

# BREXIT: what happens next?

How will the Leave vote affect the equine industry? Eleanor Jones reports

**W**ORK on delivering the Central Equine Database (CED) will continue despite Britain's vote to leave the EU, according to the company engaged to run it.

The government was required by EU law to hold "basic identification and food chain status" on all horses in the country by this year (news, 9 June). Equine Register, which won the government tender to run the database, says it has been told this will be unaffected by the result of the 23 June referendum.

The Equine Sector Council discussed the possible implications of the Leave vote at a meeting on 24 June.

An Equine Register spokesman said: "Defra said that work to deliver the CED will continue.

"The CED is entering an extensive user-testing phase with a sample group of passport-issuing organisations [PIOs] over the coming weeks. This will be followed by a PIO on-boarding programme, which is expected to be completed in time for a public launch early next year."

## Four important areas

PROFESSOR Tim Morris, who holds the equine portfolio on Defra's Animal Health and Welfare Board for England, was at a meeting of equine industry professionals last month to discuss the possible implications of Brexit (news, 26 May).

He told *H&H*: "There are four important areas for the UK's equine sector to consider from the vote to leave the EU.

"Animal health, with related trade aspects, is very closely linked to, or controlled by, EU legislation. So we now have the opportunity to consider what we want to keep and what to change or abolish.

"Defra has already indicated it will continue with microchips and passports for equines. The UK focus will now be more on welfare and disease control rather than food safety, but we should be able to implement this in a more flexible way, that

also allows international horse movement, including to and from the EU."

Professor Morris said animal welfare is "mainly based on UK legislation", so little may change.

He added: "The main exception is welfare in transport, which is governed by EU law. Here, one change we can now consider is whether live animal exports of horses for slaughter should continue.

"Third, it is likely there will still be a requirement for some degree of European clearance in the short term for the replacement of the Horserace Betting Levy but, long term, funding of British horseracing will be fully under UK control."

Professor Morris said the UK already has arrangements such as the Tripartite Agreement, which allows

movement of competition horses between the UK, France and Ireland, and an agreement with the World Organisation for Animal Health, which preceded the EU and should continue.

He added: "A key challenge will be to continue to develop bilateral trade agreements, such as for equine products in markets such as China.

"During the referendum campaign Defra minister George Eustice, a supporter of the UK leaving the EU, made it clear he was looking for a new vision of what the UK should control. So the challenge now to the equine sector is to engage and give the government a clear consensus of what is needed and what should change."

## Horse health

KEVIN NEEDHAM, director of Newmarket-based BBA Shipping & Transport Ltd, thought the Leave vote could mean benefits in terms of disease control.

He explained horses can currently move freely between member states on the EU's Trade Control and Expert System (TRACES), for which they must have health certificates but do not have to be tested for

infectious diseases before entering different states.

"Horses can come from anywhere in the EU without being tested as it's a single market. That's something we could change now," he said.

"They might say horses from countries where diseases are known to be endemic should be screened, such as infectious anaemia in Romania, and West Nile virus in France. If Turkey joins, they have an open border with Syria, which could mean a risk of [deadly disease] African horse sickness.

"There's a possible downside: the EU might impose VAT, so horses going in have to be taxed and customs-cleared, but there might be bigger markets outside the EU.

"Given the position we're in now, we have to see it as an opportunity to change things for the better."

## Business

CLAIRE WILLIAMS, chief executive of the British Equestrian Trade Association, said it is too early to determine the effect leaving will have on businesses.

She said one immediate apparent effect was the devaluation of the pound, which means those buying products for example from the Far East, where many items are in American dollars, get less for their money.

But this means those selling abroad will benefit, as their products will be cheaper.

"But apart from that, any impact will be impossible to see yet, until we get reaction from countries we trade with," she added.

"Britain produces a lot of equestrian products that are well received overseas. People want them, and will be prepared to trade, and we buy a lot from Europe."

Ms Williams said it could be up to two years until businesses know the full impact, as this is how long it could take to agree the terms of Britain's exit.

But she added: "We'll be monitoring the situation and, where we can, advising companies."

● **Are you concerned about the result, or do you support the decision?**

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Kevin Needham