

# FAQ – ‘Cross-Channel’ Racing - Racing Pigeon Loft Registration May 2022

The information in this document is correct at date of publication, 25<sup>th</sup> May 2022. For the latest guidance please see [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) and [gov.scot](https://www.gov.scot).

## **What do I need to do to move my racing pigeons?**

EU rules require that establishments (pigeon lofts) must be registered with the competent authority if keepers want to move racing pigeons from that premises in Great Britain to the EU or Northern Ireland for the purpose of immediate release for racing back to their home loft in Great Britain.

In addition, you will need to retain records, on the birds in your establishment and their vaccination status for a minimum period of 3 years and make the records available for inspection on request. In addition, you will also be required to register with a private veterinary practice and have at least one veterinary visit to your loft per year.

Anyone wanting to undertake this activity must also comply with the rules set out in the relevant [export health certificate \(certificate: 8465\)](#).

**If you do not want to move racing pigeons to the EU or Northern Ireland to race them back to Great Britain, you do not need to do anything.**

## **What is an Export Health Certificate (EHC)?**

An Export Health Certificate (EHC) is an official document certified by an Official Veterinarian (OV) that confirms a consignment meets the health requirements of the destination country. An EHC will be required to move birds from GB to EU/NI. Further guidance on the requirements of the EHC can be found in the Notes for Guidance (NFG) associated the EHC ([certificate: 8465](#)) To apply for an Export Health Certificate you will need to use [Export Health Certificate Online \(ECHO\)](#).

## **How do I find an OV to certify my racing pigeons?**

You can find an Official Veterinarian to certify your EHC on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk). These lists do not include every certifier in GB. You will need to check the OV has the relevant qualifications to certify your racing pigeons.

## **When do I need to register?**

Establishments must register before moving racing pigeons into the EU or Northern Ireland for the purpose of immediate release for racing back to their home loft in Great Britain. Please allow at least six weeks for your application to be processed. Please consider delaying your application if you do not wish to race in the first six weeks of the season. This will allow fanciers who wish to race immediately to have their applications processed as quickly as possible.

## **What are the requirements for registration?**

Specific requirements for any loft (referred to by the EU as a registered establishment) that you wish to register are that:

- all racing pigeons at the establishment must be vaccinated against Newcastle disease annually and must not have been vaccinated against avian influenza;
- the establishment must have undergone at least an annual vet visit which includes a clinical inspection and the provision of relevant information on, signs of the occurrence of diseases, including the listed diseases referred to in [Annex I to Delegated Regulation \(EU\) 2020/692](#) and diseases notifiable and reportable in GB which are relevant to pigeons. A record that the visit has occurred must be retained; and
- records for the loft including vaccination and medication records, purchases, sales, deaths and additions are retained for at least 3 years and made available for inspection on request.

## **How to register: England and Wales**

### **How do I register my loft in England or Wales?**

Your establishment will need a County Parish Holding (CPH) number. In addition, you will need to complete a racing pigeon establishment declaration each year. Please note that if you race/keep birds in partnership then only one of the keepers using the loft will need to register, with the CPH made available for use by the other keepers at the establishment, but that nominated keeper will be responsible for ensuring that the other requirements of registration as outlined in the Operator's Declaration are met, as non-compliance will result in suspension of registration, meaning no birds kept in the loft can move to EU/NI for racing.

### **What is a CPH number?**

The EU rules require registered establishments to have unique identifier to indicate that they are registered. In GB this will be a CPH number. CPH is a unique geographic reference for a holding or premises, or group of land parcels. The CPH is made up of a nine-digit number (for example 12/345/0001). The first two digits relate to the County, the next three relate to the Parish and the last four identify the Holding.

### **I already have a CPH. Can I just use that?**

Yes. If you already have a CPH issued either by the Rural Payments Agency (RPA) in England, Rural Payments Wales (RPW) in Wales, or the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) you do not need to apply for a new one. If the registered details, including email address and phone number, are correct you should read the Operators' Declaration carefully and providing you are satisfied that you can meet the requirements print, sign and place with your records.

You must however contact the APHA registration team on 0800 634 1112 and provide your CPH number and confirm racing pigeons are present at the establishment so your records can be updated.

You will then be able to move your birds to EU/NI for the purposes of immediate release for racing back to your home loft in GB, providing that each consignment meet the requirements of the Export Health Certificate (EHC). A consignment is a group of pigeons travelling together and certified by an Official Veterinarian (OV).

## **How do I get a CPH?**

### **For lofts in England:**

Racing pigeon establishment operators in England should register for a CPH from the Rural Payments Agency (RPA). Please read the [guidance](#) before completing and submitting the [form](#).

The RPA will confirm your registration and CPH number by email or letter.

Once you have been issued a CPH for your establishment you should proceed with completing the racing pigeon establishment declaration.

### **For establishments in Wales:**

Racing pigeon establishment operators should register for a CPH through [Manage My CPH on RPW Online](#). If you are not an existing RPW Online customer, you can register by clicking on the Register link on the same page or call the customer contact centre on 0300 062 5004. Once you have been issued a CPH for your establishment you should proceed with completing the racing pigeon establishment declaration. You must also contact the APHA registration team on 0800 634 1112 and provide your CPH number and confirm racing pigeons are present at the establishment so your records can be updated.

## **How do I complete the racing pigeon establishment declaration ('Operators Declaration') for my loft in England or Wales?**

Once you have a CPH number for your establishment, operators must download, complete, and sign the Racing Pigeon Establishment Operator Declaration form agreeing that your establishment meets, and will continue to comply with, the requirements set out in the declaration (in line with the requirements of Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2020/692).

If you race in partnership or more than operator has birds at the same loft only one operator declaration is required per establishment (loft). Only one of the keepers using the loft will need to sign the Operators Declaration but that keeper will be responsible for ensuring that the requirements outline in the declaration are met, as non-compliance will result in suspension of registration, meaning no birds kept in the loft can move to EU/NI for racing.

You must retain the signed copy of the declaration and be prepared to provide a copy to APHA and to an Official Veterinarian (OV) as part of the certification process for the relevant Export Health Certificate (EHC).

Your signed declaration is valid for 12 months, after which you will be required to sign a new declaration to confirm that you still meet the requirements of registration. Failure to supply a copy of the declaration on request will result in a suspension of the racing pigeon establishment registration and you will not be able to move your pigeons to the EU or NI for channel racing.

## **How to register: Scotland**

### **How do I register my loft in Scotland?**

You will need to register your establishment with ScotEID. In Scotland, the Racing Pigeon Register is operated on behalf of Scottish Ministers by ScotEID.

If you are a Racing Pigeon establishment operator in Scotland you can apply online through the Racing Pigeon Register or call 01466 794323.

During the registration process you will be required to confirm that your loft meets the requirements through a process of 'self-declaration'.

### **Scotland: What do I need to provide?**

You will need the following information to join the register:

- Name of the operator of the loft;
- Home address of person registering;
- Address of pigeon(s) if different from above;
- Landline number (if applicable);
- Mobile phone number
- Email address
- County Parish Holding (CPH) number (if applicable. If you do not already have a CPH one will be assigned to you upon successful registration)
- Number of pigeons usually kept at the loft; and
- Name and address of the vet practice the birds are registered with.

### **Scotland: What happens after registering?**

Upon successful registration ScotEID will send you email confirmation that both the loft has been 'self-declared' to meet the specific requirements to be deemed 'registered' and holds an active CPH. The CPH is a 9 digit number and is the unique code allocated to the loft where your pigeons are kept. It will be used to complete the EHC required to export racing pigeons from GB to the EU or NI for the purpose of immediate release for racing back to GB. All CPH numbers issued will take the format of 'xx/xxx/xxxx'

The declaration made during the registration process will be valid for 12 months, after which you will be contacted by ScotEID to confirm that your loft still meets the requirements of registration.

### **My loft is in Scotland, do I need to complete a separate racing pigeon establishment declaration?**

No. The operator declaration for establishments in Scotland is part of the online declaration process. This is valid for 12 months. Provided you comply with the declaration, there is no need to complete a separate declaration.

## **Additional information on registration**

### **Why do I need to register my GB pigeon loft?**

Registration is required by EU rules if you want to move pigeons to the EU or Northern Ireland to immediately release them and race them back to Great Britain.

### **If I have lofts at multiple locations does this mean I need a separate registration for each location?**

Yes, a unique identifier is needed for each loft and CPH is specific to location. Operators will also need to complete a separate 'Racing Pigeon Establishment Operator Declaration' for each loft.

### **Why do the English, Welsh and Scottish systems vary?**

Animal health policy is devolved in the UK. Defra, the Welsh Government and the Scottish Government have worked together and have agreed to the same approach to registration of racing pigeon lofts to facilitate cross channel racing/racing across the Irish Sea. This involves application for a CPH (registration number) and completion of an operator declaration. The process for applying for a CPH is however different in each administration and CPHs will be generated and issued via the Rural Payments Agency (RPA) in England, Rural Payments Wales (RPW) in Wales, and ScotEID in conjunction with the Rural Payments and Inspections Division in Scotland using existing processes.

### **What are the vaccination requirements for racing pigeons?**

All racing pigeons that are old enough to be vaccinated in line with manufactures instructions at the establishment loft must be vaccinated against Newcastle disease annually with an approved vaccine and must not have been vaccinated against avian influenza. This is stated in the EHC and is a requirement for registration of establishments.

Currently approved vaccines (as of May 2022) are Nobilis or Colombovac, though you should check the Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD) list periodically. Further information on Newcastle disease vaccines authorised by the VMD for use in pigeons in the UK are available via the [VMD Product Information Database search page](#) by searching for 'Pigeon' in the Species tab and both 'Newcastle Disease virus' and 'Pigeon paramyxo virus' in the Active substance tab. All authorised vaccines meet the relevant requirements of point 1 of Annex XV Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2020/692.

### **All birds in the loft must be vaccinated, not just those racing. Does that mean young birds have to be vaccinated before old bird/channel racing starts? A lot of people wait until it is closer to young bird season before vaccinating them. Do we need to vaccinate them as they are weaned?**

You should ensure that all of the birds in your loft are vaccinated on annual basis in accordance with the manufacturers' instructions. You should vaccinate your birds as soon as you can you but if birds are too young to vaccinate you can take part in cross channel racing, as long as the birds that are racing and older stock birds are vaccinated.

### **If birds are in a separate stock/young bird shed to the racing birds do they still need vaccinating?**

Yes. All birds on your premises should be vaccinated on an annual basis.

### **Why do I need to register with a private veterinary practice?**

There is a requirement in the EU rules that registered establishments moving live animals to the EU/NI must receive regular animal health visits from a veterinarian. This does not have to be an Official Veterinarian or Government Veterinarian.

You should register with a vet and arrange a visit as soon as possible after applying for a CPH if you have not already done so.

### **What is the purpose of the veterinary visit?**

The veterinary visit is for the purposes of detection of disease, or signs indicative of disease, relevant for the species - in this case Newcastle Disease and Avian Influenza.

You will be required to ensure that during the 12-month period from the signing of the operator declaration, a veterinarian visits the racing pigeon establishment at least once.

### **Why is the veterinary visit to my loft required annually?**

EU rules require that visits should take place at frequencies that are proportionate to the risk of introduction and spread of diseases posed by the establishment concerned. Cross channel racing takes place on an annual basis so an annual visit, as a minimum, is proportionate to the risk posed by the activity.

## **Compliance**

### **When will I be subject to a compliance check?**

Compliance checks will be carried out throughout the year and a percentage of establishments will be selected on a random basis at which point APHA will make contact asking for copies of the Operators' Declaration and records.

### **What records do I need to keep?**

The Operators' Declaration along with:

- a list of your birds with ring number, and records of birds leaving the loft through sale, loss or death etc.,
- vaccinations carried out (including details of the name of the vaccine administered, batch number and expiry date of vaccine batch, proof of purchase of the vaccine, date administered, number of birds vaccinated, ring number of birds vaccinated, name of person administering the vaccine),
- details of the registered private veterinarian and details of veterinary visits.

APHA will usually request all of these records when undertaking a compliance check.

### **What evidence of vet visits do I need to keep?**

Vet visits can be recorded on the [model attestation form](#) available on GOV.UK or on vet's headed note paper/email, which includes a statement equivalent to that

included on the model attestation form. This statement would need to outline that the vet has carried out a visit to the premises for the purpose of detection of disease, or signs indicative of disease, relevant for the species, in this case Newcastle Disease and Avian Influenza.

### **How do I evidence vaccination of birds that have do not have a leg ring?**

Only birds with a leg ring applied for the lifetime of the bird (life ring) are permitted to be moved to the EU/NI to race. Where birds have lost or had to have their leg ring removed due to injury you should seek to replace the ring as soon as possible with an alternative such as a plastic clip-on ring and add this to your records ensuring that the record clearly shows the date the ring was either removed or lost and the date and new ring number.

### **What happens if my records are not adequate?**

You will be asked to provide any missing information. If you do not do this in a reasonable timeframe your registration will be suspended. You will not be able to move your birds to the EU/NI for the purposes of racing. Official Veterinarians will not certify movements of your birds to EU/NI from unregistered or suspended establishments. You will need to demonstrate that you can meet the requirements of the Operators' Declaration to APHA if you wish your suspension can be lifted.

## **Completion of an Export Health Certificate**

### **Where can I find general guidance on completion of the Export Health Certificate**

You can check the EU rules on the completion of Part I of the Export Health Certificate in [Commission Implementing Regulation 2020/2235](#), or the following Defra resources:

For questions about the EHC speak to your OV and check guidance available below:

- [AHR New Regs FAQs V5.0 - Final.pdf \(dropbox.com\)](#)
- [APHA Briefing Note 04/2021 \(defra.gov.uk\)](#)
- [Animal Health Regulation and Composite Products - Certifiers FAQ \(defra.gov.uk\)](#)

### **Which Border Control Posts can I enter the EU via?**

The BCP you use needs to have the correct approval. On the French coast, the following BCPs are suitable for entry of racing pigeons: Cherbourg, St Malo and Caen. You should check the lists of approved BCPs on the [EU website](#) for full details and the latest information. You will need to consider which port in GB you can depart from based upon transport routes that match the BCPs with the correct approval.