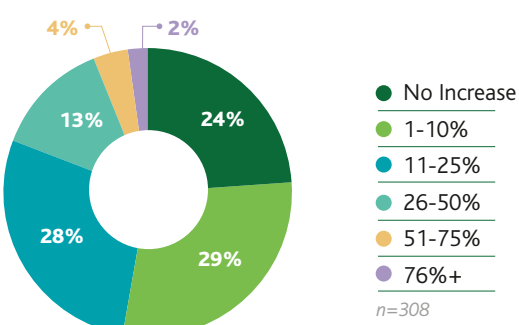
BEDDING – STRAW/SHAVINGS



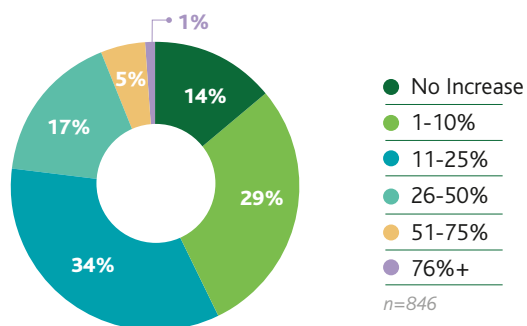
FEED – HAY/FORAGE



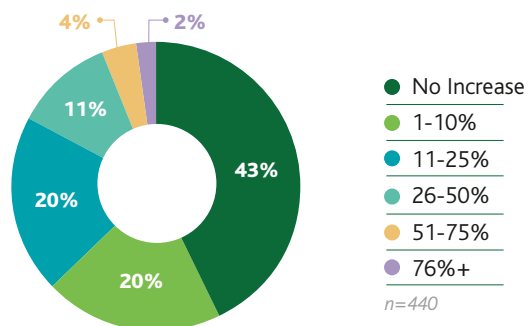
LIVERY COSTS



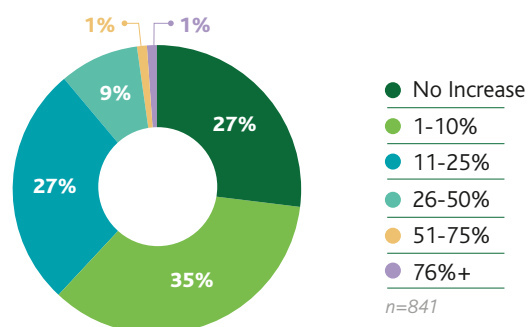
VET/DENTIST FEES



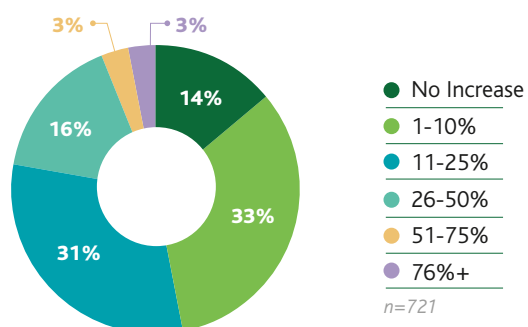
LAND RENTAL



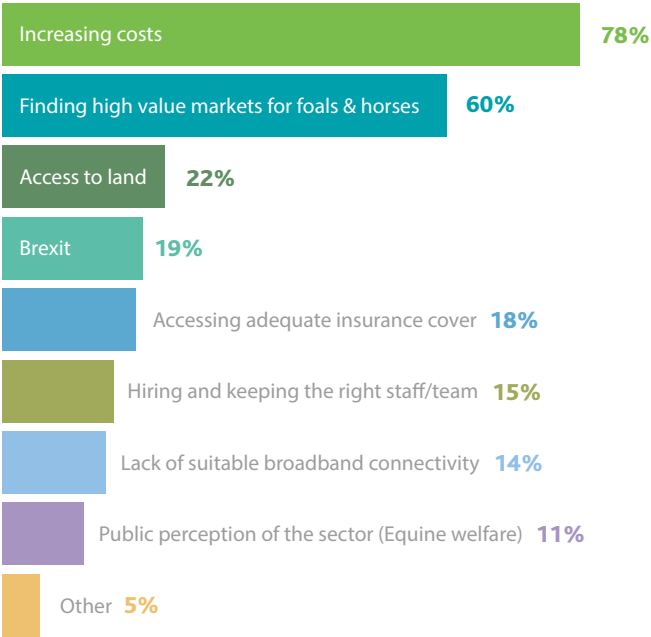
FARRIER FEES



INSURANCE



CHALLENGES FOR BREEDERS



n=869

The top three challenges facing Irish equine breeding businesses are:

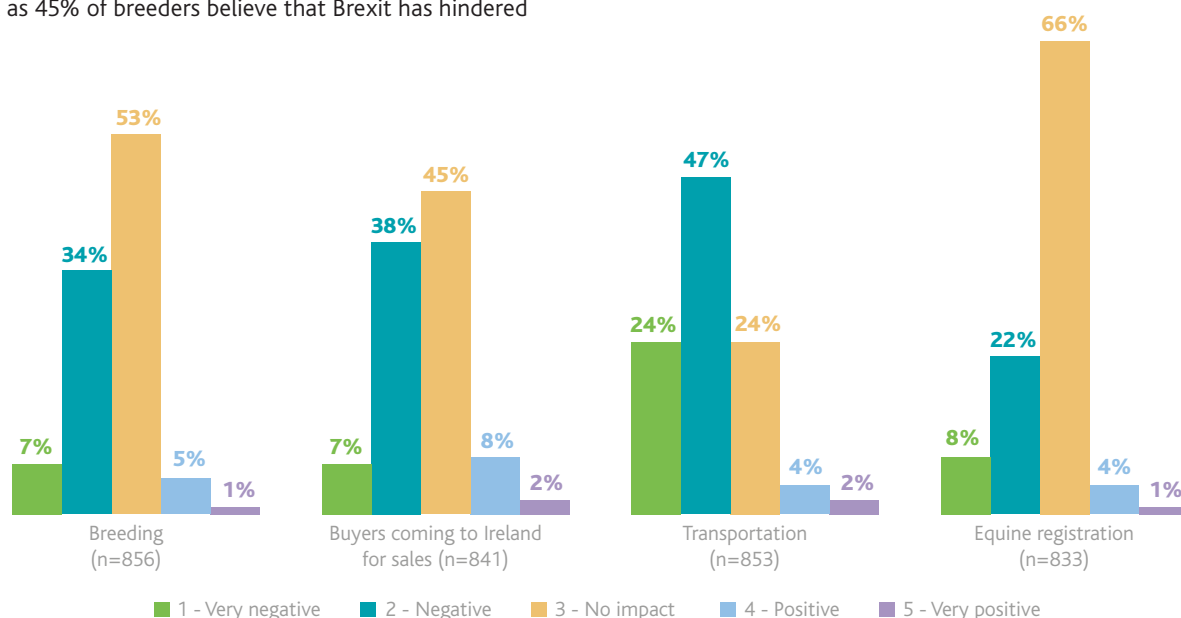
- 1. **Increasing costs (76%)**
as evidenced by the significant increases in all costs (see page 20 & 21).
- 2. **Identifying appropriate markets (60%)**
remains a challenge for breeders but the demand for Irish horses remains strong which has supported breeders to obtain a price reflective of their breeding investments.
- 3. **Access to land (22%)**
is a challenge for a fifth of respondents. There is a large amount of competition between farming enterprises in the land market currently.



IMPACTS OF BREXIT

The impacts of Brexit on the equine industry were largely delayed by COVID-19 due to a reduction in movement across international borders for 2 years. Following lifting of much of the covid related restrictions, Brexit is now having an impact. 71% of breeders have experienced a negative transport impact as well as 45% of breeders believe that Brexit has hindered

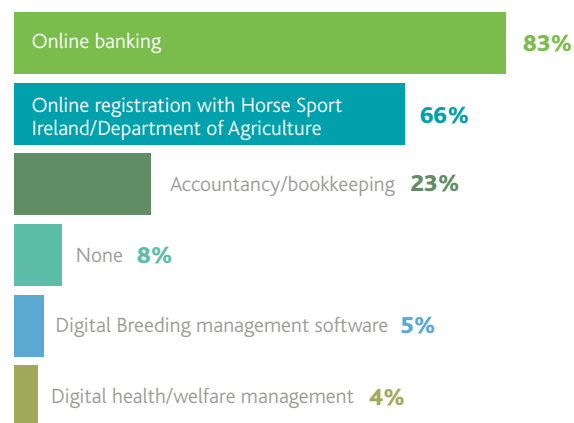
buyers coming to Ireland to view and purchase Irish horses. In comparison, 59% of breeders state Brexit has had no impact or a positive impact on their breeding programme while a further 71% feel there has been no impact/positive impact on equine registrations despite associated legislation changes.



DIGITAL SERVICES

Digital services outside of online banking are in limited use within the equine breeding sector. 66% of breeders use online registration services with HSI or the Department of Agriculture but there is very limited use of digital breeding management software or digital health software.

Increased adoption of technology will serve to support the efficiency, sustainability, and profitability of equine businesses. Working in collaboration with Local Enterprise Office and Enterprise Ireland, the development of an "equine-tech" ecosystem will be important over the coming years.



n=869



Breeder Profile:

Sharon Mannion, Co. Offaly

Sharon Mannion is the current National secretary of the Irish Draught Horse Breeders Association and is very involved with breeding Irish Draughts at her family's own Windgap Stud in Co. Offaly.



Sharon comes from a family of eight siblings, all of which have been involved in the family farm. The family stand five Irish Draught stallions, one of which is currently show jumping, and typically breed between 10 and 15 foals a year. These foals are usually sold at 6 months old to the UK or further afield. According to Sharon, her aim is to promote the Irish Draught horse as a breed here in Ireland and abroad.

"Once they reach six months, we sell a lot of the to the UK and further afield. Our primary market is the UK to sell, but also to promote the breed worldwide."

At present most of the stallion coverings from the Windgap Stud are natural cover but Sharon has expressed there is a desire to invest in AI in the future as they have been contacted by breeders from several different countries to use the Windgap Stud Stallions.

“We’re looking into trying AI with our stallions - we’ve been contacted by quite a few breeders in a few different countries who wish to use them. Obviously, that’s quite expensive for a stud of our scale but it is something that we would like to explore over the next few years.”

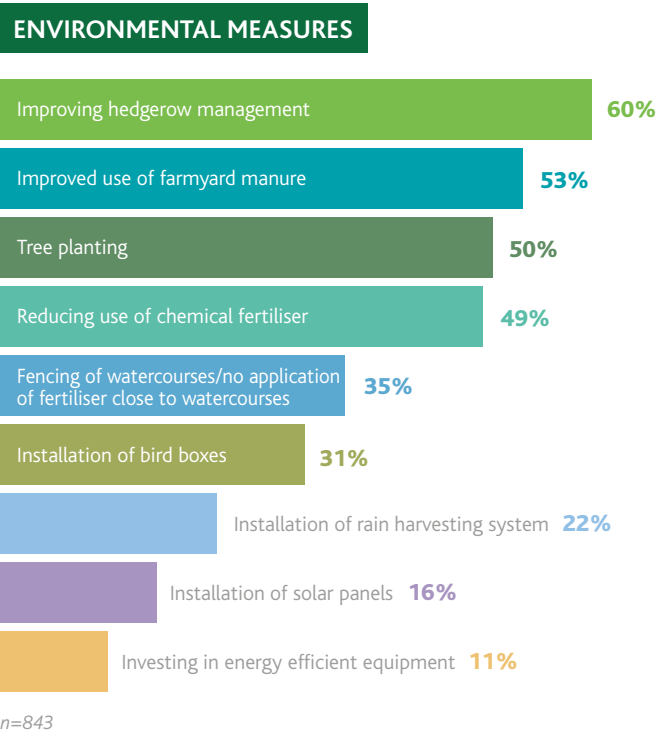
Many of the current band of broodmares at the stud are related to the original stallions, Windgap Blue and Gortlea Ruler. Due to this, Windgap purchased Coom View Highlander approximately four years ago to bring some diversity into the herd again. Another stallion currently standing at Windgap is Huntingfield Ruler. Sharon is hoping to breed a replacement stallion from him in the future.

Coming from quite a large family, Sharon is optimistic for the future of the family stud and while her brother is set to take over at Windgap, Sharon is hoping to set up her own place with her own broodmare herd where she will continue to promote the family’s stallions.



Environment

The environment, climate change and sustainability are increasingly prevalent topics of discussion in political and farming circles. Most recently on the 28th of July 2022, after much deliberation, the Irish government announced that the agricultural sector must move to reduce carbon emissions by a minimum of 25% by 2030. Elghandour et al. (2019) stated that sport horse breeding allows breeders to diversify farming practices as the global equine population omits approximately 0.6% of the global greenhouse emissions².



On the lower end of the scale, likely due to the cost burden of installation, only 22% of breeders have installed a rain harvesting system; 16% have installed solar panels and 11% have invested in energy efficient equipment. TAMS II supports in these areas would likely increase investment in these areas.

Anaerobic Digestion has the potential to meet the heat and light energy demands of an equestrian centre using equine waste but this will need significant support and will need a level of scale³.

Overall, Irish breeders are overwhelmingly positive with regards their efforts to operate in a sustainable fashion; 78% of breeders have implemented at least one environmental measure in their breeding business.



Of the 843 respondents, 83% of breeders state that they have taken measures to improve hedgerow management; 53% improved use of farmyard manure perhaps linked to the 49% who have reduced their use of chemical fertiliser and 35% who have evaluated their watercourses in an effort to prevent contamination. Tree planting has been implemented across 50% of equine farms; 31% of breeders have worked to erect bird boxes on farm.

2 Elghandour, Mona MMY, et al. "Equine contribution in methane emission and its mitigation strategies." Journal of equine veterinary science 72 (2019): 56-63.
3 Young, Sharon, Alistair B. Sproul, and Anna G. Bruce. "Potential for Biogas Production and Emissions Reduction at Equestrian Centre." 2014 Asia Pacific Solar Research Conference. 2014.





Breeder Profile:

Robert Draper, Co. Kildare

Robert Draper, and his wife Gillian, own and run Brownstown stud on the Curragh in Co. Kildare. Self-described as a mixed enterprise, Draper is involved with equine breeding, producing and private livery of a range of sport horses. The Drapers have bred successful show jumpers, Irish Draughts and eventers.



Robert believes that the proximity of his stud to the Curragh has a lot to offer his clients and is a huge asset in the education of his young horses. Robert is modest about his facilities, which include an outdoor and indoor arena, horse walker and lunging pen. Draper purchased the site in 2011 and has spent significant time and money renovating and investing and upgrading the stud to its current impressive form.

"We have invested a lot over the years, in arenas, surfaces and in a horse walker. We've put a lot into those and trying to justify that spend on horses alone is tricky. It's certainly a very slow payback but you try to create the best facilities possible and it is what clients want and expect for their horses now."

We did a lot of paddock fencing last year, but again it is costly. It would have made a huge difference if that could have been additionally funded. TAMS should be extended to equine breeders too. Many equine enterprises are run on family farms or small agricultural holdings and it could be argued that the equine pursuits contribute as much if not more economically.

On the sustainability side, there's plenty of equine arenas, stables and sheds with large roof areas that should be entitled to the same financial support as agriculture for solar generation"

Robert is mindful of the ever-increasing running costs of an equine enterprise and has taken simple, and inexpensive, proactive steps to improve energy efficiencies and cost with the environment in mind.

"I have some solar panels and would consider more if they if they're included in TAMS. I do some water recovery - I should be doing more of that. I'm collecting water off the arena roofs and using it to water them."

The current market for the well-bred amateur and leisure horses is strong. Robert feels that the focus should readjusted to breed proportionately to what the market wants.

"A significant percentage of what is bred will never be asked or will never see the money invested in them to compete at an elite level."

We use a combination of natural and artificial reproduction methods. This investment must reflect the outcomes and all stakeholders from stallion owners to vets must appreciate the value they are adding and the outcome of the process.

Selling sport horses privately typically involves amateur social media marketing. It's Facebook, Twitter etc. A significant proportion of the market is private undisclosed sales which lacks the transparency of the thoroughbred market where significantly more horses go through the sales rings.

The well-behaved utility horses that could do a variety of jobs to an average ability is what 99% of the market wants. We need to target and tier our breeding strategies to a greater extent otherwise we are all looking for the Lottery win. The risk and reward does not make sense if we don't control and understand our inputs. It doesn't make sense for every mare to breed to five-star international stallions. Breeding



a quality Irish horse still satisfies the largest segment of the market and quality Irish Draught bloodlines have a huge part to play in this.

To produce a sport horse properly to four or five years of age is expensive and risky. The chance of breeding or stumbling across the next Nations Cup horse is less and less likely and we need to acknowledge that we won't all produce elite sport horses and do what we have done best and produce for the wider market too - Athletic, good looking, sound, sensible Irish horse - that's my view on it, for what it's worth!"



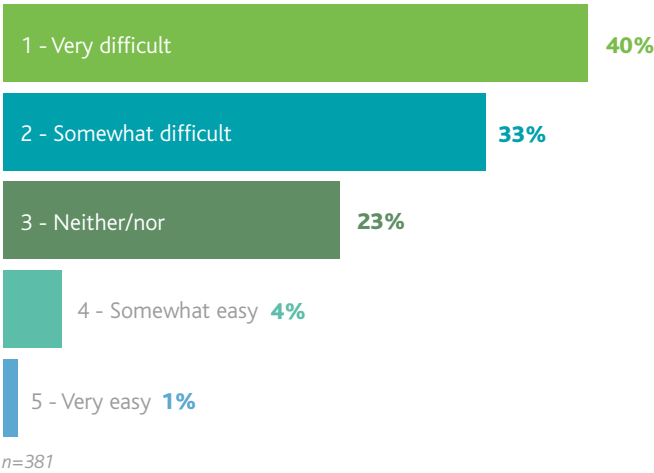
People and Succession

People are at the core of any business and equine businesses are no different. Recruitment and retention are becoming increasingly difficult for equine businesses as Ireland continuously edges towards full employment. In the longer-term, succession is relatively low on the agenda of equine business owners as there is a serious lack of sufficient succession planning across the sector.

RECRUITMENT - DIFFICULT OR EASY?

Finding the right people is proving difficult for the majority of equine breeders. 40% say it is very difficult to find the right people and a further 33% say it is somewhat difficult.

On the other end of the scale only 5% find it easy to hire (4% easy / 1% very easy).



As we take a deeper look into the reasons why hiring is difficult, there are three clear reasons:

- The skills are not available (63%)
- Salary expectations are not aligned (59%)
- Lack of interest in the roles (57%).

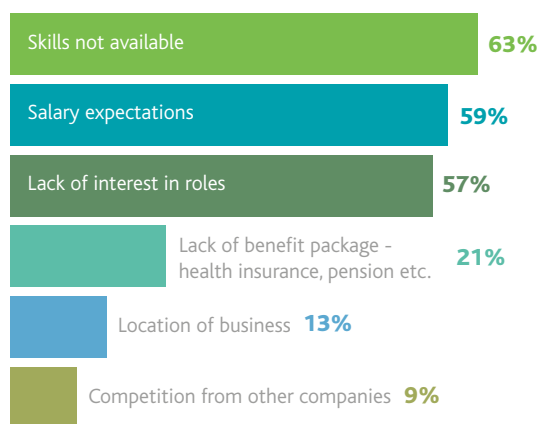
This trend is somewhat concerning as without a pipeline of talent the longevity and sustainability of the sector could come into question.

It is important to look at measures that can be taken both as a sector and as individual businesses to make roles more appealing to potential candidates.

Considerations

- Do you have a clear job specification?
- Are you advertising on the correct platforms?
- Can you offer flexible working hours / accommodation?
- Are there opportunities for progression?
- Do you have a referral programme in place for current employees?
- What perks are available?





n=268



IMPORTANCE OF A CANDIDATE'S QUALIFICATIONS COMPARED TO EXPERIENCE

Based on the research there is a clear indication that experience is considered more important than qualifications for breeders when recruiting.

80% of breeders feel experience is important at some level. Compare this to only 35% stating that qualifications are important (24%) or very important (11%).

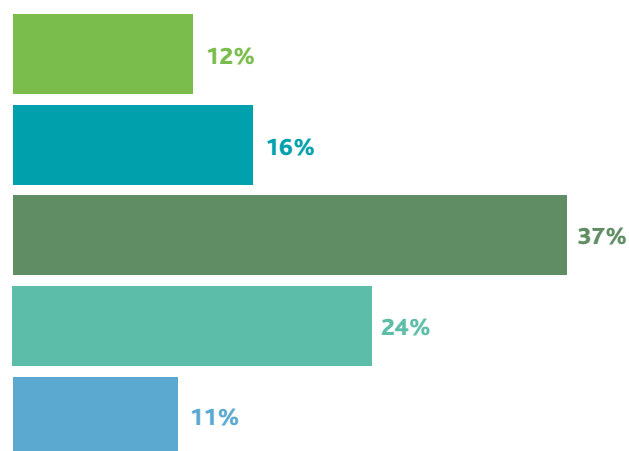
Qualifications do have a big role to play in developing the Irish sport horse sector. Combining this formal education and training with practical experience is important to maximise the impact candidates can have on the sector in the medium to long term. Internships or short-term placements while undertaking formal education are a perfect way to do so.

At Horse Sport Ireland we have a range of training courses available to assist both those starting their career in the sector or those looking to upskill.

Scan the QR code to check them out.

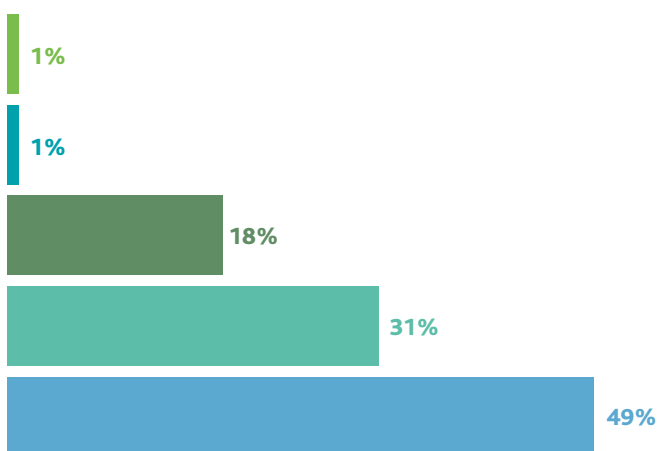


QUALIFICATIONS



n=351

EXPERIENCE



n=365

1- Not at all important 2- Not important 3- Somewhat important 4- Important 5- Very important

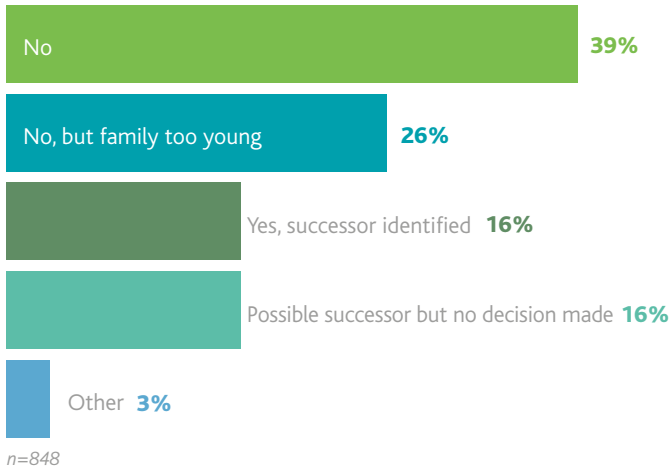


SUCCESSION

Identifying a successor

Of the 848 respondents, 65% of breeders are yet to identify a successor for their business. 26% of those without a successor have stated their family being too young as the reason for not taking action.

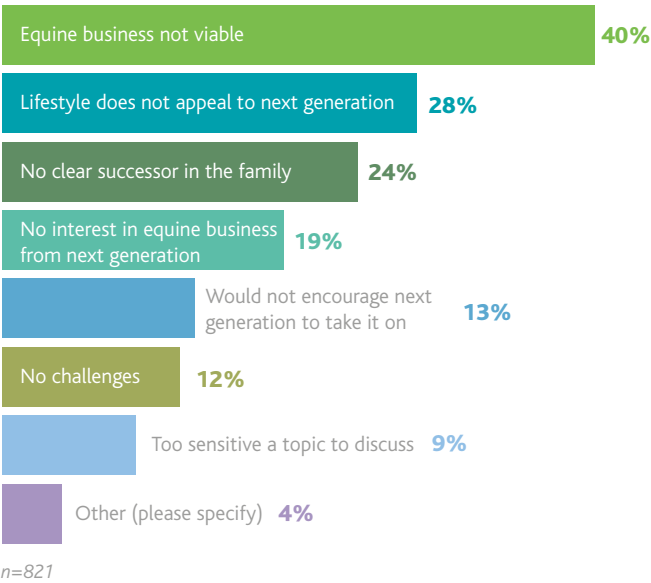
16% have a successor identified which is positive to see but we would encourage the further 16% who have a possible successor in place to take the next step, and ensure that with appropriate financial and legal advice that they finalise their succession plan.



Challenges in succession planning

Viability of the business is the main challenge of 40% of breeders trying to put a succession plan in place. The lifestyle associated with breeding is another challenge for 28% of respondents closely followed by the lack of a successor at 24%.

Only 12% don't see any challenges to developing their succession plan which is encouraging but it unfortunately is a very small cohort of breeders. The statistics, issues, challenges and sensitivities relating to equine succession, mirror those across other agricultural sectors.





SUCCESSION PLANNING – KEY CONSIDERATIONS



Declan McEvoy, Head of Tax, *ifac*

1. **Goals** – Set goals to ensure you have clarity on what you want to achieve
2. **Information** – It is important to gather and analyse all the information about your equine business
3. **Viability** – Use this information to assess the business' viability
4. **Identify** – Consider potential successors
5. **Liaise** – Work closely with your professional advisors to develop a succession roadmap
6. **Decisions** – Based on the outcomes of steps 1-5 now is the time to make the required decisions
7. **Plan** – Develop your succession plan. It is important the relevant tax reliefs such as Entrepreneurial and Retirement relief into consideration at this stage
8. **Review** – Implementing a succession plan takes time, review it at least once a year to ensure relevancy
9. **Will** – Review and update your will in line with your plan
10. **Discuss** – Ensure that the incoming generation is happy with the plan

Declan is an AITI Chartered Tax Adviser (CTA) and Member of STEP-society of trust and estate practitioners. Declan has extensive experience and expertise in personal and corporate tax planning, estate and succession planning.

If you have any tax or succession related queries you can get in touch with ifac on (01) 455 1036 or info@ifac.ie.



Research Methodology

Ifac was commissioned by Horse Sport Ireland to carry out an independent survey among equine business owners in Ireland to get an understanding of their sentiment about the sector and the prospects for the sector into the future.

An independent survey was conducted online by *ifac* from June 13th – 26th 2022 using a dedicated online portal. A total sample size of 1,076 was achieved. The sample provides a margin of error of +/- 3% with a 95% confidence interval.

As respondents were only required to answer questions relevant to their business, all questions were independently analysed based on the number of respondents to the specific question.

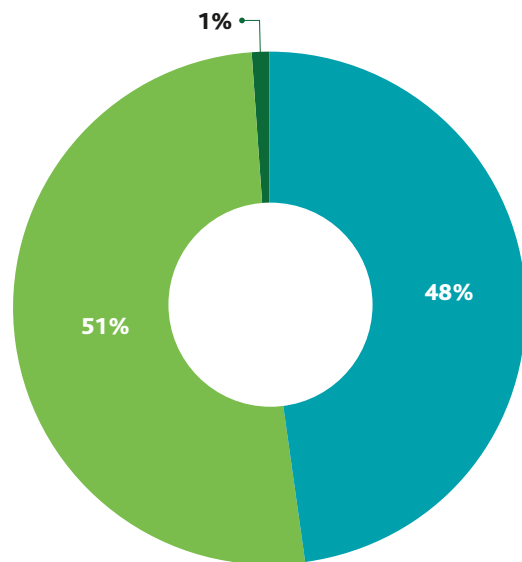


The sample has an even split of male (48%) and female (51%) respondents. The age profile of the respondents allows for sentiment from various age demographics with the largest cohort coming from the 51–64-year-old category (32%).

All provinces are represented with the majority being located in Leinster (38%). In terms of business type, breeders with less than 5 horses are the predominant type of business at 53% and breeders with 5-10 horses are the second most common at 30%. Over half of those surveyed do not have any other farming enterprise.

A sample size of 1,076 provides a confident understanding of the sentiment among equine business owners in Ireland.

GENDER

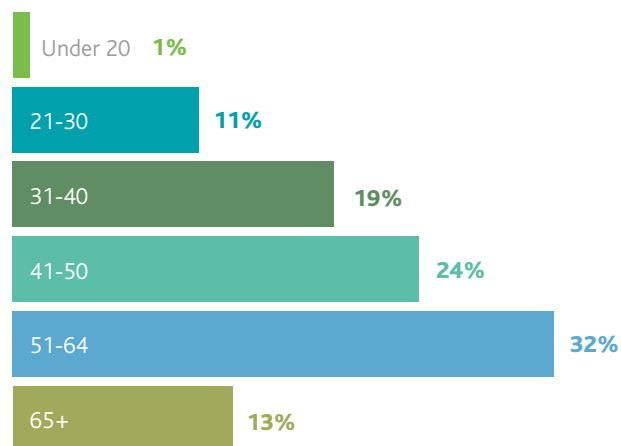


● Male
● Female
● Prefer not to say

n=1,069

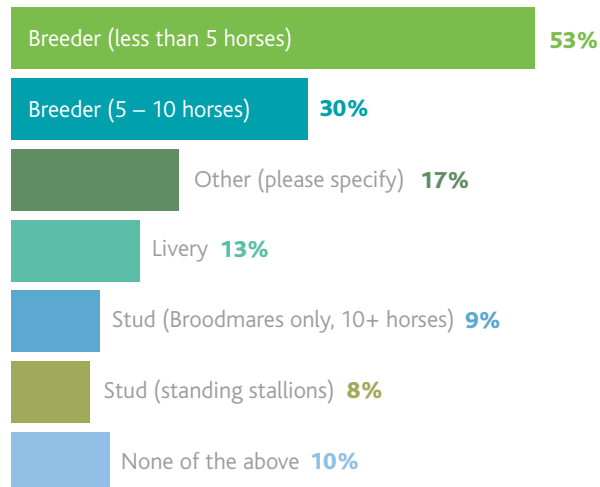


AGE



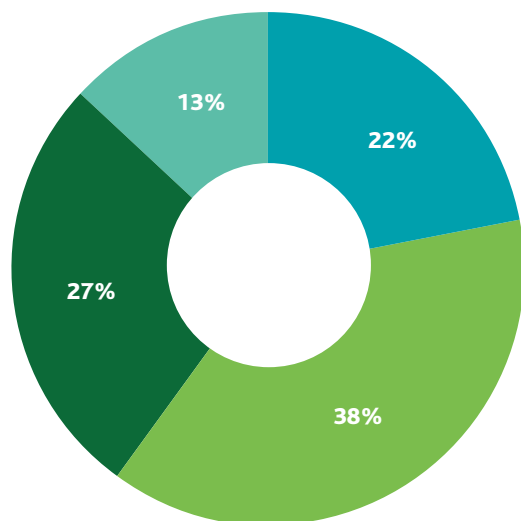
n=1,072

TYPE OF EQUINE BUSINESS



n=1,066

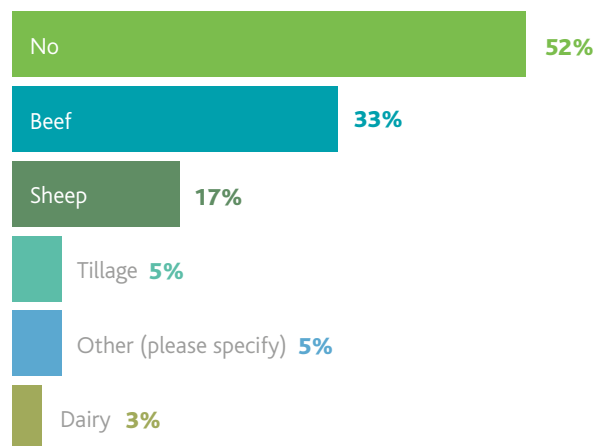
LOCATION



- Connacht
- Leinster
- Munster
- Ulster

n=1,064

OTHER FARM TYPE



n=1,058



ifac is an Irish top ten professional services firm with more than 30 offices nationwide. They provide specialist consultancy, market research, tax advisory, and accountancy services to farming, food and agribusinesses across Ireland. Founded in 1975, ifac is an award winning, market leading firm, committed to providing excellent client service. Contact David Leydon, Head of Food and Agribusiness, davidleydon@ifac.ie.

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Horse Sport Ireland

ABOUT

Horse Sport Ireland (HSI) is a company limited by guarantee, established in December 2006 by a joint initiative of the Minister for Agriculture and the Minister for Tourism and Sport. A distinguishing feature of HSI is the continual interplay between sport and breeding which are fundamental pillars for a successful sport horse industry.

Mission

To lead the equestrian sector to enable it to fulfil its potential.

Vision

to have the best horses and riders in the world.

Breeding and Sport Expertise

HSI, as a public interest entity holds a unique position in the sector. It has a role in both sport horse breeding production and equestrian sport.

HIGH PERFORMANCE

As an officially recognised National Federation of the Federation Equestre Internationale (FEI), the Olympic Federation of Ireland and Sport Ireland, HSI draws upon the knowledge and expertise of the high-performance unit to meet current industry and marketplace demands.

STUDBOOK

Horse Sport Ireland are one of seven passport issuing organisations (PIOs) approved by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) to maintain studbooks and to issue passports for registered equines (with pedigree – eligibility for entry into a studbook). These Studbooks are the Irish Sport Horse, Irish Sport Pony, Irish Draught, Irish Cob and Irish Part-bred Cob. Horse Sport Ireland is also an approved PIO for the issuance of equine identification documents, without pedigree passports.

AFFILIATE BODIES

As the national governing body for equestrian sport, there are 26 national organisations affiliated to HSI. HSI will interface with key stakeholders on matters of common interest across the equestrian community, and act as the leader in international matters. This includes international participation at Olympic, Paralympic and European Level for Top Sport.



Horse Sport Ireland: National Breeding Services

HSI provide national breeding services on behalf of, and funded by, the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM). These breeding schemes and initiatives are open to all DAFM approved studbooks provided they meet the specific eligibility criteria. HSI national breeding services are devised in consultation with the DAFM, geneticists and breed representative groups to support Irish breeders in making breeding decisions for their current and future equine breeding herd.

These schemes focus on driving innovation in equine genetics, monitoring equine skeletal and venereal health, maintaining sight of the potential for heritable conditions and production of young horses from foal to competition.

MARE UPGRADE SCHEME

The aim of this initiative is to incentivise Irish breeders to invest in performance dam lines abroad as either filly foals, active performance mares or retired performance mares that may/or may or may not be already in foal. Following a valid and approved online application, HSI will cover the cost of veterinary pre-purchase screening and transport back to Ireland up to a receipted maximum of €2,000.

EMBRYO TRANSFER SCHEME

The Embryo Transfer Scheme aims to reduce the generation interval and increase genetic improvement by maximising the genetic potential of Ireland's top class performance mares. The performance criteria does not apply to Traditional Irish Horse mares. Following a valid and approved online application, a payment of up to €1,500 per embryo will be reimbursed to the breeder.

THOROUGHBRED PERCENTAGE SCHEME

Horse Sport Ireland will provide €300 to the first 80 eligible breeders to register a foal with more than 70% Thoroughbred blood. This supports breeders who wish to produce a foal suitable for eventing and Traditional Irish Horse Breeding.

MARE X-RAY SCREENING SCHEME

The aim of this scheme is to benchmark the national mare/filly herd for the prevalence of bony abnormalities and to investigate the radiological differences between traditional and continental warmblood breeding on the skeletal structure of the Irish mare herd. HSI cover the cost of screening and radiological reporting for eligible mares and fillies.

BREAKING AND SCHOOLING SCHEME

The HSI Breaking and Schooling Scheme aims to incentivise Irish breeders to produce future breeding horses through a designated training pathway. Sport horse type breeders will receive €800 and Irish native rare breeds €1,000 for 6 weeks of training.

STALLION HEALTH SCREENING SCHEME

The scheme subsidises screening for sport horse sector stallions standing in Ireland for Equine Viral Arteritis (EVA), Equine Infectious Anemia (EIA), Contagious Equine Metritis (CEM) and Fragile Foal Syndrome (FFS).

HSI also host the HSI Foal Championships, HSI Filly Loose Jumping, HSI Autumn Development Series, HSI Studbook series and a range of young horse show classes and initiatives nationwide.

Scan the QR code and apply for our schemes today!



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