

Advice to Breeders and Breed Societies (15th April 2020)

The Rare Breeds Survival Trust recognises the extraordinary nature of current events, and the priority of maintaining and ensuring the safety of its members, volunteers, associates and the general public.

As such, RBST has closely followed Government advice and instructions when considering its approaches to the breeding of native equines, first of all ensuring all public health legislation is adhered to, as well as the context of the critically endangered status of some of our equine breeds.

Recent Government guidance on social distancing in the workplace gives examples of how social distancing and other measures might be implemented by employers in England to help protect their workforce¹. As an example of specific and relevant guidance, the Thoroughbred Association (TBA) have developed detailed protocols and guidelines in order to maintain their essential equine breeding activities².

The RBST suggests that Breed Societies representing native equines consider guidance and protocols such as that from the TBA and others^{1,2,3}, as well as their activities in the context of their necessity for the future development and survival of the breeds. Seasonal breeding in mares on average begins on the 7th April in the Northern Hemisphere, therefore the activities of Breed Society members should be in the context that the equine breeding season can run from April to September.

RBST believes that through adhering to the stringent guidance and protocols, travel and activities that are absolutely necessary for the breeding of native equines may be able to continue. Such protocols must be stringent, detail best practice, and scrupulous records should be kept.

At this time, if you cannot follow all of these protocols, you should not be moving and transporting native horses for breeding, or requesting veterinary involvement. Public health and NHS resources are the priority.

Advice on moving forward?

The RBST advises that during the controls for COVID - 19 that Breed Societies for **critically endangered native equines** consider developing stringent protocols and associated documents (as examples those developed by trade associations^{1,2}) and thoroughly assess the delivery of breeding strategies that are **absolutely necessary** to undertake, on a case by case basis.

The 2020-21 RBST Watchlist⁴ was published on 8th April and provides information on the critically endangered native equine breeds. If native equine breeds wish to obtain further advice on breeding strategies please contact the RBST Head of Conservation, Prof. Philippe Wilson [PhilippeWilson@rbst.org.uk]

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/social-distancing-in-the-workplace-during-coronavirus-covid-19-sector-guidance>

² <https://www.thetba.co.uk/corona-virus-latest-information-and-guidance/>

³ <https://www.rcvs.org.uk/setting-standards/advice-and-guidance/coronavirus-covid-19/>

⁴ <https://www.rbst.org.uk/watchlist-overview>