



2026 ANNUAL REPORT to the General Assembly Dublin (Ireland)

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This report consists of:

1. Introduction
 2. Objectives
 3. Key Projects
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1. Introduction

The WBFSH Department of Development, led by Vice President Renai Hart (New Zealand) and Executive Director Katy Holder-Vale (United Kingdom), has dedicated 2024 to strengthening collaboration across the global sport horse breeding industry. Our work continues to focus on projects that are relevant, forward-looking, and designed to provide lasting benefits to breeders, studbooks, federations, and the wider equestrian community.

2. Objectives

During 2026, the Department of Development has continued to build on the work established through the third edition of the **State of the Industry report** and our programme looking at welfare and Best Breeding Practice. Our focus remains on providing reliable information, identifying emerging issues affecting sport horse breeding and supporting the WBFSH and its member studbooks in responding to them.

3. Key Projects

WELFARE AND BEST BREEDING PRACTICE

The second stage of our welfare project in collaboration with **Hartpury University** is now underway. The project is examining the science surrounding **Artificial Reproductive Techniques (ARTs)**, with the aim of developing science-based recommendations that can contribute to future Best Breeding Practice.

Advances in reproductive technology offer significant opportunities to breeders, but it is important that their use continues to be considered alongside the developing scientific evidence relating to horse and foal health and welfare.

This next stage therefore builds on the work already undertaken with Hartpury and moves towards practical recommendations for breeders and studbooks. The results of the project are expected to be ready for presentation at the **WBFSH General Assembly in 2027**.



TRACEABILITY OF REPRODUCTIVE TECHNIQUES

Traceability has become an increasingly important part of the Department's work during the year. We have asked breeders about the recording of reproductive techniques and whether information relating to the breeding techniques used is currently being recorded in horse passports. This has helped us to better understand current practice and the differences that may exist between breeders and studbooks.

The WBFSH has also taken this discussion to a wider European audience through a presentation to the **European Parliament on the traceability of Artificial Reproductive Techniques**.

This work is important not simply from the perspective of record keeping. Reliable information about how horses are bred will increasingly be required if the industry is to understand the long-term implications of developing reproductive technologies, undertake meaningful research and demonstrate responsible breeding practice.

STATE OF THE INDUSTRY

During the year we have continued to develop the statistical work started through the third edition of the **State of the Industry report**. Additional information received from studbooks after publication has enabled us to update parts of the dataset and provide a more complete picture of breeding activity internationally.

The figures demonstrate that the situation is not uniform. Some studbooks continue to report growth in foal numbers, while overall numbers are declining in parts of Europe, with the reduction particularly apparent in **Germany and the Netherlands**.

Understanding why these changes are taking place is becoming increasingly important. Foal numbers alone tell us what has happened, but not necessarily the economic and practical pressures influencing breeders' decisions.

FOURTH STATE OF THE INDUSTRY REPORT

Work has therefore begun on the **fourth edition of the State of the Industry report**, which is planned for publication in **2027**.

As well as continuing to monitor breeding populations and foal numbers, we plan to expand the information collected to investigate the reasons behind falling foal numbers and to gain a better understanding of the commercial environment in which breeders are operating.

In particular, we intend to gather more information about **the prices at which horses are sold privately and the ages at which breeders typically sell their horses**.

This should allow the next report to move beyond measuring the size of the breeding industry and begin to provide greater insight into the economics and changing behaviour within it.

The continuing objective of the Department of Development is to ensure that reliable data, scientific evidence and the practical experience of breeders are brought together. By doing so, the WBFSH can help its members understand how the sport horse breeding industry is changing and provide a sound evidence base for the decisions that will shape its future.