

# THE PREPARATION AND SALE OF THOROUGHBRED BREEDING AND YOUNG STOCK AT PUBLIC AUCTION

## SALE ENTRY, HEALTH TESTING AND GENERAL GUIDANCE FOR VENDORS AND PROSPECTIVE PURCHASERS

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- i. The pre-sale requirements detailed in the Conditions of Sale or sales documentation information respective to the health certification, blood testing, swabbing and vaccination status of horses, should be checked and arranged within the time parameters outlined in the rules for each sale. The appropriate certificates and evidence should then be submitted to the sales house prior to the arrival of horses on the premises. This may include the uploading of vaccination records to the horse's e-passport via the Vaccination App.
- ii. The sales houses have their own individual rules pertaining to the maximum age of a mare on the date of the sale; the maximum stage of gestation permitted; and the minimum age of any foal being sold. These restrictions, introduced solely to safeguard the welfare of horses going through the ring, should be checked before horses are entered to be sold at public auction.
- iii. Consignors and prospective purchasers are advised to read the Conditions of Sale and to familiarise themselves with the definitions, allocation of responsibilities and any restrictions relating to the administration of medications; health certification; declaration of stable vices; and any circumstances, health conditions or positive post-sale health testing, which may mean that the horse is returnable to the vendor. Purchasers may wish to engage the services of a Bloodstock Agent.
- iv. Some horses may have special bedding requirements e.g. shavings/paper, due to a medical condition. This can be accommodated by the sales house by submitting a veterinary health certificate in advance of the sale.
- v. Repeated endoscopic examination at the sale can be distressing, harmful and suboptimal in terms of introducing infection. Vendors should arrange for their horses, especially foals and yearlings, to be video endoscoped shortly before the sale, recording the identification of the individual; the nostril used; and ensuring good quality imaging of the larynx and pharynx. Crucially, videos must be of sufficient diagnostic quality to prevent repeat requests for endoscopy. The video should then be left at the repository for examination by the veterinary surgeons representing prospective purchasers. Full video endoscopy guidelines and repository rules are available from the individual sales houses.
- vi. When selling entire male horses, especially foal colts and rigs, the advance examination and palpation of the testicles by a veterinary surgeon may avoid repeat manual examinations during the sale, which the horse may start to resent. The veterinary certificate can be presented to prospective purchasers or displayed on the stable door.

- vii. If the vendor wishes to provide x-rays of the horse – in particular, foals and yearlings – to be lodged at the repository for the veterinary surgeons representing prospective purchasers to review, it is usually preferable to take these at the stud farm in advance of the sale, rather than at the sales complex on arrival, as horses may not be as relaxed and potentially less inclined to stand still whilst quality radiographic images are obtained. Essentially, images must be of sufficient diagnostic quality to prevent repeat requests for x-ray.

## PREPARATION OF THE HORSE FOR SALE

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- i. The appropriate preparation in terms of nutrition, exercise, farrier work and veterinary care is required, to ensure the healthy presentation of horses, especially young stock and pregnant mares, at public auction. Additionally, the horse should be taught to stand correctly for physical inspection; become accustomed to being taken in and out of the stable to be shown; and become familiar with loading on and unloading from the horsebox.
- ii. A busy sales complex can be a stressful environment for all horses, especially pregnant mares and this does place some risk on the unborn foetus. Pregnant mares should therefore be prepared adequately for sale, so that they are able to be presented to prospective purchasers for inspection, without impacting their wellbeing. Sales preparation for pregnant mares will usually involve some in-hand walking exercise, so that they are fit enough to walk and have their action and conformation assessed by potential purchasers.
- iii. Any foals being sold will be prepared according to their age and developmental stage, with some in-hand walking likely. Care should be taken to ensure foals do not become footsore. Preventative steps should be taken well in advance of the sale to prepare the hooves and soles for presentation at public auction, with regular trimming, balanced nutrition and topical ointments commonly used to achieve strong feet and prevent bruised soles.
- iv. Yearlings are generally prepared with a combination of in-hand walking, long reining, or automated horse walker exercise. Some trot and canter work on the lunge is also recommended, with equal amounts of work performed on each rein. Post-sale wind (respiratory) testing requires the yearling to be exercised on the lunge in both directions for assessment by the purchaser's appointed veterinary surgeon and, if required, a veterinary panel (yearlings would also undergo repeat video endoscopy at this point, as part of the two-stage examination process).
- v. Care must be taken not to let sales horses carry too much condition - they want to look well rather than heavy; juveniles are future athletes and excess weight is detrimental to their development, putting strain on their joints and organs.
- vi. If any horses are showing signs of stress or are known to be of a temperament that would find a sales atmosphere challenging, then the use of sedatives may reduce their anxiety levels and safeguard employees. Sedation should be prescribed under the guidance of a veterinary surgeon, so that the appropriate drug is administered for each scenario and given at the recommended dosage rate according to the bodyweight of the horse. Some sedatives may have a negative impact on the performance of the horse (and airways) during showing and post-sale wind testing.

Exceeding the recommended dosage may be dangerous, as some sedatives are known to have a prolonged effect on the horse.

- vii. The removal (i.e. trimming, clipping or shaving) of sensory hair for cosmetic purposes, around the eyes, nostrils and muzzle, should not be carried out on Thoroughbreds, unless performed by a veterinary surgeon to facilitate the examination or treatment of the horse. Sensory hairs are required by horses for spatial orientation when in darkness, to familiarise themselves with surroundings, mangers and water troughs. The removal or trimming of these hairs reduces the horse's ability to adapt to new environments.
- viii. It is not recommended that fillies retiring from racing and mares entered in the winter breeding stock sales are rugged excessively or clipped, purely in an attempt to enhance their cosmetic appearance. However, it is recognised that some fillies may come to the sale direct from the trainer, where they have recently been clipped to remove a winter coat, in order to comfortably race and gallop. Foals should not be rugged during their sales preparation. It is likely that purchasers will want to turn these horses out following the sale and adverse or extreme weather conditions will make it difficult to 'rough them off' at this time of year.

## AT THE SALE

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- i. Any equine welfare concerns whilst on site at Thoroughbred public auction houses should be reported in a timely fashion to the welfare officer, who can be contacted via the Control Office at Tattersalls; or the ID veterinary surgeons at Goffs. All participants are reminded that sales complexes are public spaces and the presentation and sale of Thoroughbreds serves as the racing and breeding industry's 'shop window'.
- ii. If a veterinary surgeon recommends that a horse requires medicinal treatment, which would require declaration at the rostrum immediately prior to sale, then this should not be withheld from the horse.
- iii. The vital signs (health markers) of the horse should be monitored daily, in particular the temperature, which can be obtained via rectal thermometer or by scanning to check for a biothermal microchip (Thoroughbreds born in GB from 2023 and Ireland from 2024 onwards). This is especially important if the horse was transported for a prolonged period to the sales complex.
- iv. Vendors, consignors and breeders should monitor all horses in their draft for signs of fatigue or being footsore, especially foals. They should be managed to preserve energy levels, where possible. A minimum of at least one uninterrupted rest period of 30 minutes daily, taken during normal working hours, for every full day the horse is resident at the sales complex is recommended, so that horses are able to rest and potentially lie down; have free access to hay and water; and be able to urinate on straw. If foals are becoming tired and/or footsore, then additional/a longer rest period(s) should be given. The bit should be removed from the horse's mouth during this rest period and at frequent intervals during the day. This should optimise the welfare, demeanour and sale expectations of every horse.

- v. In extreme weather conditions, such as heat waves, storms (high winds or torrential rain) or snow, it may be inadvisable to show horses continuously or to lunge them. It may be necessary for horses to be rested, or for them to take shade or shelter until peak temperatures have reduced, or conditions have abated.
- vi. If horses begin to resent the frequency at which they are being shown, taken in and out of their stable, or are reluctant to load or unload horseboxes, only reasonable and sympathetic measures should be used to encourage them. Where space constraints, layout of facilities and staffing levels permit, a dedicated member of staff may hold horses who are reluctant to enter stables outside, or allow them to graze in-hand for a short period.
- vii. Staff should be suitably experienced at handling young and fit horses, particularly where colts may be stabled and shown in close proximity to fillies in oestrus. Particular care is required in congested areas for people and other horses, such as the chute to the sales ring and in the queue for the lunging rings.

## FOLLOWING THE SALE

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- i. Horses should be left with adequate water and hay. For safety reasons, headcollars must be left on horses post-sale.
- ii. If the sale has taken place during the winter months and the horse has an unseasonably fine or clipped coat, continued rugging may be required, until such a time that the horse can gradually be 'roughed off'. The vendor may have left a rug on the horse, but if not, the purchaser will need to make arrangements for one to be fitted, potentially via their shipping agent. Dialogue between all parties is encouraged to ensure continuity of care for each horse.
- iii. Purchasers must complete the transfer of ownership process with Weatherbys within 30 days of the sale taking place – it is a statutory requirement that owners, breeders or their agents are required to complete by law. This administrative process can be completed during the sale in the on-site Weatherbys office located at both Goffs and Tattersalls, which in most cases would mean that the paper passport would not then have to be sent back and forth in the mail. A partial transfer of ownership can also be initiated digitally on the e-passport, but if using this means of notification, the paper passport will still need to be posted to Weatherbys (or updated at the Weatherbys sales office) in order for the record to be completed. Incidentally, passports for any deceased Thoroughbreds can also be returned to Weatherbys at their sales offices.
- iv. It is recommended that any horses purchased at public auction are isolated and health tested in line with the *HBLB International Codes of Practice* (including performing diagnostic testing for internal parasites), prior to integration with other horses on the stud farm. This is especially important with pregnant mares, where the stress of a sale and transportation may be a factor in recrudescence of Equine Herpesvirus (EHV, 1) in those with carrier status, which may result in pregnancy loss and spread of infectious disease.