

Channel Racing in South Wales

Report by Ian Evans for RPRA Welsh region and Welsh Homing Union 1st September 2022

This report has been produced with the backing of the Presidents of the RPRA Welsh region and Welsh Homing Union.

Background

The implementation of Brexit on 31st December 2020 and the new EU Animal health laws on 21st April 2021 meant that the historic activity of cross channel pigeon racing was impossible.

Following a period of lobbying, these rules were amended to make channel racing possible. While adhering to the new requirements a number of organisations in England and Scotland have successfully provided their members with channel racing. In South Wales, although a number of individuals have taken part in channel racing with clubs such as the BICC and NFC, there has been no Channel racing carried out by organisations; meaning there has been little opportunity for the majority of members.

A number of organisations such as the Welsh South Road Federation, New North Road Fed and the Rhondda Valley Federation have moved to racing North road for the 2022 season. Organisations such as the Swansea Valley Fed, South West Glamorgan Fed, West Wales Fed and the newly formed Rhonda Valley Community Fed have continued to provide racing on the east to west route, In addition, the Welsh South East National, Welsh South Road National and Gwent Greater Distance Club have considered providing racing on two different routes.

Within South Wales, there is still an appetite among a significant amount of members to race the channel. Possible barriers may include concerns over veterinarian fees for both the annual loft visits and marking stations. This report will try to address such concerns with a view to providing an avenue for organisations to provide their members with channel racing, if they so wish.

Requirements

EU regulations require pigeons moved from non-EU countries, (referred to as Third countries) to:

1. Come from lofts registered with the competent authority within the country of origin. In the UK this is DEFRA
2. Each loft has to register with a veterinary practice and have at least one annual visit from the vet.
3. That all pigeons within the loft are vaccinated against Paramyxo/Newcastle disease, with an approved vaccine
4. That pigeons entered into a race do not come from an area restricted due to outbreaks of avian influenza
5. An Export Health Certificate (EGC), signed by an approved veterinarian, must accompany convoys.

Processes

DEFRA and devolved administrations have put in place a process of registration. In Wales, this is largely an automated process, facilitated by an online application for a CPH number through Rural Payments Wales (RPW). Once RPW issue a CPH number, lofts then have to be complete and retain an operator's

declaration (See appendix A). This declaration outlines the requirements of adhering to the EU regulations for the purpose of cross channel pigeon racing.

At annual loft inspections, the regulations require the veterinarian to look for signs of notifiable diseases i.e. Paramyxovirus and Avian Influenza. This is a visual inspection. There is no requirement to carry out tests on the pigeons.

Each convoy of pigeons moved into the EU require an Export Health Certificate (EHC) signed by an approved veterinarian. In the UK DEFRA have an online process for completing the EHCs along with a list of approved veterinarians authorised to complete the EHC. The current Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) guidelines/rules require a veterinarian at each marking station. This requirement is currently being challenged and an alternative process proposed. However there are no guarantees this will be approved and therefore we have to progress on the worst-case scenario.

Furthermore, each convoy of pigeons along with the EHC is subject to a further inspection at French Border Control. There are currently three French border control posts authorised to permit the entry of racing pigeons from the UK into the EU (Caen, Cherbourg and St Malo). There are no Dutch or Belgium ports available to permit entry of racing pigeons.

Throughout 2022 the East of England Continental Club, National Flying Club, British international Championship Club and Scottish National Flying Club have all demonstrated that these requirements can be achieved to provide channel racing to their members.

Cost Implications and solutions

For loft visits and EHCs, veterinarians have provided quotes of around £500 per day. Further information can be found here; <https://www.rpra.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Veterinary-Practices-List-200622.pdf>

The cost of loft visits can be significantly reduced by coordinating multiple loft visits on the same day.

There are also other costs applicable to the transporting organisations such as a shipping agent; recommended to deal with the custom formalities.

Conclusions

The lack of any provision to allow entry of pigeons via Calais will add to the costs of providing racing from Belgium/Holland/Germany (the traditional route for many Federations under the structure of the Welsh South East Combine). Therefore, consideration should be given to racing from France. This may also allow a more cooperative approach for the benefit of members and clubs between the Welsh South Road National and those that came under the Welsh Combine.

A coordinated approach to loft visits throughout the winter should be pursued to reduce the cost to members. The aim should be somewhere between £50 to £60 per loft. This can be achieved by coordinating at least 10 loft visits per day; this may prove more difficult for lofts in more rural communities. An initial discussion with a veterinarian has already agreed a rate of £60 per loft.

Allowing race marking at multiple locations will prove expensive and is not therefore feasible. A central marking facility should be provided. Ideally this will be in an easily accessible place and central for the majority of lofts.

Recommendations

1. The RPRA Welsh region and WHU invite officials from all racing organisations in South Wales to a meeting to discuss these proposals and their intentions. This should take place in early October 2022.
2. The RPRA Welsh region and WHU hold an 'information session' in October, for any South Wales member to attend. The veterinarian mentioned above has indicated he would be willing to attend and provide information to members and answer any questions or concerns relating to the process of loft visits.
3. This should then be followed by a canvas of members to establish the appetite for channel racing.

If demonstrated that there is sufficient demand or interest in channel racing, the following steps should be considered:

4. Many members will require assistance to complete the RPW online registration process. Therefore, we should provide a facility where members can attend a venue to have their applications completed by Volunteers/paid Staff who are competent and familiar with the online process.
5. The RPRA Welsh region and WHU collaborate to coordinate the loft visits throughout the winter minimise cost.
6. An overarching organisation is created to provide Channel racing for all Welsh organisations, whether affiliated to the RPRA or WHU
7. Central Marking should be implemented

APPENDIX A

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Welsh Government

Racing pigeon establishment operator declaration for the movement of racing pigeons to the EU or Northern Ireland for immediate release for racing back to Great Britain

Establishments wanting to move race pigeons from Great Britain to the EU or Northern Ireland for the purposes of immediate release for racing back to Great Britain, must meet the requirements set out in [export health certificate 8465](#) and [Articles 8 and 62 of Commission Delegated Regulation \(EU\) 2020/692 \(as amended\)](#).

You must complete and keep a copy of this declaration, if you are responsible for an establishment from which you, or other keepers of racing pigeons, move racing pigeons from England or Wales to the EU or Northern Ireland for the purpose of immediate release for racing back to Great Britain.

An official veterinarian can only certify the export health certificate 8465 if the establishment has both:

- [a county parish holding \(CPH\) number](#)
- a copy of this declaration completed and signed within the last 12 months

This declaration is valid for 12 months from the date the operator signs it. After 12 months the operator will need to sign a new copy of this declaration to confirm that they can still meet the requirements of registration for the next 12 months.

What you need to do

To complete the declaration, you must:

- read the [guidance on the movement of racing pigeons](#), before you complete this declaration to make sure you understand how to comply with the requirements in the relevant [export health certificate](#) and Articles 8 and 62 of Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2020/692 (as amended)
- have a valid CPH number for the establishment
- complete all fields marked as mandatory
- complete a separate declaration for each establishment you register
- sign section 3 to confirm you agree to act in accordance with the requirements of this declaration

keep a signed copy of this declaration, and provide a copy if the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) or the official veterinarian request to see it as part of the certification process for export health certificate 8465

Section 1: Establishment operator (applicant)

You must complete all fields marked as mandatory. Give details of the person who is responsible for the establishment.

Full name **including title** (Mandatory)

[Click or tap here to enter the first and last name](#)

Business or trading name (if applicable)

[Click or tap here to enter the business or trading name.](#)

Operator's address (Mandatory)

Postcode (Mandatory)

Telephone number (Mandatory)

Email address (Mandatory)

Section 2: Location of the establishment from which birds will be moved

Provide details of the establishment from which birds will be moved from:

Establishment's address (if different from the operator's address)

Postcode

[Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

County parish holding number (CPH) (Mandatory)

GPS coordinates of the establishment (Mandatory)

Provide the GPS coordinates of the establishment, which you can find using the [MAGIC mapping tool](#).

Section 3: declaration

Before signing this declaration, you should read the [moving racing pigeons to Northern Ireland or EU](#) guidance and make sure you can meet the legal requirements of [export health certificate 8465](#) and [Articles 8 and 62 of Commission Delegated Regulation \(EU\) 2020/692 \(as amended\)](#).

By signing this declaration, I confirm that:

- the establishment has been issued a CPH number and this has been provided in section 2 of this declaration
- I will provide my CPH number and confirmation of establishment registration to anyone moving racing pigeons from the establishment to the EU or Northern Ireland for the purpose of immediate release for racing back to Great Britain
- I agree the establishment will be registered with a veterinary practice
- I agree the establishment will receive at least one visit per year from a veterinarian, which must include an assessment of, and 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 Great Britain which are relevant to captive birds
- I will keep evidence for a minimum of 3 years that veterinary visits have occurred and make these records available to APHA for inspection on request
- I will seek advice from a veterinarian if I have any concerns regarding the health of the birds in the establishment
- the birds in the establishment have not been vaccinated against highly pathogenic avian influenza
- all birds in the establishment have been vaccinated against infection with Newcastle disease virus with a vaccine approved by the Veterinary Medicines Directorate, in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions
- I agree to maintain vaccination records for a minimum of 3 years for the birds in the establishment which must include 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, and name of person administering the vaccine
- I agree to APHA contacting me in the event of notifiable disease outbreaks (such as avian influenza) in my area, and I also agree to APHA giving me advice and information on biosecurity and animal disease control
- I understand that the derogation allowing pigeon racing from EU or Northern Ireland to Great Britain will be suspended should my establishment be within a 10 kilometre radius of an outbreak of highly pathogenic avian influenza or

infection with Newcastle disease virus while disease control and surveillance activities are undertaken within the relevant zones

- I agree to provide APHA with copies of my records as required by [export health certificate 8645](#) and Articles 8 and 62 of Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2020/692 including a copy of this signed declaration either by post or email, if requested
- I understand I will be unable to use the derogations from the animal health requirements for the entry into the EU of captive birds set out in [Article 62 of Commission Delegated Regulation \(EU\) 2020/692](#) if any of the registration requirements set out in this declaration are not met

Signature:

Date:

Data protection

For information on how we handle personal data, read [APHA's Personal Information Charter](#) on GOV.UK.

