



**Submission of the
Kerry Bog Pony Co Operative Society
to the Department of Agriculture
relating to the
Conditions of Entry to the next
Agri Environmental Scheme**

Contents

Context

Current Situation

Proposed actions for effective support

Appendix 1 – Current GLAS Rare Breed specifications

Appendix 2 – Society actions to support breed

Appendix 3 – Society Promotional brochures

Context

Despite being an ancient breed Kerry Bog Ponies were only officially recognised by the Department of Agriculture and the European Union in 2005, the same year that the official Kerry Bog Pony CoOperative Society was founded.

Due to the economic situation and changing agricultural practices in Ireland, the Kerry Bog Pony was on the brink of extinction by the 1990s. It was thanks to local Kerryman John Mulvihill who collected 20 local ponies of the old type that the breed survives. Subsequent Blood testing and DNA testing showed that the ponies formed a distinct breed and efforts were put in place to preserve and increase the stock. Herd numbers have slowly increased since registration began in 2005 but the breed remains critically endangered.

The Kerry Bog Pony CoOperative Society was formed to be the representative body for the breed, and its responsibilities include the conservation and promotion of the pony. Annual Inspections and a Breed Show are held with a view to promoting the breed and ensuring standards are met.

The Kerry Bog Pony Co Operative Society Ltd holds the Studbook licence, granted by the Department of Agriculture. The Register is maintained by Horse Sport Ireland, who issue the Passports on behalf of the Society. This studbook is the register of all purebred Kerry Bog Ponies. It consists of a main section only and is divided into four classes:

- Class 1 is for ponies that pass inspection for classification.
- Class 2 is for ponies that are not included in Class 1 when inspected only because they are outside the height limits (102cms-112cms for mares and 102cms – 117cms for stallions).
- Class 3 is for animals that do not meet the criteria for entry into class 1 or 2. Any pony showing visible signs of broken colour (e.g. white body flashes); one or two wall eyes; pink pigment around the eyes, will be placed in class 3.
- Class 4 [Un-inspected Ponies] is for un-inspected foals and all other animals that have a legal right of entry into the studbook but have not been inspected.
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To hold the licence for the Studbook it is required under EU legislation to have a Breed Programme in place. This is fulfilled by the Inspection procedure.

When first registered all Kerry Bog ponies are Class 4. At 2 years of age, Kerry Bog Ponies are eligible for Inspection for upgrading within the Studbook thus fulfilling the Breed programme requirement.

The Kerry Bog Pony Co Operative Society receives aid from the Department of Agriculture, under the Equine Technical Support and Equine Breeding schemes, in support of the measures required under the conditions for the holding of the studbook license.

Under the current GLAS scheme, there is no requirement to meet the Breed objectives of the Studbook to qualify for payment of the Rare Breed premium.

Reaching New Heights, the report of Irish Sport Horse Industry Strategy Committee, comprising the RDS, Horse Sport Ireland and Teagasc, (<http://www.horsesportireland.ie/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Reaching-New-Heights-FINAL.pdf>) states in its Key Recommendations under **R5 Develop and enhance the structures to improve the Health and Welfare of horses:**

R5.5 No public funds should be channelled into breeding grants or subsidies unless they are linked to quality improvement as they principally serve to distort breeding

THE CURRENT SITUATION

As a Rare Breed the Kerry Bog Pony is heavily dependent on the GLAS Scheme. Within an active population of about 300 ponies, currently 100 ponies are claiming premiums. We have no idea how many of these are adult breeding mares and whether they conform to the Breed Standard. The scheme requires that each female must produce 1 purebred offspring within the duration of the scheme. To qualify, stallions over 3 yrs of age must be inspected. As there is no requirement for mares or their offspring to be inspected in order to qualify for the grant, we have no idea if the foals being produced are in line with the Breeding Objectives of the Studbook.

KBP Foal registration figures:

Year of Birth	Number of Kerry Bog Pony Foals registered
2018 (to date)	45 foals
2017	35 foals
2016	40 foals
2015	55 foals
2014	33 foals

It is hard to measure the difference the GLAS scheme has made to foal registration numbers – the above figures could simply be the result of a difficult economy.

Comparative Irish Equine Rare Breed Numbers:

Breed	Estimated Number of Active Broodmares	Number of foals per annum
Irish Draught Horse	1,658	782
Connemara Pony	3,316	1,564
Kerry Bog Pony	95	45

The Kerry Bog Pony is the rarest of Ireland's native equine breeds with just 45 foals approximately born each year. This compares with the Irish Draught Horse which has approximately 800 foals and the Connemara pony which has approximately 1,500 foals registered a year.

The Kerry Bog Pony population is approximately 2.67% of the Connemara Pony population, yet the premium paid on a livestock unit is the same despite the difference in the health of the population of both breeds.

While we appreciate that 1 pony equals 1 LU, the rate paid per livestock unit is the same for all three breeds regardless of their level of endangerment.

Proposed amendments

“GLAS Tranche 3 Rare Breed Objectives: Retain and where possible increase populations of specific rare breeds to ensure long term survival of the breeds.”

Proposed actions for more effective support:

KBP Society Responsibilities	Current GLAS Scheme actions to achieve this end	Proposed GLAS Scheme actions to maximise support
1. To preserve the Kerry Bog Pony Breed	<i>The payment to farmers under the Tier 1 Priority Environmental Asset Rare Breeds encourages the keeping of Kerry Bog Ponies. Requirement: Produce and register 1 foal per mare in 5 years</i>	Requirement: Mares over 3yrs should produce 2 registered foals in 5 years
2. Maintain Traditional Breed Characteristics	<i>Stallions over 3 yrs of age must meet the inspection requirements of the studbook (No such requirement for females)</i>	Mares over 3 yrs that are inspected (Class 1, 2 or 3) should be eligible for increased premium. Progeny over the age of 2yrs to receive increased premium when inspected (Class 1,2 or 3)
3. Maintain an acceptable level of genetic diversity in the herd	<i>NONE</i>	Outcross foals to be recognised and receive an increased premium at registration.
4. Encourage the market for Kerry Bog Ponies -Membership Requirement	<i>Priority entry is only available to those who have been registered with the KBP Society and have registered ponies in 2012, 2013 and/or 2014.</i>	Entry requirement to be relaxed. Applicant must be paid up member of KBP Society for duration of the scheme. No previous membership of KBPS to be required however during first year of scheme new owners are not paid for KBP and must attend a training programme organised by KBPS. All members must attend 1 seminar during scheme. Participants in the previous scheme involving Rare Breeds could claim for up to 20 LUs. New participants could claim up to 10 LUs.
5. To be the responsible authority in all matters concerning conservation,... and welfare	<i>NONE – ponies never seen or condition assessed during period of contract.</i>	Department visit would ensure animal welfare as well as the accuracy of claim information, ensuring all ponies claimed for are present on the property unless absent for a legitimate reason e.g. at stud.
6. Promotion	<i>NONE</i>	Aims of Glas ... to ensure longterm survival of the breed. Increased premiums for inspected ponies would ensure a level of training that would enable stock to be utilised at the end of the GLAS scheme

1. To preserve the Kerry Bog Pony Breed
 - 1.1 The breed is Critically Endangered, it is not enough to simply maintain current numbers.
 - 1.2 To grow the Kerry Bog Pony population increased numbers of foals should be encouraged.
2. Maintain Traditional Breed Characteristics
 - 2.1 Currently the majority of foals registered are never seen, either at selections or shows, therefore it is not known if they actually conform to the Breed Standard
 - 2.2 It is essential to monitor breed type especially at the early stages of a Breeding Programme.
 - 2.3 Unmonitored breeding results can quickly lead to erosion of breed characteristics.
 - 2.4 Rewarding ponies that comply with the Breed Program should encourage participation.
3. Maintaining Genetic Diversity
 - 3.1 The current requirement to produce 1 foal in 5 years, may impact the population negatively, by reducing the potential number of offspring from valuable breeding mares.
 - 3.2 Valuable outcross mares should be identified.
 - 3.3 Their progeny by unrelated stallions should receive increased premiums.
4. Encourage the market for Kerry Bog Ponies -Membership Requirement
 - 4.1 Currently Glas is not an aid to marketing the KBP as retrospective ownership is required.
 - 4.2 The backdated Membership and Ownership requirement of the current scheme limited the potential for farmers to opt for Kerry Bog Ponies as their Rare Breed option.
 - 4.3 Establishing livestock units in the first year of the scheme, without payment, would allow new enthusiasts to be eligible for the Rare Breeds priority, and to receive payment in subsequent years.
 - 4.4 Participants in previous schemes would be rewarded for their continuing interest in the breed by an increased number of eligible LUs
5. To be the responsible authority in all matters concerning conservation, ... and welfare
 - 5.1 Within the current scheme the ponies are never seen by the GLAS agent. The KBP Society would see them if they came out to inspection.
 - 5.2 As the condition of the ponies is never monitored – potentially payments could be made to participants when the ponies may be emaciated, neglected or even dead.
 - 5.3 Anecdotal evidence suggests that payments have been made on deceased ponies
6. Promotion
 - 6.1 Encouraging Inspections ensures training and handling of ponies.
 - 6.2 An older unbroken pony has very little commercial value.
 - 6.3 In the past it has been noted that individuals leaving REPS, AEOS and GLAS have sold these unhandled ponies at very low prices to dispose of them, often to the Factory.
 - 6.4 They do not contribute positively to the image of the breed or the future of the breed.

CONCLUSION

We realise we must have an objective in mind for the end product and we constantly promote the pony at Equestrian and Rare Breed events around the country. (See Appendix 2). The pony does not fall under the Food Production umbrella and so must be treated differently to rare breeds of cattle or sheep. It is part of our living heritage, representative of the tradition of small farming which has disappeared in the last 70 years. It has a value under the headings of Heritage, Tourism, Biodiversity, Local history.

Traditionally it was a small working pony. Its preservation should involve the protection of its original attributes: its appearance, its good temperament, its strength and its hardiness. Ponies benefit greatly from human interaction and actively enjoy being busy and working, whether that is under saddle or driving or walking with tourists.

Attending inspections will ensure the ponies are used to interacting with people and would have the added benefit of identifying good quality ponies, especially stallions. This will benefit the owners as well as the breed. It would also ensure the production of a saleable product once it exits the scheme.

The increased premium requested for inspected Kerry Bog Ponies would still only be a fraction of the premiums paid out to the Irish Draught Horse and Connemara ponies participating in the Rare Breed Section of the GLAS scheme whose populations are not nearly as endangered.

More targeted action is needed in order to achieve the objectives of the GLAS rare Breed Scheme
“..to increase populations of specific rare breeds to ensure long term survival of the breeds.”

The Kerry Bog Pony is Critically Endangered and must increase its population significantly if the breed is to prosper.

Appendix 1 - Current GLAS Rare Breed Specifications

Requirements:

Participants must:

1. For Bovines and Ovines be a member of a breed society approved by the Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine, for the period of the contract.
 - 1a. For Equines be a member of a studbook approved by the Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine, for the period of the contract.
2. For Bovines and Ovines register all progeny from a purebred mating with the relevant breed society where they are seeking a GLAS rare breed payment on the animal.
 - 2a. For Equines, register all progeny from a purebred mating with the relevant studbook where they are seeking a GLAS rare breed payment on the animal.
3. Maintain an up-to-date monthly record of all registered animals owned by you.
4. Record all animals on the Rare Breeds Record Sheet.

Requirements for the different types of livestock:

Equines:

1. All equines must be registered in an approved studbook and have a studbook passport with pedigree recorded on sire and dam.
2. All registered females and entire males between 6 months and 3 years of age will be considered for payment
3. An adult female (s) (over 3 years of age) must be mated to a purebred male of the same breed at each mating. Breeding females must produce registered offspring before the end of the contract; otherwise there will be full clawback.
4. Entire adult males greater than 3 years of age that have met the inspection requirements within their studbook of origin up to a maximum of 1 stallion per 5 mares will be considered for payment.

Appendix 2

SAMPLE MARKETING ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN

- Attended numerous shows around the country each year,
- Organised and took part in rare Breeds festivals.
- Running National Breed show for last 12 years.
- Specialised lectures to Biodiversity Conference, Galway, Folklore conference, Killarney, Rare Breed Conference, Mulranny etc
- Liaised with Irish Pony Society re Mountain and Moorland status. Contributed to subsequent IPS conferences on Judging Standards.
- Organising National Mare Championship with regional qualifiers around Ireland in conjunction with the Irish Shows Association.
- Making representations to Department of Agriculture re inclusion in schemes such as Reps and Commonage
- Compiled and distribution of Brochures, Leaflets and Information Sheets
- Produced a Stallion Book with photos and pedigrees of all Class 1 stallions.
- Researched and produced a Book on the history of the Kerry Bog Pony
- Benefited from GRGAS, Equine Technical Support Schemes. Plus payment from Dept of Rural Affairs grant aid to Show Organisers.
- Organised a Judging Seminar to highlight the breed characteristics of the Kerry Bog Pony compared with other breeds.
- Ran Art and Photography competitions
- Newsletters 3 per year to members and stakeholders.
- Monthly News Article in Ireland's Horse Review for past 4 years.
- Ear to the Ground segment
- Seminar in conjunction with Teagasc – Adding Value to your pony
- Seminars covering Pony Welfare, Nutrition, Handling etc

Appendix 3

DL leaflet –

http://kerrybogpony.ie/su_media/documents/o_1auv8ar8d1ec0187lq6o18ejqcs14.pdf

C5 Brochure -

http://kerrybogpony.ie/su_media/documents/o_1av1ro1t61g9okdcuv910mv1r0ua.pdf