

EQUINE CENSUS 2023 – Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

GENERAL

Q1. What is the purpose of the equine census?

A1. The results of the equine census will provide the Department with details of the equine population in the country. This information will help inform DAFM's future equine industry development and will be used to protect the equine industry by enhancing the Department's disease prevention and control measures.

The data returned by individual keepers will create an equine herd profile for the premises on the Department's systems. Recording this equine residence data will help reunite lost/straying animals with their keepers.

Q2 Is it mandatory to complete and submit and annual census return?

A2. Yes - EU Animal Health Law provides that each Member State must record the habitual residence of each equine resident in their country on a central database. The equine identification and traceability elements of this EU legislation have been transposed into national law via S.I. 254 of 2023. It is an offence not to comply with the EU and national requirements.

Q3. Will my census data be shared outside of DAFM?

A3. No – individual census data will not be shared by DAFM with any other organisation. Cumulative data, where no individual or premises can be identified, may be used in the preparation of reports, policy documents etc.

Your census data may be used within DAFM to establish your eligibility for certain DAFM Schemes.

Q4. How often is the equine census conducted?

A4. The equine census is conducted on an annual basis, generally at the end of November.

Q5. Who must complete the census?

A5. The registered keeper of every premises where any equines are kept on census night must submit a completed census return. Where your premises is registered to keep equines but there are no equines present there on the night of the census, you are still required to complete a census form indicating that position and confirming whether you wish your herd number to remain active on the Department's systems.

Q6. What are the implications for me if I do not submit a census return?

A6. Keepers who do not return a completed census return commit an offence. In addition, they may not be eligible for payments under DAFM equine-related Schemes.

Q7. What information must be submitted?

A7.

- (i) The total number of equines present on your holding that permanently live there;
 - (a) The total number of these equines that have passports;
 - (b) The total number of these equines that have yet to be issued with a passport (typically foals).
- (ii) The total number of equines present on your holding on census night that do not generally live there (visiting – for breeding, competition purposes etc.).
- (iii) ONLY in respect of the equines that permanently live on your holding and have passports (as at (i) above) - their UELNs (passport numbers) and the approx. dates on which they moved to your premises.

Q8. What does 'habitually resident' mean?

A8. In the context of the equine census, 'habitually resident' has the same meaning as 'permanently' resident and 'ordinarily resident'. An equine is considered to be habitually resident on a premises where it has been kept for more than 30 days. Exceptions apply for

- equines participating in competitions, racing, shows, training and hauling for a period not exceeding 90 days;
- male equines for breeding kept during the breeding season; and
- female equines for breeding are kept for a period not exceeding 90 days.

The excepted horses can be present on your holding for more than 30 days without being considered to be habitually resident there. For the purpose of the census, these horses should be counted as being 'temporarily' present on your holding (visiting) .

Q9. What is a UELN?

A9. An equine's UELN is its Unique Equine Life Number - often referred to as its passport number. This number is used to identify an equine for its entire lifetime. You will generally find this at the front of the passport document. UELNs are generally 15 digits long but can be shorter for older animals where the passport was issued before 1 July 2009.

Q10. What is a microchip number?

A10. All equines identified with a passport in the EU since 1 July 2009 must be implanted with a microchip by a veterinary practitioner. Each microchip is coded with a specific number which is generally 15 digits long. Microchip numbers may be similar – but not the same- as the passport number/ (UELN). The number of the microchip must be recorded on the

passport document. It provides a tangible link between the animal and its identification document. However, the microchip number alone does not serve to identify an equine.

Q11. What is an equine premises registration number (EPRN)?

A11. Where a person intends to keep equines, they must firstly apply to their DAFM Regional Veterinary Office (RVO) to have the premises registered for that purpose. Contact details for the Department's RVO can be found at the following link <https://www.gov.ie/en/organisation-information/9dc27-contact-us/#regional-offices-rvos>. Premises approved to keep equines are issued with a unique equine premises registration number (EPRN), which is essentially a herd number. If you have other species, your EPRN will be the same as your herd number.

Q12. I keep other species and have a herd number. Do I need a separate approval to keep equines?

A12. Yes – you must notify your DAFM Regional Veterinary Office (RVO) of your intention to keep equines, and you must submit a completed application form. Where approved, your herd number will be updated on the Department's systems and will be activated for equines. Your (EPRN) will be the same as your herd number. If you do not notify the Department of your intention to keep equines, we will not be in a position to contact you with equine-related information - e.g. in the case of a disease alert etc. Contact details for the Department's RVO can be found at the following link <https://www.gov.ie/en/organisation-information/9dc27-contact-us/#regional-offices-rvos>

Q13. The system says that my EPRN is not valid. I am using the herd number assigned by the Department. What is wrong?

A13. This would indicate that your herd number has not been activated to keep equines. You should contact your DAFM Regional Veterinary Office to regularise the position. Contact details for the Department's RVO can be found at the following link <https://www.gov.ie/en/organisation-information/9dc27-contact-us/#regional-offices-rvos>

Q14. I am keeping equines but have not notified DAFM. What must I do?

A14. You must complete and submit an application form for approval of an equine premises (HR1) and return it to your DAFM Regional Veterinary Office. Contact details for the Department's RVO can be found at the following link <https://www.gov.ie/en/organisation-information/9dc27-contact-us/#regional-offices-rvos>. Your application will be considered there and may involve an inspection of your premises.

Q15. Do all horses need passports?

A15. Yes – all horses, ponies, donkeys and zebras must be issued with an equine passport no later than 12 months from the date of the animals' birth or before the equine leaves the premises on which it was born, whichever is the earlier date. You must submit a passport application to the relevant PIO within six months of the equine's birth, to allow sufficient time for any issues arising to be resolved and to facilitate the passport being issued no later than 12 months from the animal's date of birth.

Q16. I have an older equine that does not have a passport. What should I do?

A16. You should contact your vet to arrange for the equine to be identified. You should then submit an application to the appropriate PIO for an equine passport for the animal.

Q17. Where can I get an equine passport?

A17. Equine passports are issued by a number of Passport Issuing Organisations (PIOs) approved by the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine. A list of the contact details can be found in the document [Bodies approved to issue Equine Passports](#).

Q18. What is involved in obtaining a passport for my equine?

A18. Before applying to an approved PIO for a passport, the equine must be identified by a veterinary practitioner who will inspect the animal to ensure that it has not been identified previously. The vet will complete the required marking chart and insert a microchip, where they are certain that the equine was not previously implanted with a compliant microchip. Where the equine is to be registered in a studbook, DNA samples will be taken by the vet. You should contact the appropriate studbook for information on the procedures to be followed in having the DNA analysed.

Q19. I have lost my equine's passport. What should I do?

A19. You will need to apply for a duplicate or replacement passport for the horse. You should contact your vet, who will complete a marking chart and scan the horse to see if it has already been implanted with a microchip. If a microchip is found, the number can be checked on the Department's Microchip Checker at the following link <https://EquineChipCheck.agriculture.gov.ie> which is also accessible on the Department's website at <https://www.gov.ie/en/collection/32568-horses/>. If the microchip is recorded there, it will also record the PIO that issued the original passport. You should submit a completed duplicate application form to the PIO that issued the original passport. Where the vet cannot detect a microchip, and you do not know what PIO issued the they will implant a new one and record the number on the marking chart. You should then apply to an appropriate approved PIO for a replacement document.

COMPLETING THE CENSUS ONLINE

Q20. Where do I go to submit my census online?

A20. There is a dedicated equine census portal in the AIM Services tile, located on the agfood.ie home page. To complete the census, you must **not** log in to agfood - Instead, go directly to click on the 'AIM Services' tile on the lower right-hand side of the home page to start the process.

Q21. Is the AIM Services portal accessible to everyone?

A21. No – you must be registered as an equine herdkeeper with agfood.ie to access the AIM Services portal. The census portal can then be accessed using your agfood.ie password and PIN. To complete our two-factor authentication process, you will also be asked to nominate a mobile phone number to which a onetime code (OTC) will be sent each time you use the system.

Q22 How do I register with agfood.ie?

A22. You create an account by logging on to www.agfood.ie

- (i) Choose the option to 'Register' - using your PPSN, email address, phone number and date of birth.

For security reasons, your personal login details will issue to you by post and should arrive at your address a few days after you register. You will need this information to access the 2023 Equine Census portal (and the wider agfood.ie system).

- (ii) If you have any difficulties accessing your online account, please contact the Department by phone at **049 – 4368288** or by email at agfood@agriculture.gov.ie for assistance.

Q23. What is Two-factor Authentication?

A23. This is an added security feature introduced by the Department to protect your data and ensure that the person trying to access your account is you. In order to access the Equine census 'Home Page', you will be asked to provide a mobile phone number to which the Department can text a new specific code each time you wish to access the census portal. The first time you use the AIM Services portal, please provide a mobile phone number you will have with you each time you wish to access the census portal in the future. **Note: it may take up to 90 seconds for the code to arrive on your mobile phone.**

Q24. I chose to create my 2023 census using previous data but Sections 1 and 2 are blank. Why is this?

A24. Choosing to use previous data will return a list of all the UELNs (passport numbers) that the system accepted from your 2022 census. This provides a base for your census 2023 reply. Sections 1 and 2 will record the overall position for census 2023. This may or may not be the same as last year. Complete these Sections based on the equines present on your holding on 2023 Census Night. The system will then expect you to list the UELNs of all the equines present on the holding that night that ordinarily (permanently) live there. To help with this, the system will list the UELNs of all the equines recorded as being present on Census Night 2022. If some horses have moved out of your holding since that time, you can delete them from your list. The UELNs of any new horses present and permanently living on the holding can be added to the list.

Q25. What does 'permanently resident' mean?

A25. This refers to equines that ordinarily live on your holding.

Q26. What equines count as being 'temporarily' present on my holding?

A26. These are equines that are present on your holding on census night but do not ordinarily live there – this would include equines visiting your premises for breeding/racing/training etc.

Q27. Why do I not have to list the UELNs of the equine that are temporarily present?

A27. The census is a snapshot in time to create a profile of the equines in your care. Equines that are visiting your premises should not appear on your profile. By recording the total number of these equines, they will be included in the overall count of equines present in the country on Census Night, but they will not be recorded as being habitually resident on your holding.

Q28. I run a livery yard – do I need to record the horses kept on my premises?

A28. Yes – you are the keeper responsible for these equines and must record them as being permanently present on your holding. You should have all their passports in your care and must list each of their UELNs.

Q29. I submitted more than five equines last year, but I can only see five UELNs on the screen. Why?

A29. To make it easier to read, the screen is set up to list five UELNs at one time. However, you can change this setting to read ten at a time or 20 at a time by left-clicking on the arrow beside the words 'Items per page' at the bottom of the UELN list.

Q30. Not all the UELNs I submitted last year are listed. Why?

A30. In 2021 and 2022, the Department's census portal could only accept UELNs (passport numbers) that were notified to the central equine database by approved Passport Issuing Organisations (PIOs). Where a horse was identified with a passport by a PIO outside of Ireland, the information recorded on it is not available to the Irish central database until the keeper in Ireland lodges the associated passport with an approved PIO here, from where all the information required by law is notified to the DAFM central equine database.

To make completion of the 2023 census easier and more effective, the Department has decided that we will accept data in respect of UELNs that are not recorded on the database **for census purposes only**. This information will not be validated (as there is nothing to validate it against) and the data will **not** be notified to the central database. When your census return includes one or more of these equines, they will be highlighted in red on the census screen.

These equines are not properly identified in accordance with EU and national law, which requires that all required data in respect of the animal are recorded on the equine's passport, on the database of an approved PIO and on the central equine database. The keepers of such animals will be advised that their information is **not** recorded on the central database.

Q31. What should I do if my horse's UELN is not recorded on the central equine database?

A31. You must lodge the associated passport with an approved Irish PIO ([Bodies approved to issue Equine Passports](#)), from where the relevant data will be notified to the central database in the Department.

Q32. Are there any consequences for me if my horse is not recorded on the central equine database?

A32. If your horse's details are not recorded and updated on the central equine database, the animal is not properly identified. It is an offence to keep an equine that is not properly identified.

Any horses whose data are not recorded on the central database in accordance with EU and national law **shall not be considered eligible for payment under any DAFM scheme until the keeper lodges the associated passport with a DAFM approved PIO and that information is properly recorded on the DAFM central equine database.**

If, at the end of the equine's life you chose to present the animal for slaughter for inclusion in the food chain, the equine will not be accepted at an approved slaughter plant unless the data recorded on the central database in respect of that animal indicate that it is eligible for the food chain.

Equine passport numbers that are not recorded on the central database will be highlighted on the equine census screens. Action will have to be taken by the keepers to remedy those equines not recorded on/notified to the central database.

Q33. My horse's passport was issued by an Irish PIO but is not included in my 2022 list. What should I do?

A33. The name of the issuing PIO will be recorded on the passport. You should contact them directly to resolve this issue.

Q34. How do I delete a UELN (passport number) from last year's list?

A34. - Using the lefthand side of your mouse, click on the box next to the UELN you want to delete.

- This will highlight the 'Delete UELN' box underneath the list of UELNs on the screen.
- Double check to make sure that you are deleting the correct record – as once it has been deleted, it cannot be retrieved.
- Left-click on the 'Delete UELN' box to delete the record.
- A green notification will appear at the top right-hand side of your screen to confirm that the UELN has been deleted.

Q35. I deleted a UELN by mistake. What should I do?

A35. Click on the green '+Add UELN' box to create a new record, into which you can re-enter the UELN that you deleted in error. Alternatively, you can click on the 'CANCEL' button on the bottom right of the screen to cancel all the entries that you have made. This will bring you back to the 'home' page, where you can start the process again.

Q36. Can I edit a UELN from my list of 2022 UELNs?

A36. A recorded UELN can be edited where you have made a mistake in entering the 15-digit number. Click on the 'Edit' button on the UELN line to edit it.

You can also edit the date on which that equine moved to your holding using the 'Edit' button.

Where you are updating your information following the movement of a 2022 equine from your holding and its replacement with another equine that moved in in the last year, we recommend that you delete the old UELN separately and then add a new one.

Q37. Can I change the information I submitted for 2022?

A37. No – this field has been locked. If you wish to amend this information, email equinecensus2023@agriculture.gov.ie, stating the reason for the change. This request will be considered by DAFM, and you will be contacted about it in due course.

Q38. Can I change the information that I submitted for 2023?

A38. Yes

- You can amend the information that you have already submitted.
- To do this, go to the 'Home' page
- Choose 2023 as the census data that you wish to access – click on the 'Search' button. - This will present a new tile on the left-hand side of the screen, which displays options to 'View', 'Amend' or 'Print' your 2023 census data.
- Click on the 'Amend' option to return to your 2023 census data.
- Amend as necessary and click on 'Submit' to record the amendments.

Q39. Can I print out the information that I submitted?

A39. Yes – you can print your equine census returns from 2022 onwards. To do this return to the Home page and select census year and then select 'Print' option.

Q40. Can I print my 2021 data?

A40. No – this facility is not available.

Q41. I am keeping more than ten equines but am not comfortable using the 'Batch Upload' option to record the UELNs. Can I list them individually?

A41. Yes, you can. However, you should be aware that individual listing of large numbers of individual UELNs will take longer to process because the portal interacts with the DAFM central equine database to validate each separate record.

Q42. What is a batch upload?

A42. Where there are 10 equines or more present on a holding, keepers can use the 'Batch Upload' option to submit the required details for all equines kept on the holding. This involves inputting the relevant information for each horse onto a spreadsheet which can be uploaded on to census portal. If you are the registered keeper of multiple herds this option can be used to submit 2023 census data in respect of up to five separate herds, using a separate worksheet for each EPRN. If you are submitting information for fewer than five separate premises any unused worksheets can remain blank.

If you click on the 'Batch Upload' option on the top right hand side of the census portal, there is a 'How To' guide on the first tab of the excel worksheet which provides full details on how to use the batch upload facility. There is also a video on the online portal to assist keepers using the batch upload facility.

AGENTS

Q43. Can an Agent submit my equine census data on my behalf?

A43. Yes, an agent can submit your equine census data on your behalf if they are registered with the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine as an Agriculture Agent, their account is active, and they have access to your herd through their agency.

Q44. How does a Herd keeper give an Agent/Agency access to complete the Equine Census on their behalf?

A44. A Herd keeper can give an Agent/Agency access by filling out an AG1 form which can be found on the Department's website [here](#). The herd keeper can then return a scanned copy of the AG1 form to aimaccess@agriculture.gov.ie. The Agent/Agency should ensure the Agency name, address and Agency Number are filled out correctly before asking the Herd keeper to sign and date the form.

Q45. Where do I login to complete the Equine Census as an Agent?

A45. The Aim Services Application Tile is available on the Agent Log-in page <http://agfood.ie/agent> and is also available on the Individual Applicant Log-in page <http://agfood.ie/applicant>

Q46. I am a registered Agent, and I know my username but have forgotten my password and/or PIN, how can I retrieve it?

A46 You should use the 'Forgotten Password' and/or 'Forgotten PIN' facility on the Login page before clicking the AIM Services Application Tile.

Q47. I am not an Agricultural Consultant but want to act as an agent for my neighbour. Is this possible?

A47. Yes, this is possible. You should complete the Agency form (**AG2**) and the Agent form (**AG3**). For the purposes of AIM, you will become an Agency and be the sole agent in that agency. Your neighbour should complete the AG1 form nominating you to act on their behalf. You will be notified when you have access to AIM and will be provided with a username, password and link to the relevant website. All forms can be found on the Department's website [here](#).

Q48. Where can I contact if I need information on how to become an Agent and the correct form to fill in?

A48. You can contact aimaccess@agriculture.gov.ie.

Q49. Where do I contact if I am having technical difficulties accessing my online account?

A49. If you are having difficulties accessing your online account, please contact the Department's helpdesk by telephone at 049 4368288 or 049 4368200 or by email at agfood@agriculture.gov.ie for assistance.