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**HORSE-BOUND**  
**HORSES**  
**IN THE NEWS**

# Europe: the final countdown

In four weeks, the UK will stage one of the most important polls of our time. But what will be the implications for the equine industry of a vote to leave or remain on 23 June? **Eleanor Jones** reports

**L**EAVING the European Union could have a negative impact on the equine industry – but could also be an opportunity to change it for the better, experts believe.

Former Defra ministers, businesspeople and representatives of organisations from Weatherbys to the British Equestrian Federation met at the Horse Trust, Bucks, last Friday (20 May) to discuss the facts that could influence next month's vote.

Horse Trust president Baroness Ann Mallalieu QC said: "Sometimes, the equine industry has not spoken with a single voice.

"I hope we will be bringing together all the sectors to discuss matters of policy – I hope there will be strong views but also dissemination of the facts from people in different parts of the industry.

"I'd like us to use this opportunity of having so many experts, all of whom have a part to play whatever their views.

"If there's been criticism of the referendum campaign so far, it's been that it's been about sabre-rattling and personalities, not about the facts on which the decision should be made."

## Transport and welfare

**LORD RUPERT DE MAULEY**, a former Defra minister and member of the House of Lords, asked whether the Tripartite Agreement between the UK, the Republic of Ireland and France would be affected by a vote to leave.

Professor **Tim Morris** (see box, The panel) said the amended agreement, which allows racehorses and those entered in FEI competition to move freely between the countries, predates Britain's membership of the EU and so should not be affected.

**Alick Simmons** said: "This isn't a matter of borders, it's a matter of risk [of disease]." **Graeme Cooke** added: "The number of

events that come under the FEI has increased [especially in Europe], which means horses moving around more to compete. The further they go and the more frequently, the greater the degree of risk.

"One has to strike a balance between what's acceptable in terms of disease risk and what's acceptable in terms of social and economic benefits of further trade and increasing competition.

"I've no doubt that if we left, there would be efforts to ensure horses could move around similar to the way they do now."

**Mr Simmons** also mentioned welfare of horses transported for slaughter.

"I think if you believe in welfare of horses, you want to see if you can influence it. One has to consider whether we would have more or less influence if we left," he said.

But **Lord de Mauley** said: "I often hear the argument we'd have less influence outside the EU but you shouldn't over-emphasise

the influence we have now.

"I think we've had influence but in some areas, I was one voice in 28 [EU member states]. It was incredibly frustrating when you couldn't get something agreed."

Horse Trust chief executive **Jeanette Allen** asked what effect leaving would have on passport and welfare legislation that has come from the EU, as "realistically, horse issues won't be a government priority".

But **Baroness Mallalieu** added: "This European legislation is part of our law and that wouldn't change.

"We'd have the status quo and the chance to look at it. In a sense, the arguments about the possibility of our leaving have rather over-exaggerated the dangers of us suddenly finding ourselves with nothing – that won't be the case.

"There will be a transition period and that's the opportunity for the equine industry to say what we want to get rid of and keep – it's a terrific opportunity."

**Louise Kemble**, chief executive of the Thoroughbred Breeders' Association, mentioned the EU's Common Agricultural Policy and the subsidies it pays to farmers.

Both **Lord de Mauley** and **Baroness Mallalieu** said they believed these would reduce if Britain left, but subsidies might then be paid to farmers for benefiting the environment, for example having permanent pasture, a feature of equine business, rather than "for doing nothing".

## International trade

**CLAIRE WILLIAMS** said many products are imported into Europe from outside, and that while leaving might mean their cost increases, it may boost British business.

"A lot of products are made in [mainland] Europe," she said. "If there's no longer free access, that will increase costs but it might encourage more UK companies to bring manufacturing back into the UK.

"Most horse food is made in the UK. There may be an effect from the impact on farming, and it might be difficult to get some raw materials – but that could mean manufacturers look at materials from the UK, it could be an opportunity."

**Ms Williams** added that international trade is "crucial".

"British' is rated very highly across the world," she said. "Where horses go, British products tend to follow.

"I think change may affect European markets, but may open great opportunities for other international markets."

**Laura Bewick** of the British Horseracing Authority said the body was "pretty confident" racing throughout Europe was carried out aside from the EU and should not be affected by the poll's outcome. She said trainers were concerned that leaving the EU might worsen the current staff shortage in the racing industry.

## THE PANEL



**Professor Tim Morris**

Member of the Defra Animal Health and Welfare Board for England



**Claire Williams**

Executive director of the British Equestrian Trade Association



**Alick Simmons**

Former deputy chief veterinary officer for the government



**Graeme Cooke**

Former Defra policy advisor and veterinary director for the FEI



**Carolyn Madgwick**

Formerly of animal health trading standards, recent Equine Sector Council steering group member

**Professor Morris** said it was not clear whether leaving would be "an opportunity or a threat", and asked if this was "part of the landscape we should be looking at".

**Mr Simmons** warned that EU members have clout, such as when re-establishing trade after disease outbreaks.

"I appreciate there are problems from a horse point of view," he added. "Especially when it comes to moving them quickly and it's probably not as flexible as it should be, but that doesn't mean we can't fix it.

"My experience negotiating with third countries [those outside the EU] to take our horses is it's complex and irrational."

**Mr Cooke** said he was glad to have heard the facts.

"To me it's about sovereignty," he said. "The ability to make our own decisions about the horse industry, and trade. Having dealt with the Chinese and others, a long time ago, I think it would be harder if we weren't in the EU.

"We can use its benchmarks for extra muscle – but if we went alone, I'm sure after a very confusing time, we'd shape things."

**Professor Morris** added: "It's not always about going backwards.

"It wouldn't be going back to what was before the EU, it would be a new and different world."

● **How would Brexit affect the equestrian property market? p32**



## TOMATILLO

The Hon Finn and MW Guinness' clone of Badminton and Burghley winner **Tamarillo** is standing at their Biddesden Stud this year, for £800. The three-year-old was backed at William Fox-Pitt's yard, but is now "taking mares".



## DON COSSACK

This year's Cheltenham Gold Cup winner has been announced the highest-rated jumps horse for the second season running. The gelding, who is now out with a tendon injury, was given a rating of 177, following his Festival performance.



## BART VI

Jay Halim's top horse is out for the summer following colic surgery. The 10-year-old gelding underwent an operation for a blockage and spent 10 days in hospital. He is now on box rest at home and vets are confident he will make a return to full work.



## RULE THE WORLD

This year's Grand National winner has been retired at the age of nine. As the gelding had suffered two pelvic injuries in two years, his connections felt it would be "unfair" to run him with heavier weights next season.



## BRANSTON PICKLE

The driving pony has died aged 20. The 11.2hh "feisty" part-Exmoor and Grace Smith won individual bronze and team gold at the junior World Championships in 2012, as well as five national titles.

Picture by Richard Sharrock