

FAQ – ‘Cross-Channel’ Racing – Racing Pigeon Loft Registration

The information in this document is correct at date of publication, 26 July 2022. For the latest guidance please see [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) and [gov.scot](https://www.gov.scot).

1. What do I need to do to move my racing pigeons?

European Union (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.

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.

2. 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 \(ECHO\)](#).

3. 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.

4. 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 to race back to their home loft in Great Britain. Please allow at least six weeks for your application to be processed. If you do not intend to race this season but are likely to be doing so next season, please register now to avoid any future delay.

5. 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:

- 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. This includes 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.

Registration: England and Wales

6. 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. 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.

7. What is a CPH number?

The EU rules require registered establishments to have a 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.

8. 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. Providing you are satisfied that you can meet the requirements, you should print, sign, and place with your records.

In addition, you must contact the APHA registration team on 0800 634 1112 to provide your CPH number and confirm racing pigeons are present at the establishment. This will ensure your records are up-to-date.

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).

9. How do I get a CPH?

(a) 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.

(b) For lofts 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.

10. In England & Wales once you have a CPH complete the racing pigeon establishment declaration ('Operators Declaration') for the loft. How do I do this?

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).

You do not need to submit your signed declaration, unless asked to do so by APHA in the event of a compliance check (see questions 24 and 25, or requested by an OV (see question 2)).

If you race in partnership, or more than one 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. 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

11. 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'.

12. Scotland: What do I need to provide?

You will need the following information to join the register:

- name of the operator
- full address (including postcode) of each loft being registered
- landline number (if applicable)
- mobile phone number
- email address
- number of pigeons usually kept at the loft

13. 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 that it 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.

14. 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

15. 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.

16. 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.

17. 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. 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.

18. What are the vaccination requirements for racing pigeons?

All racing pigeons that are old enough to be vaccinated must be vaccinated against Newcastle disease annually with an approved vaccine in line with manufacturer's instructions. They 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 paramyxovirus' in the Active substance tab. All authorised vaccines meet the relevant requirements of point 1 of Annex XV Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2020/692.

19. 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 an annual basis, in accordance with the manufacturers' instructions. You should vaccinate your birds as soon as you can. If birds are too young to vaccinate, you can still take part in cross channel racing, as long as the birds that are racing (and older stock birds) are vaccinated.

20. 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.

21. Why do I need to register with a private veterinary practice?

EU rules stipulate 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.

22. 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.

23. 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.

24. Will my loft be visited by a government vet?

No, registration for cross-channel racing does not require your premises to be inspected by a government vet.

25. What do I do if I think my birds might have bird flu or pigeon paramyxovirus?

Both bird flu (avian influenza) or Newcastle disease (paramyxovirus in pigeons) are a notifiable animal diseases in all poultry and captive birds, including racing pigeons. If you suspect either of these diseases in your birds, you must report it immediately to the APHA by calling the Defra Rural Services Helpline on 03000 200 301. In Wales, contact 0300 303 8268. In Scotland, contact your local Field Services Office. Failure to do so is an offence.

26. What happens once I've reported suspected disease in my birds?

A government vet will visit your loft and wherever the sick bird(s) is (are). They will look at the bird(s) and, if necessary, take samples (usually swabs) and serve restrictions on your loft. If the bird has died, then they will likely undertake a post-mortem to look for clinical signs of notifiable avian disease. Samples will be tested at the national reference lab for bird flu and Newcastle disease. These tests look for the viruses causing the diseases and for antibodies to these viruses, to see if your birds currently have, or have had the viruses.

27. What happens if bird flu is confirmed?

If bird flu is confirmed in your birds, then unfortunately your birds will be culled to stop any disease spread. You will be compensated for the healthy birds that are culled. You will also be required to either leave your loft empty for 12 months or cleanse and disinfect your loft, any equipment and vehicles that have come into

contact with your birds. You will also be asked for your records of the any races/shows/sales, etc your birds have attended recently and details of any people that have visited your loft. This is so the potential source and spread of the virus can be sought.

28. Someone has bird flu near to my loft, what happens now?

Disease control zones will be put in place surrounding the premises to prevent further disease spread. Some premises in the zones will receive a visit from a government vet to inspect the birds and provide reassurance that they are fit and healthy. Sampling of some birds from a small proportion of premises is also required as part of surveillance within the zones. These disease control and surveillance activities are essential to allowing the zones to be lifted and normal activity for bird keepers to resume within the zone.

29. Will my birds be culled if bird flu is near by?

There is no automatic culling policy for avian influenza or Newcastle disease outbreaks in GB. Birds will only be culled if:

- Avian influenza or Newcastle disease is confirmed in your flock following official lab testing of samples; or
- A veterinary risk assessment indicates that there is a strong likelihood that a premises keeping birds has significant links to an infected premises where disease has already been confirmed. These links could be via movements of birds, poultry products, people, equipment, or vehicles between the two premises. Sampling and testing would also be used.

30. How can I keep my birds safe?

For the health and welfare of your birds, you can help prevent the disease by:

- vaccinating your pigeons against Newcastle Disease (this is mandatory if you want to participate in shows, sales, domestic or cross-channel racing) - talk to your vet for advice
- practising strict biosecurity on your premises. Further information on biosecurity including a self-assessment checklist can be found [here](#).
- the [racing pigeon code of practice](#) also provides specific information for pigeon fanciers.

Further details about government's approach to notifiable disease control including contact and tracing premises can be found in our Notifiable Avian Disease Control Strategy for Great Britain and Contingency Plans for Exotic Notifiable Diseases in England, Wales and Scotland.

Compliance

31. 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.

32. 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.

33. 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.

34. 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.

35. 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

36. 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 \(defra.gov.uk\)](https://www.defra.gov.uk)

37. 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.

38. Do I need to complete pre-notification?

The economic operator responsible for the consignment in the EU will need to pre-notify the BCP of the arrival of your consignment. They should complete Part I of the Common Health Entry Document (CHED) to be submitted to the Border Control Post of entry into the EU.

39. Who should I include as the consignor/exporter in I.1 of the EHC?

The consignor is the natural or legal person dispatching the consignment.

Where the EHC is certified at a basketing event, and racing pigeons from multiple lofts are included under one EHC, you may wish to discuss with the establishment operators and the race organisers who will be the consignor. This may be the association organising the race or a representative of the association.

The European Commission has confirmed that the address of the 'Consignor' given in Part 1 of the certificate may be different from the address of the place of dispatch given in the same part of the certificate. It is not a requirement that this person/organisation always operate from, or be based at, the premises from which the consignment is dispatched to the EU, though they must be located in the exporting country (i.e. the UK).

40. Who should I include as the consignee in box I.5 of the EHC and does this need to match the operator responsible for consignment detailed in I.6?

The consignee is the natural or legal person for whom the consignment is intended in the Member State of destination, whereas the operator responsible for the consignment is the person responsible for the consignment on arrival at the EU BCP.

The EU Commission has confirmed that it is permissible for consignee details (name, address) entered into Part I of the EHC to be different from those of the details of the operator responsible for the consignment.

If using a transporting company, you should put in box I.6 the details of the person transporting the racing pigeons. They should be the person who is available to be contacted when going through the BCP.

41. How should I complete box I.8 region of origin and box I.10 region of destination of the EHC?

There are no legal regionalisation requirements for this certificate and therefore the boxes should be struck through.

42. How should I complete boxes I.11 place of dispatch and I.13 place of loading in the EHC when exporting from a basketing event?

Where the EHC is certified at a basketing event rather than the registered establishment where the animals are regularly kept, and the birds in the consignment come from a range of establishments, enter 'See attached Schedule' in box I.11 and list all the registered establishments in a schedule. The place of basketing should be put in box I.13. If birds from multiple marking stations are being certified at a final marking station/basketing event, this final station should be the place of loading in the EHC.

43. What should I put for time of departure in box I.14 of the EHC?

Add in the box the time the racing pigeons are loaded at their place of loading for departure to the EU. Where multiple loads are added at different times to a single lorry that is being certified at a final marking station, certify the time that the final group of birds was added to the lorry at the final station.

44. What box do I tick for box I.15 means of transport of the EHC?

You should only tick one box in I.15, even if both a road vehicle and vessel are being used to transport the birds. The EU have confirmed to us that where a vessel and road vehicle are used then 'vessel' should be ticked and the details of both road vehicle and vessel entered into the EHC. We are aware however that certain BCPs, including Calais, request that 'road vehicle' is ticked and that the details of just the road vehicle are included. This is acceptable if the BCP request it.

45. What accompany documents do I need to include in box I.17 of the EHC?

The EU have confirmed that only information required by EU legislation that would need to be checked at BCPs is required in I.17 of the EHC (e.g. documentation displaying permission to join a race). Information relating to other documents, such as a commercial invoice reference, is optional. If no information is required, N/A should be entered into the box instead of striking it through. Exporter should talk to the member state when asking about permission for race if anything else is needed.

Certain BCPs have suggested that you can also add the reference of the release permit from the EU member state in I.17 if you wish.

46. Do I need to put a seal number in box I.19 of the EHC?

No. Seals are not required for the export of live animals, so you do not need to include the seal numbers in the EHC.

47. What box do I tick for I.21 and I.22 of the EHC?

Tick option 'internal market' in box I.22. Do not tick the box 'transit' in box I.21. We appreciate in this scenario the racing pigeons are not entering the EU internal market, we are seeking clarity from EU whether they intend to amend the certificate.

48. What do I put in I.24 as the total number of packages of the EHC?

Indicate the number of baskets in which the racing pigeons are being transported.

49. What do I put in I.25 as the total quantity of the EHC?

Indicate the total number of racing pigeons.

50. What do I put in I.26 as the weight?

Indicate the total gross weight i.e. the aggregate mass of the animals but excluding transport containers and other transport equipment

51. How do I describe the consignment in I.27?

Indicate the species, category, identification method, identification number(s), age, sex and quantity/ net weight. A schedule may be used where more than five birds are being certified on a single EHC.

52. Can one EHC be used for exporting pigeons from a whole club or pigeons multiple lofts?

Yes, one EHC can cover racing pigeons from multiple lofts exported together in the same transport. In a scenario where birds from a racing pigeon club are exported together, the racing pigeon club may wish to apply for the EHC for all of its participating members.

53. Do I need an EHC per race?

You will need an EHC for each movement of a consignment of birds to the EU (e.g. for each race). A consignment may include multiple birds. You only need to register for EHC Online once.

54. How do I obtain an EHC?

You can obtain an EHC from EHC Online.

Where a club wishes to apply for EHCs on behalf of its members, the club should register on EHC Online. Guidance on how to register for EHC Online is available on gov.uk.

If there is only one individual applying for EHCs on behalf of the whole club, they should sign up as an individual.

Where there may be multiple people applying for EHCs on behalf of the whole club, select sole trader. Selecting sole trader will allow multiple people to use the account whereas an individual account would not.

To sign up as an individual, during registration when prompted with the question 'are you registering as a business or an individual?' select the option 'an individual'.

To sign up at a sole trader, during registration when prompted with the question 'are you registering as a business or an individual?' select the option 'a business or organisation'. Continue through the questions and where prompted with 'Is this organisation a sole trader or charity?' select option 'sole trader'.

55. What do I put down as the name during registration of EHC?

Where completing registration as sole trader on behalf of a club, you can put down the name of the club. There is no link between the name you put down and what goes in the EHC.

56. Is using EHC Online the only way to apply for an EHC?

Yes.

57. What are the requirements if birds are being collected at multiple marking stations/basketing events into a single means of transport, with certification taking place at the final marking station?

You should follow the guidance above in terms of completion of the EHC (e.g. place of loading will be the final marking station). The certifying OV at the final marking station will need to attest to the ID of the birds. To do this they will either need to be able to identify the birds personally or be provided with evidence from another registered vet (not necessarily an OV) who was able to identify the birds when loaded. An attestation provided by a registered vet at a marking station might also cover other elements within the EHC to support the certification of the EHC by the final OV.

Animal welfare

The welfare of the pigeons during transport is the responsibility of the transporter, who must transport the birds in a way that is not likely to cause injury or undue suffering to them.

When you transport birds, you must:

- plan the journey properly and keep it as short as possible
- check the birds during the journey to make sure you meet their needs for water, feed and rest
- make sure the birds are fit to travel
- design, construct and maintain the vehicle and loading and unloading facilities to avoid injury and suffering
- make sure anyone handling the birds are trained or competent in the task and do not use violence or any methods likely to cause unnecessary fear, injury or suffering
- give the birds sufficient space

You must assess if transporting pigeons with multiple pick-ups and the loading and unloading prior to certification (which might cause further unnecessary handling and stress) is appropriate from the point of welfare. You must consider the whole travel time before getting to final point, time and practicalities for unloading/ loading and facilitation of the ID checks, and travel to destination in EU or NI.

Guidance on animal welfare during transport, including information on the required documentation, is available on [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk). You should speak to your veterinarian who can advise you on animal welfare during transport, or the Welfare In Transport team at the Animal and Plant Health Agency (WIT@apha.gov.uk) if you need further guidance.