

From Foal to Race



Transition Year
Programme
2024

AgriAware
EDUCATE • ADVOCATE • ENGAGE



&

equip



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Welcome

Welcome to From Foal To Race – a collaborative transition year (TY) programme developed by Agri Aware and Equip.

Agri Aware, as the national agri-food educational body, strives to transform understanding of Irish food production and life in the countryside.

Equip, as the education and training body for Horse Racing Ireland, strives to promote accessibility into an industry at the forefront of Irish life.

We are proud to present TY students with a comprehensive overview of the horse racing industry with a strong focus on horse knowledge and skills.

This TY programme has been purposefully structured to create a learning experience for both student and teacher that will enhance understanding and interest in all things horse racing. It is important to note here that no prior knowledge of the industry is required before introducing this programme to the classroom.



The three primary objectives of the programme are:

- To raise awareness of Ireland's equine and racing industry
- To increase understanding of the foal to race story
- To showcase the many careers within this vibrant industry.

The programme provides foundational knowledge for the leaving certificate cycle within biology, business and agricultural science. This interdisciplinary approach to a subject reflects real world application of school taught subjects in a flexible and interesting format.

In addition, the programme covers the transferable skills of group work, debate, public speaking and research. The inclusion of horse racing careers allows insight into available careers and vocations, which may pique the interest of students during this pivotal time in their schooling.

There are six chapters in the programme. Each chapter should take no more than 2 hours to complete. A project group project submission is required upon completion of the programme.

Agri Aware & Equip

Project Brief



Using your learning over the course of the From Foal To Race programme, please submit a reflection exercise through your preferred medium. Your submission should communicate what you have learnt throughout the programme.

Please choose from one of the following options:

- Essay
- Poem
- Short story
- Written or verbal speech
- Video presentation
- Powerpoint presentation
- Piece of artwork
- A filmed drama

"submit a reflection exercise through your preferred medium".

1 Structure

Be as creative as you like. The more originality the better.

For example, you could write and act out a drama that is situated at a stud farm.

You could also write a short story based on a day at a racecourse.

Consider bringing in additional themes such as sustainability, animal welfare, charity or fundraising, horse-racing marketing etc.

Any written submissions should be a maximum of 1000 words.

Any video submissions should be a maximum of 10 minutes in length.

2 Submission

Please use the submission form provided and fill in the appropriate sections.

If submitting as a group, there should be no more than four people in each group.

If submitting a piece of artwork, please upload a photograph in jpeg or png format.

The winning individual or group will receive a VIP trip to one of Ireland's most exciting racecourses for their TY class and family passes to the Irish National Stud.

There is also a school prize of €1000 to be used for the well-being of the students.

If you have any questions, please email office@agriaware.ie

Submission Form



Upon programme completion, you are tasked with submitting a reflection exercise. You will be asked to fill in the areas below when you are submitting your project. Be sure to prepare your answers in advance.

School roll number:

Name of registered teacher:

Student name/s:

1

2

3

4

Which type of exercise are you submitting? (Dropdown)

Please give details on what inspired your submission? (approx. 200 words)

Chapter 1: Introduction to Horse Racing



Before You Begin

The following words are key concepts for the upcoming chapter. Write your understanding of the following words before continuing with the material. Use a dictionary to aid your understanding.

Agility
Stamina
Apprentice

Introduction Jockey Case Study Worksheet One

Pre-programme Questionnaire

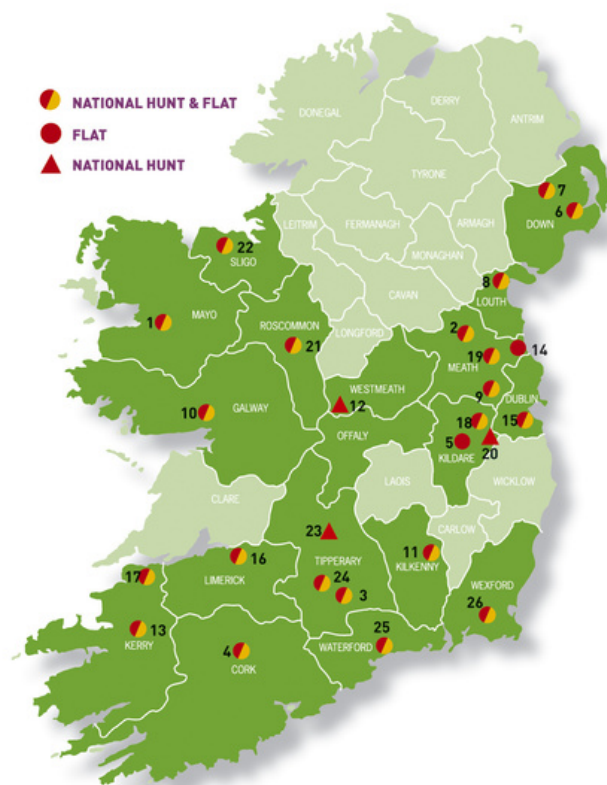


Introduction

There are a number of equestrian sports practiced across the globe. Horse racing is one of many. As with many sports, the fanbase is strong. This makes horse racing one of the most popular spectator sports in Ireland. Over 1.28 million people visit Irish racecourses each year. This is on par with Ireland's number one family attraction, Dublin Zoo (1.27 million).

There are a total of 26 racecourses on the island of Ireland.

Task One (5 mins): Take a look at the map and locate your closest racecourse. Identify the type of tracks available at that location.



26 IRISH RACECOURSES

1		BALLINROBE	14		LAYTOWN
2		BELLEWSTOWN	15		LEOPARDSTOWN
3		CLONMEL	16		LIMERICK
4		CORK - MALLOW	17		LISTOWEL
5		CURRAGH	18		NAAS
6		DOWNPATRICK	19		NAVAN
7		DOWN ROYAL	20		PUNCHESTOWN
8		DUNDALK	21		ROSCOMMON
9		FAIRYHOUSE	22		SLIGO
10		GALWAY	23		THURLES
11		GOWRAN PARK	24		TIPPERARY
12		KILBEGGAN	25		TRAMORE
13		KILLARNEY	26		WEXFORD

From Foal To Race

Introduction to Horse Racing



The majority of our racecourses are mixed national hunt and flat racecourses but what does this mean?

National hunt racing requires horses and their riders, known as jockeys, to jump over a number of obstacles as they race including hurdles, fences and ditches. The ability of a horse and jockey to complete this course is largely dependent on their level of **agility** as well as their speed.



Flat racing does not require the horse to complete jumps but requires a high level of speed and **stamina**. With the majority of our racecourses being mixed, this means that both types of races can take place within one site.



From Foal To Race Jockeys



Within horse racing, there are numerous people involved in getting a horse from foal to race. The first career we're going to take a closer look at is a jockey. Any person can ride a horse, but to be a jockey and to ride in races you must be a trained and registered person.

Jockeys begin their careers as **apprentice** or conditional jockeys. Many people who become jockeys have grown up with family members within the industry but this is not always the case. Jockeys are professional athletes. To become a professional athlete, one must show talent for the sport and dedication to their training.

To begin, hopeful professional jockeys must complete a jockey training course. Once a rider has reached the age of 16, they are eligible to enrol in a training course. The Jockey Training Course at RACE is one of the best foundational courses for becoming a professional jockey. Like many education and training courses, acceptance into the course is highly competitive.

'The most important attributes we look for during trials are a love for horses, a high level of fitness and a good attitude, meaning being a team-player and being coach-able.' RACE

The course at RACE has an impressive track record for producing successful jockeys including Sean Flanagan and Gary Halpin.

Task Two (10 mins): Learn more about what it's like to be a jockey from Sean Flanagan and Gary Halpin.

Sean Flanagan



Gary Halpin



The course takes place over 42 weeks or 10 months and runs from Monday to Friday. Upon successful completion, a QQI Level 4 qualification is received and this prepares the individual for a full time job as an exercise rider. After this, if a rider shows particular skill and commitment, a rider can apply for an apprentice or conditional jockey license.

For more information see the RACE website by clicking below.

**Racing Academy and
Centre for Education
(RACE)**



Jockeys begin their careers as apprentice or conditional jockeys. An apprentice jockey must ride 95 winners before they become a full professional. Depending on how many competitions an apprentice undertakes, they can become a full professional in roughly four years.



Task Three (20 mins): Complete the worksheet below.



A jockey earns money from a percentage of competition winnings. A jockey receives 8% of the prize money for a win (1st) and 3% for a place (2nd | 3rd | 4th). Take a look at the 2020-2021 National Hunt winnings in table below and answer the following questions.

Name	Runs	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	Win €	Prize €	Total €
P Townend	293	100	41	44	24	2,138,100	495,195	2,633,295
R Blackmore	570	92	78	72	59	1,145,100	791,570	1,936,670
PW Mullins	161	50	26	29	7	872,100	221,370	1,093,470
JW Kennedy	322	59	63	49	29	846,600	627,125	1,473,725
MP Walsh	342	56	45	46	46	764,700	543,395	1,308,095
DE Mullins	375	33	31	36	35	621,900	340,875	962,775
SW Flanagan	508	60	58	49	51	609,000	436,210	1,045,210
DJ OKeefe	540	44	47	46	48	534,900	286,440	821,340
SD Torrens	416	34	25	32	42	518,700	222,155	740,855
RA Doyle	232	17	20	18	15	446,800	110,835	557,635

1

P Townend earned the most prize money out of the 10 jockeys above. How many times has he won 1st place?

2

P Townend earned €2,138,100 for his 100 wins. Calculate his average take home winnings from each win (jockeys earn 8% of the winnings for a win).

3

Rachael Blackmore (R Blackmore) was the first Irish female to win the Grand National in 2021. How many races did she win during the 2020-2021 National Hunt season?

4

Rachael Blackmore earned place money of €791,570 during the above season. Calculate her average take home winnings per race (jockeys earn 3% of the winnings for a place).

5

Calculate the number of races or runs in which each jockey did not win or place in the above season.

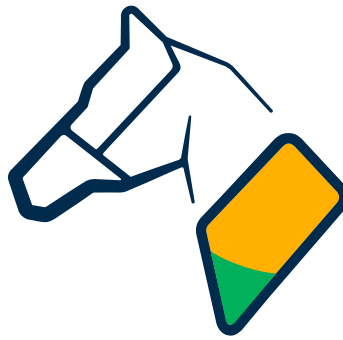
Chapter 1 Quiz

Introduction to Horse Racing

Test your
knowledge



Chapter 2: Horse Basics



Evolution Digestion Grooming

Although jockeys are extremely important during races, there are many other people involved in the foal to race story. Over the coming chapters, various equine careers will be presented. In order to get involved in horse related sports, one must learn the basics before moving into their respective careers.

Strong knowledge of horses, from evolution to care, is important for animal welfare and for good business practice. The horses are the primary assets within equestrian sports, therefore ensuring the highest possible welfare procedures are followed will enable the best possible outcome.

Horses are **domesticated** animals that originate from wild sources. The first horses were significantly smaller than today's modern day thoroughbred racers. Over millions of years, horses have evolved through human and natural selection to become the Equus species we see today. Throughout the evolutionary process, four trends have been observed. Modern horses have i) a stiffer back ii) longer legs iii) one toe and iv) larger size.

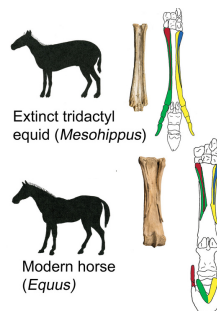
All of these traits are likely the most pronounced in modern day horses due to artificial and **natural selection**.



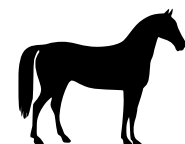
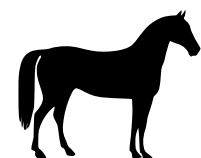
A stiffer back.



Longer legs



A reduction in toes from
three to one



A steady increase
in size

Before You Begin

The following words are key concepts for the upcoming chapter. Write your understanding of the following words before continuing with the material. Use a dictionary to aid your understanding.

Domesticated
Natural selection
Monogastric
Fermentation
Ruminants
Microorganisms
Forage
Graze
Nutrients
Concentrates
Roughage
Lactating
Paw

From Foal To Race

Horse Basics

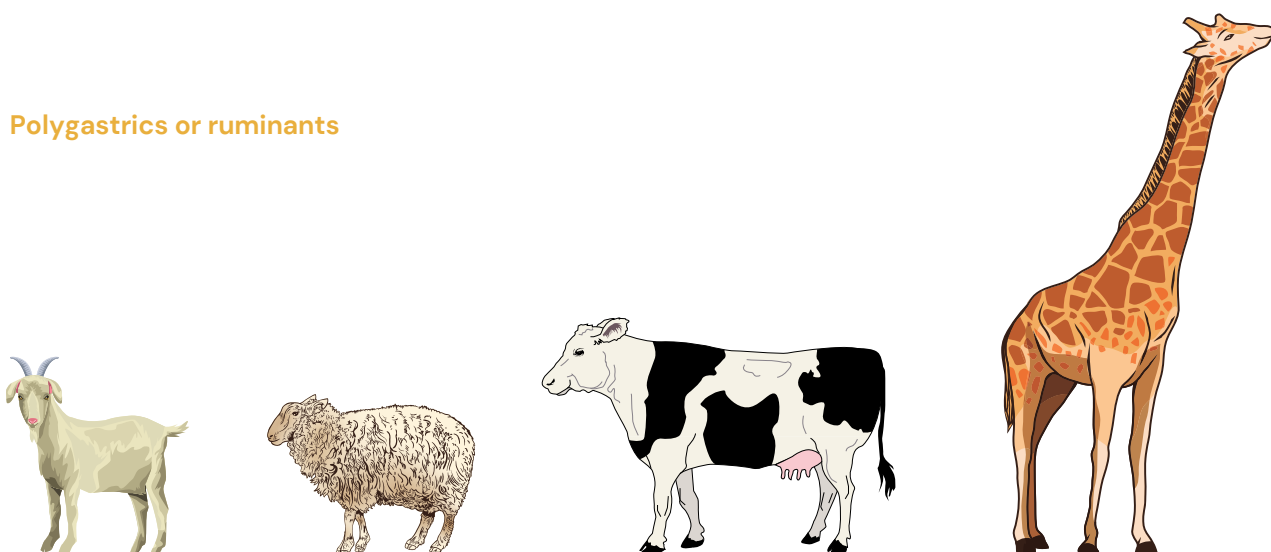


Modern day horses also have other traits that are non-physical. Horses are **monogastric herbivores**. A herbivore is an animal that consumes plants for energy. Monogastrics have a single chambered stomach. This is different to polygastrics (aka ruminants), that have a four chambered stomach.

Monogastrics



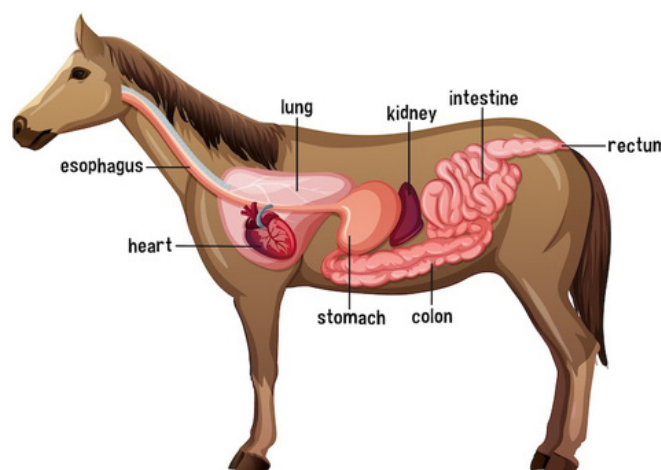
Polygastrics or ruminants



One of the key processes within the horse's digestive system is hind-gut **fermentation**. This means that additional absorption of **nutrients** occurs after food has passed through the small intestine. The small intestine absorbs vitamins and minerals into the bloodstream. Fibrous food stuffs i.e. grass or hay, cannot be broken down or absorbed in this section.

Once the food has moved to the hindgut (or colon), further digestion and extraction of nutrients can take place. This is made possible due to the presence of **microorganisms** in the hindgut of the horse. Without this process, it would be much more difficult for horses to access the nutrition they need from low energy **forage**, such as grass.

Click to learn more about
equine digestion and nutrition



From Foal To Race Horse Basics



Wild horses **graze** between 16–18 hours per day. Therefore, horses have evolved to do well on grass and other foodstuffs derived from grass. Whilst this is unrealistic for many horses due to the limited availability of such a quantity of fresh grass, particularly in winter, this grazing schedule can be mimicked within the stables. However, it is important that horses are allowed to express their natural grazing behaviour, on which their digestive system is based, for their general wellbeing.

Within stables, horses have routines. They are trickle feeders which means they are suited to a 'little and often' feeding schedule. This is due to their long grazing schedule that is typical of the wild horse

Racehorses must have a carefully constructed diet in order to balance their energy intake with their energy output. Their diet is supplemented with **concentrates** in order to achieve this. A horse will be fed 2% of its body weight per day in order to maintain its form. The majority of their diet is **roughage**, with some concentrates. The ratio depends on numerous factors including age, height, sex, temperament and condition of the animal e.g. pregnant or **lactating** females.

A racehorse must follow a daily routine to ensure they are in good performance condition. Typically, a horse will follow a routine similar to this one.

Task Four (20 mins): In groups, research more about a racehorses daily routine.

Use the headings to below to guide you. The resources linked below may help you. Present your findings to the class.

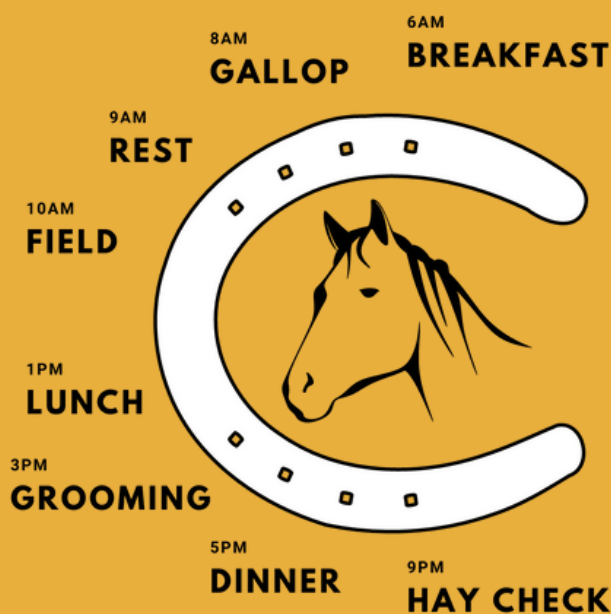
**The Agri Aware
Virtual Farm**



**Teagasc Guide to
Horse Ownership**



**Watch 'Gallops
Demonstration'**



From Foal To Race Grooming



Correctly interpreting a horse's behaviour is crucial for the health and safety of both horses and humans.

Horses ears can tell you a lot about how their feeling.

- If the horses' ears are upright and forward, this can indicate that they are alert and interested.
- If their ears are pinned backwards, this is a warning. A frustrated horse may kick or bite.



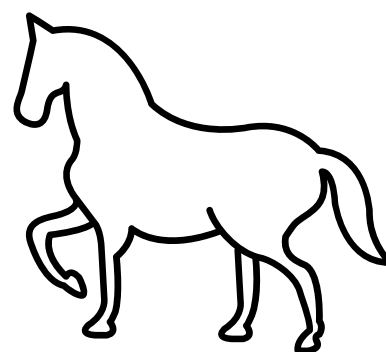
'Horses' ears are upright and forward'

Horses **paw** the ground for several harmless reasons but it can also be used as an indicator of frustration.

Other signs that a horse may be frustrated include:

- A horse with one front leg lifted up can be a mild warning.
- A horse with their back leg lifted is more often a defensive stance and can be observed during feeding.
- Stamping of their feet can indicate irritation but may also be the horses way of riding their leg of flies.

Handling
Bloodstock



'Can be a mild warning'

Task Five (10 mins): Investigate the statements and questions below. Discuss as a group.

1. Horses have eyes on the sides of their head. This means they have a wide range of vision. Should you approach a horse from a) behind b) the side or c) never approach a horse.
2. Horses have good sense of smell. It is good practice to a) always allow them to sniff the back of your hand b) allow them to sniff your open palm c) allow them to lick your fingers
3. Horses can be sensitive to touch. You should always ask permission before touching a horse you don't know. What part of a horses body should you not touch?
4. Horses are grazers and are well accustomed to eating grass and grass derivatives. With permission, occasional treats can be given to horses. Can you list some examples?
5. Horses have excellent hearing. Their ears are shaped like funnels which helps to capture sound. How do you think you should speak to a horse?

ISPCA Horse
Guide



Horse
Care



From Foal To Race

Grooming



Ideally, horses should be groomed daily. This process is essential for health, cleanliness, appearance and to ease a horse's nerves around people. Basic grooming technique includes talking softly to a horse and keeping one hand on the horse's shoulder or hip to let the horse know where the groom is. Both of these practices build trust between the groomer and the horse and keep both parties safe.

There are several steps involved when grooming a horse. A grooming kit may contain some or all of the following:

1. A curry comb is a rubber or metal brush used to groom the horse's body. It removes mud, loosens matted hair, massages the skin, increases blood circulation and brings out the natural oils.
2. A stiff brush or dandy brush is used to pull out dust and dirt particles from the hair and skin.
3. A soft brush is used to remove any of this dust and dirt.
4. A comb can be used to remove tangles from the horse's mane and tail. A detangling solution can minimise the loss of hair.
5. Finally, a grooming cloth can be used to wipe down the horse's coat. This gives it a shine.



Horses should only be bathed after exercise to cool them down and to remove sweat that can cause irritation. This should be done well in advance of sundown so that the horse's coat has sufficient time to dry. A sweat scraper can be used to remove excess moisture.

A horse blanket has a number of functions. They prevent bleaching from the sun, keep the horse warm at night, stop the growth of winter coats, keep their coats clean and finally they can be used after exercise to prevent the horse from cooling too quickly in colder weather.



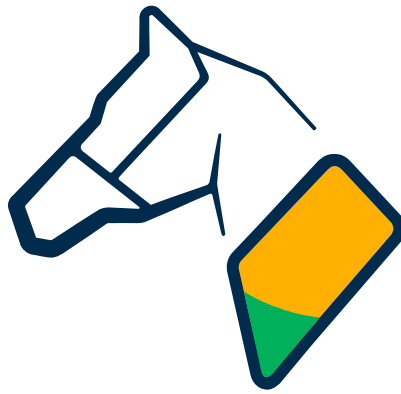
Chapter 2 Quiz

Horse Basics

Test your
knowledge



Chapter 3: Breeding and Stud Farms



Before You Begin

The following words are key concepts for the upcoming chapter. Write your understanding of the following words before continuing with the material. Use a dictionary to aid your understanding.

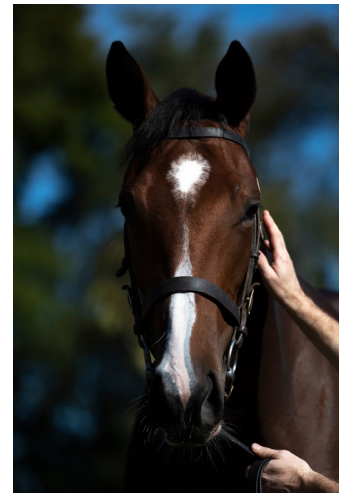
Thoroughbred
Bloodline
Sire
Revenue
Pedigree
Live cover

Thoroughbreds Breeding Stud Farms

As briefly addressed in the previous chapter, horses originate from wild sources. The domestication of horses began centuries ago with the exact details of origin still debated to this day. Nevertheless, it is likely that the domestication of horses played a role in the movement of peoples across Europe, even if the specifics are unclear.

When it comes to modern-day breeding of racehorses, breeders prefer **Thoroughbreds** over other breeds of horse. All Thoroughbred foals can be traced back to three **bloodlines** of domesticated horses that lived in the mid-1600s to the mid-1700s.

The three bloodlines are Godolphin Arabian, Byerly Turk and Darley Arabian. This means that to be called a thoroughbred, a foal must be a descendant of one of the three bloodline species.



Godolphin Arabian



Byerley Turk



Darley Arabian

Task Six (10 mins): Investigate some traits of the thoroughbred breed. Considering the thoroughbred is almost exclusively used for racing, this should give you some ideas.

From Foal To Race Stud Farms



Thoroughbred breeders operate in every country on the island of Ireland, from small independent enterprises to large scale international operations. The international trade of Irish Thoroughbreds is an enormous industry, with horses often selling for millions.

Stud farms play an important role in the breeding industry. There are both private and state owned stud farms across the world. State run stud farms were originally set up in order to increase a country's foothold on the world horse racing stage. By having a state run stud farm, they could provide access to high performance stallions and progress the production of winners.

Ireland's state run stud farm is called the Irish National Stud. There are also 200+ private stud farms within the country. A primary role of stud farms is to house and pair stallions with mares in order to produce foals. In horse racing, the animals mate through '**live cover**'. This means artificial insemination is not permitted.



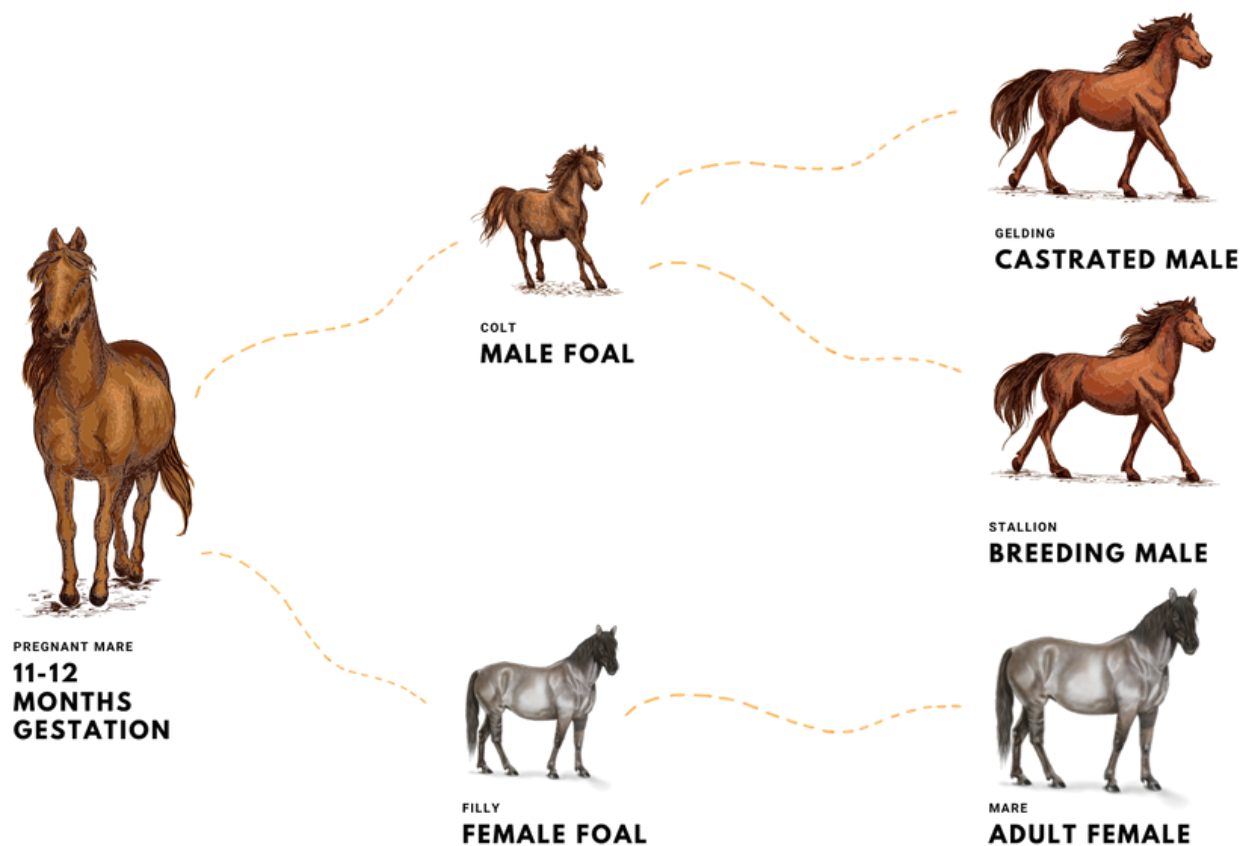
Task Seven (10 mins): Before exploring the topic of breeding further watch 'Bloodline – The Search for Speed', a short film co-funded by UCD Research and SFI.

Bloodline

From Foal To Race Breeding



An adult female horse, known as a mare, is pregnant for 11–12 months of the year. They typically give birth to one foal, twins are unlikely. A male foal is called a colt and a female foal is called a filly. Males can either be kept for breeding or castrated. A castrated male is referred to as a gelding and a breeding male, a stallion.



In horse racing, it is important to assess the need to geld (neuter) a male horse. If a stallion does well on the track, he can be sold to a stud farm to then be used to sire further successful racehorses. When training a racehorse, the horse must respond to commands and routine, but given that horses are animals first and foremost; their cooperation is not guaranteed. A horse trainer will recommend the gelding of a horse if their behaviour is deemed unruly or if there is underlying medical reason. Owners are sometimes reluctant to geld their horses due to the potential financial gain from owning a stallion. However, the ease of training a racehorse must come first.

Stud farms are primarily known for their housing of stallions. There are other revenue streams to be aware of within such an enterprise.

Task Eight (15 mins): Investigate other ways that stud farms make money. Research some e.g. Coolmore, Irish National Stud; and take note of the additional services they may offer, including events and tourism.



Now that we have investigated additional revenue streams on stud farms, let's take a closer look at the behind the scenes of a stud farm.

Behind the Scenes Coolmore Stud



In addition to the Stud Owner there are many other persons involved in the operation:

- Stud Manager
- Yard manager
- Farm manager
- Stud Secretary
- Sales
- Marketing
- Accounting



Nominations Executive

A nominations executive is a specialist marketing and sales role. The career requires expert knowledge in thoroughbred pedigree. There is no one degree or education pathway into nominations but generally those in this career may have studied business, equine business, animal science or horsemanship.

A nominations executive has a range of responsibilities:

- Contribute to the development of the stud's overall strategy to attract clients. The clients are the owners of mares who are seeking a stallion for breeding.
- Research and analyse pedigrees. Pedigrees act as family trees for horses to ensure the best breeding stock is selected.
- Regular communication with clients and the management of the sale of stallions.
- Inspections of foals, weanlings and yearlings. A foal becomes a weanling once it is weaned off of its mothers milk. A foal is known as a yearling once it reaches one year of age.
- Attend all major sales of stallions.
- Consistent networking and the building of relationships with others in the industry.
- Awareness and understanding of trends in the industry at home and internationally. This is in order to compete at all levels.

Nominations Executive, Godolphin:

"My role involves being the point of contact for breeders/clients wishing to breed their mares to Godolphin stallions. This includes maintaining relationships with current clients and building relationships with prospective clients. In the months leading up to the start of the breeding season, I suggest particular stallions for our client's mares and then follow through with getting contracts finalised. When the foals are born I visit the different farms around the country to inspect the foals and get an idea of the type of progeny (offspring) the different stallions are producing. During the sales season I attend all bloodstock sales as a representative of Godolphin and view all the Godolphin sired stock."

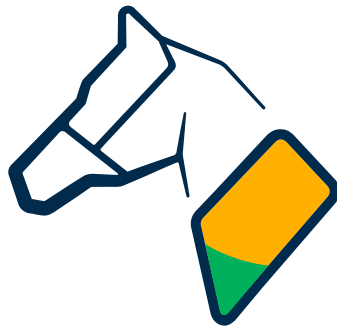
Chapter 3 Quiz

Making a Racehorse

Test your
knowledge



Chapter 4: Making a Racehorse



Before You Begin

The following words are key concepts for the upcoming chapter. Write your understanding of the following words before continuing with the material. Use a dictionary to aid your understanding.

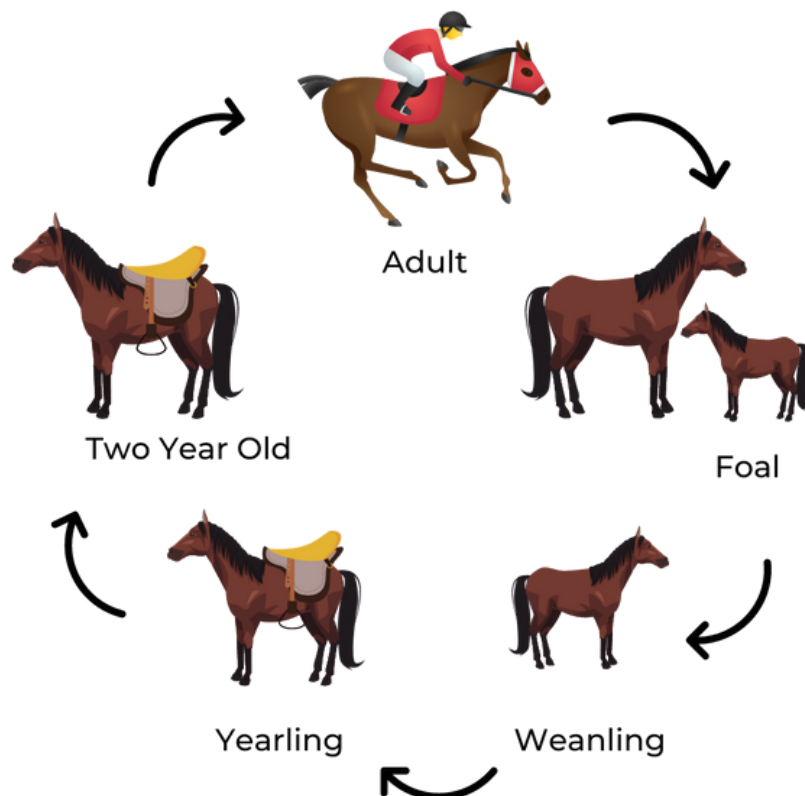
Antibodies
Euthanasia
Farrier

Horse Lifecycle
Daily Routines
Training Yards
Careers

Irish racehorses have a fantastic international reputation. This is down to their expert knowledge of breeding thoroughbreds, excellent trainers and talented riders.

Ireland has been referred to as the 'land of the horse'. The industry is hugely important to the Irish economy as well as playing a key role in the lives of many of its citizens.

Let's take a closer look at the racehorses' lifecycle from foal to adult.



From Foal To Race Making A Racehorse



Foals (0 months)

From the time a horse is born it is known as a foal. In the very early stage the foal is entirely dependent on its mothers milk for nutrition. A foal should be standing and suckling from its mother within two hours of birth. The first milk produced by a mare is known as colostrum – this is the same for the first milk produced by all mammal mothers. It is rich in antibodies that strengthen the immune systems of young animals. These **antibodies** can help reduce the risk of illness and disease. After approximately 3 months of suckling, the mothers milk naturally reduces in quantity. The natural weaning process then begins.

Weanlings (4 months – 1 year)

A weanling no longer suckles milk from its mother. This stage is a huge transition for a horse. They must learn independence, socialisation and to graze.



Yearling (1 – 2 years)

A yearling is a horse that is over the age of one and under the age of two. This is a playful stage in the horses development with many yearlings displaying bucking, galloping and play fighting. Horses are usually broken in during this stage. This includes getting them used to being handled and holding a rider on their backs.

Task nine (10 mins): Check out the first steps in creating a racehorse by clicking the button to the right.

**Breaking
In**



From Foal To Race Making A Racehorse



Two Year Olds (2 – 4 years)

From two years, most horses will start racing. This is dependent on the level of maturity of an individual horse. A racehorse must follow a daily routine to ensure they are in good performance condition. Typically, a horse will follow a routine similar to this one below. The routines are worked out by the horse trainer and implemented by various staff members at a race yard.

Task 10 (10 mins): Check out the features of good racehorses. Make note of the key traits trainers look for. Discuss as a group.

**Racing
Explained**



Adult (4 years +)

Once a horse reaches four years old, they are considered an adult. Horses are typically kept within the racing circuit until they are no longer fit to perform. This is sometimes due to injury but can also be simply related to age. According to the Guinness Book of World Records, the oldest winning racehorse was Al Jabr who won The Three Horseshoes Handicap Stakes at 19 years of age.

The average age of retirement is 8–10 years. If a horse becomes injured, their entry back into racing is dependent on their recovery time. Often the best option is to retire the horse and sell it for hack or leisure riding. Sometimes, euthanising a horse is necessary. **Euthanasia** is the most responsible decision if a horse is diagnosed with an incurable disease, severe lameness or severe traumatic injury amongst others. There have been incidences of heart attack and other system disorders in racehorses.

Veterinarians are onsite during races to provide pre-race health checks and to ensure the condition of a horse during the race. Despite this, deaths during races do occur. This is why strict animal welfare policy is crucial for the horse racing industry. If an animal were to run on an injury, masked by painkillers or performance enhancing drugs, a fall and injury will likely follow. Therefore, painkillers are controlled and performance enhancing drugs are banned in the sport. This is to protect both the horse and jockey.



From Foal To Race Making A Racehorse



Training yard revenue

The trainer of a winning horse is entitled to a share of the prize money – just as we explored with jockeys. A trainer's share is approximately 7% of the winnings. The prize money for a race varies across competitions. Training yards should not solely depend on winnings to keep them in business.

Training yards receive a fee per day for training a racehorse (see table 1). This fee is typically inclusive for feed, exercise and staff costs. Additional fees may be required for **farriers**, travel and veterinary bills.

Owner Type	Flat	National Hunt	Dual
Sole Owner	€1740	€1483	€1787
Syndicate	€1598	€1371	€1472

Table 1: Monthly fee for racehorse training.

Training yards can train horses for flat racing, national hunt racing or both (dual). One of the most important jobs in a racing yard is an exercise rider. They must exercise a horse on a daily basis. Horses will exercise in groups called 'lots' with each lot taking from 30 minutes to one hour. An exercise rider can ride up to 6 lots each morning.

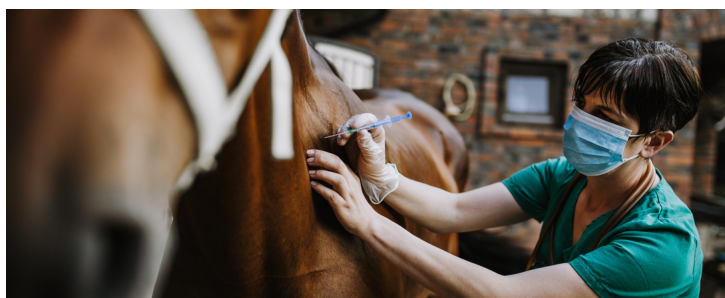
Task 11 (2 mins): One of the most important skills for an exercise rider is being able to take direction. See what Tanya has to say about her job as a full time exercise rider.

Tanya



Other careers in a training yard:

- Work Rider
- Travelling Head Lad/Lass
- Stable Staff
- Vet
- Racing Secretary



Farrier



Head Lad
or Lass



Trainer



Work Rider



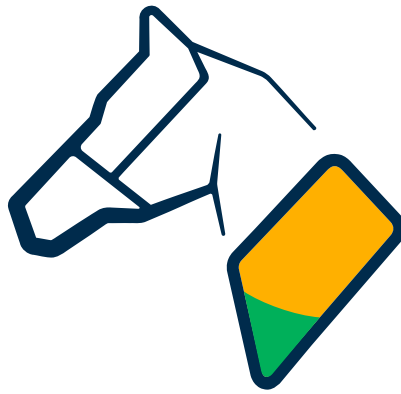
Chapter 4 Quiz

Making a Racehorse

Test your
knowledge



Chapter 5: The Tracks



Hospitality
Race Day Events
Handicapping
Racecourse Careers

Before You Begin

The following words are key concepts for the upcoming chapter. Write your understanding of the following words before continuing with the material. Use a dictionary to aid your understanding.

Hospitality
Spectators

As we discovered in Chapter 1, there are 26 racecourses in Ireland. The main events are race days where either National Hunt or Flat Racing takes place. There is a charge for entry into the racetrack. This averages out as €11 per attendee and generates a huge amount of revenue for the racecourse.

Additional revenue comes from hospitality packages, media rights, betting and general catering on site. The busiest racecourse in Ireland only has race days 38 out of the 365 days of the year. This means there are plenty of dates available for additional events, both private and public.

Task 12: Take a look at the Leopardstown Racecourse website to learn more about their hospitality offering here. Make a list of private events that would be suitable for a racecourse venue.

Leopardstown



There are several famous racecourse events that you may be familiar with.

The Galway Races take place during the summer festival in the last week of July. Over a week, locally known as 'race week', the festival draws hundreds of thousands of people. Races are held each day with additional festivities around the actual race event such as Ladies Day.



From Foal To Race

Race Day Events



Another is the Fairyhouse Easter Festival. This famous festival takes place over three days during the Easter bank holiday weekend.

The BoyleSports Irish Grand National Steeplechase takes place on Easter Monday. This is one of the most anticipated events of the racing calendar year.



The origins of the race name, steeplechase, comes from the old practice of racing from one church steeple to another, usually in a neighbouring town. The horses and riders would encounter jumps such as stone walls and fences during the race. The name has been preserved to maintain tradition.

During the Irish Grand National Steeplechase, a horse will jump 24 fences over three miles and five furlongs (5/8 of a mile). This event has been running since 1870 and has only been cancelled for three events in history. The first being WWI (1919), the second being WWII (1941) and the third due to Covid-19 pandemic (2020).

Horses that enter this race must be five years old or more and this is to ensure that the horses racing are at a more fair competitive level.

There are an additional few tactics employed in horse racing that make it more fair between horses. If the same horses win at each race, this quickly becomes boring for the spectators and tiresome for those trainers and owners that do not place.



From Foal To Race Handicapping



In order to even out the competition, handicaps are introduced. The person who determines the weight to be carried by a horse is called the handicapper. The handicapper observes a horse and gives a score based on how 'good' a horse is relative to the other horses running. This is only done after a horse has a) won a race OR b) the horse has run three races.

A better horse will carry a heavier weight, to give him or her a disadvantage when racing against slower horses. The handicap number equals a specific weight that the horse must carry during a designated handicap race. The weight takes into account the weight of the jockey and equipment and may also include physical lead weights that are strapped to the saddle.

Weight for age is another form of handicapping a horse without it being called such. Younger horses have disadvantages on the track due to their maturity level. An older, more experienced horse is more likely to win and this again, without a handicap, can make a winning horse too easy to predict and the sport less exciting.

Task 13 (10 mins): Below is a hypothetical data table containing information on racehorses. Study the table below and answer the following questions.

The results are in. Horse 4 came first and horse 3 came last. If a horse comes 1st in any race then get a 'win'. If a horse comes 2nd, 3rd or 4th in any race they get a 'place'. The total number of races they have run in are called runs.

	Current Result	Total Runs	Total Wins	Total Places
Horse 1	3rd	1	0	1
Horse 2	6th	3	1	1
Horse 3	8th	1	0	0
Horse 4	1st	6	2	2
Horse 5	2nd	3	0	2
Horse 6	5th	5	0	2
Horse 7	7th	3	0	2
Horse 8	4th	6	1	3

1. Which horses should have received a handicap rating prior to the current race?
2. Which horses will not have received a handicap rating?
3. Which horses are now due a handicap rating?
4. Which horses are the most experienced racers?
5. Which horses are the least experienced racers?

From Foal To Race Tracks



Now that we understand some basics about the races and the venues, let's take a closer look at the actual tracks.

Flat Racing

The flat racing season runs from mid-March to mid-November.

Flat racing tracks contain no jumps. The horses mature quickly and start running as young as 2 or 3-year-olds.



The horses start from stalls and the aim is to gallop as fast as possible. Flat races are run over distances ranging from 5 furlongs (5/8 mile or 1,000 metres) to 20 furlongs (2 1/2 miles or 4,000 metres).

National Hunt / Jump Racing

Jump racing goes on all year round but its main season runs from November until the end of April. The horses mature more slowly and don't run until they are 4 or 5 years old.

These races start at a tape barrier rather than in stalls.

All jump races are contested over at least 2 miles and the horses and jockeys have to jump a number of obstacles along the way.



Types of Jump Races

Steeplechase is run over 'fences' which vary in size.

Hurdle is run over obstacles measuring about 3 feet 1 inch in height.

Point to point is run over fences on designated farmland throughout Ireland in the Spring and Autumn. Point to points are like a nursery for young jump horses.



Task 14 (5 mins): There are many people behind the actual race day events. Watch the video on Punchestown racetrack to learn more. Track crew staff are very important in preparing the jump's races. The building of courses and hurdles is a skill in itself. Health and safety must be considered.

Punchestown



Other careers at the racetrack include:

Clerk of the Course

The clerk of the course is responsible for ensuring that a course is fit to race by ensuring that safe racing ground is provided. Duties will include walking the track in the days running up to a race meeting to determine if it is fit for purpose, deciding if running rails need to be moved or if watering of the track is necessary.



Horticulturist

A racecourse horticulturist is responsible for all green areas in a racecourse with the exception of the race track. Duties will include, maintaining the carpark and entrance approach, attending to the boundary fences, finding suitable and available shrubs, flowers, and trees to enhance the appearance of the racecourse.



Maintenance

Ground staff work as part of a racecourse team to ensure that the race track is kept in premium condition; this will involve applying nutrients or pesticides as required, cutting the grass, dealing with issues caused by the weather such as a waterlogged track. On race days ground staff will replace divots after each race, they will also carry out any emergency repairs of rail or track as required. On National Hunt racedays this will include repairing hurdles and fences damaged by horses during a race.





Sophie O'Hare – Digital Marketing Manager

This role involves building an online connection with customers, clients, or followers via the digital space (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram etc) by establishing and managing an online presence.

My name is Sophie O'Hare and I am the Digital Marketing Manager for Horse Racing Ireland. Horses have always been a huge part of my life, my family owns a stud farm just outside of Naas and we breed sport horses for eventing. I've always had a creative streak so when I finished secondary school I enrolled in the National College of Art and Design where I obtained my degree in Industrial Design. My part-time job when I was attending college was working for Tote Ireland as a counter clerk. When I finished college, a job came up in the Tote head office to cover maternity leave for the marketing manager. When my contract expired, I continued to work for Tote as their Technology and Marketing Executive.

About a year later, Horse Racing Ireland advertised for a Digital Marketing Executive. I applied for the job because I enjoy working with social media and wanted to be more involved with the industry rather than the betting side of things. I am currently finishing my degree in marketing in the Smurfit Business School as I didn't take the usual route to gain a job in marketing.

My job is mainly office based and my main responsibilities include the day-to-day management of our overall digital presence (goracing.ie, Facebook, Instagram and Twitter), digital media for events, planning and coordinating social media and campaigns for award ceremonies, trade events, and festivals. I also research, maintain and report on market analysis/competitors.

To do this role you must have a degree in marketing, have a good understanding and be proficient in photoshop, have strong web development skills, and have knowledge of the racing industry.



Chapter 5 Quiz

The Tracks

Test your
knowledge



Chapter 6: Regulation and Representation



Before You Begin

The following words are key concepts for the upcoming chapter. Write your understanding of the following words before continuing with the material. Use a dictionary to aid your understanding.

Integrity
Sanctioning
Clinical
Prohibit
Spectacle

Irish Horseracing Regulatory Board (IHRB)
Horse Welfare
Horse Racing Ireland (HRI)
Stall Handlers

Horse Racing Ireland and the Irish Horseracing Regulatory Board (IHRB) are responsible for the regulation and the representation of the industry in Ireland.

The Irish Horseracing Regulatory Board (IHRB) is responsible for the regulation of the Irish horseracing industry. There is a rule book that aims to regulate everything from monitoring the use of illegal substances to the positioning of hurdles.



There are people responsible for the enforcement of the rule book across the various areas of horse racing. On race day there are particular roles that ensure races are run fairly. There are stewards and officials.

Three to five race day stewards are appointed for each race day to maintain the **integrity** of a race meeting. There is a stewards' secretary that acts as an advisor to the stewards. This panel of stewards then makes reasonable calls relating to changes around race day. This can include the postponement, abandonment or the voiding of a race, the disqualification of riders or horses or the **sanctioning** of persons found to be in breach of the rule book. The role is voluntary and each steward should have detailed knowledge and an interest in horse racing.



From Foal To Race

Regulation and Representation



Officials are appointed at each race meeting. A judge must occupy the judges' box during a race. The finishing positions, if obvious, are reported by the judge immediately. If closer inspection is required, this is done by examining digital images of the horses clearing the finish line. If for any reason the judge cannot complete their duties, the stewards will appoint an acting judge.

Another race day official is the veterinary officer. Veterinary officers are responsible for regulatory **clinical** examination of horses, equine anti-doping (performance enhancing drugs) procedures and the provision of advice on veterinary matters to the stewards on the racecourse. The role includes documenting injuries that occur during races, providing evidence during disciplinary meetings and ensuring high standards of animal welfare.



Horse Welfare

The rule book takes horse welfare into account and aims to prohibit certain activities or to sanction certain actions or inactions of the persons responsible.

Some of the rules include:

- A pregnant mare cannot run when over 120 days pregnant.
- On a race day a horse can only eat normal feed, hay and water.
- A horse presenting with cough, nasal congestion or allergy cannot run for a period of 6 days.
- A horse that is 'in season' or otherwise stressed or ill cannot run for a period of 3 days.
- Inadequate or inappropriate shoeing of a horse, that leads to a slip or fall, is liable for a fine.
- Substances detected in the horse's blood, that have not been previously approved, are prohibited.

Task 15 (5 mins): Complete the horse welfare true or false questions individually or as a group discussion.

1. It is important for horses to express natural grazing behaviour. (T / F)
2. Horses should only be fed grass. (T / F)
3. You should approach a horse from behind. (T / F)
4. Horses should be bathed just before they are stabled for the night. (T / F)
5. A male horse must be gelded before they start race training. (T / F)
6. An injured horse should be given painkillers right before a race. (T / F)
7. Younger horses should carry more weight during a race. (T / F)
8. Oats should be fed to a horse just before beginning a race. (T / F)

From Foal To Race

Regulation and Representation

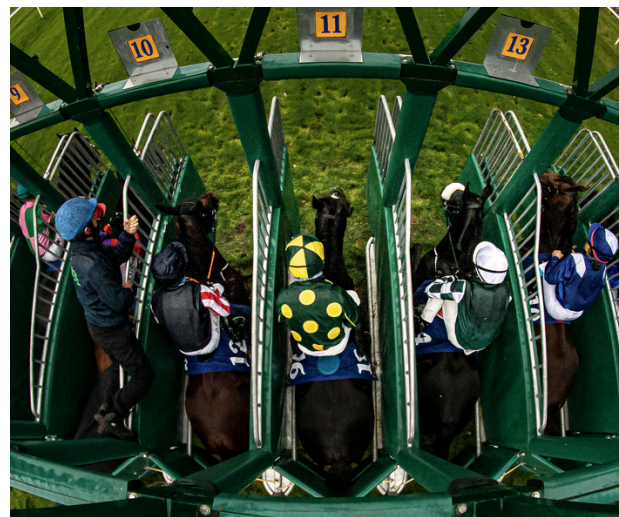


Horse Racing Ireland is responsible for the administration, development and promotion of the industry under the Horse and Greyhound Racing Act 2001. HRI is partly funded by the Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine.

HRI represents Irish racing internationally and includes the marketing and promotion of Irish thoroughbred horses. They also supply grants and loans to racecourses that hope to improve or develop their venues.

Another significant role of HRI is the operation of Tote, who provide betting services to all 26 racecourses in Ireland. Typically, horse racing and betting go hand in hand. However, the sport is first and foremost about the competition amongst the competitors and the **spectacle**. As in all sports, you can back an individual or a team without having financial incentive to do so.

Horse Racing Ireland (HRI) manages the starting stall system at 21 Irish racecourses. A stall handler's role is to load the correct horse in its designated stall prior to the start of a flat race, taking responsibility for the safety of both horse and rider in the stalls and managing the activity in a timely and orderly manner.



Task 16 (5 mins): Watch 'Stall Handlers – the people behind the moments' to learn more about the role of a stall handler.

Stall Handler



Matthew Whyte – Stall Handler

"I have been a stall handler since the year 2000, so it's safe to say I like my job. I come from a racing background having ridden as an amateur jockey and driven horse transportation so when I became a stall handler I had plenty of experience with loading and handling horses. The key to this job is horse sense, knowing the animal you are dealing with and being aware of what's going on around you. I have 12 full timers and 18 casuals on my team and we must attend every flat meeting in Ireland. The job requires a lot of travel and long hours, but it is very enjoyable as you have good banter with the jockeys and trainers plus get to be up close and personal to the best and most valuable of racehorses".

Chapter 6 Quiz

Regulation and Representation

Test your
knowledge



Closing Address

Post-programme
Questionnaire



Dear Teachers & Students,

Congratulations on your successful completion of From Foal To Race.

Students! By now, you should have a good understanding of the horse racing industry in Ireland, the foal to race story and the careers and vocations offered by this vibrant industry.

All that is left to do is to submit your entry for the competition. You should read the instructions at the beginning of the PDF in full and take note of the closing date. Do not forget to prepare your answers for the submission form in advance.

Agri Aware, Ireland's national agri-food education body, and Equip, Horse Racing Ireland's education and training division, would like to express thanks to all involved in the creation of this transition year programme.

We would also like to thank all of the teachers and students for participating in this initiative. We hope you enjoyed completing the programme as much as we did creating it.

Sincerely,

AgriAware
EDUCATE • ADVOCATE • ENGAGE



&

equip

HI FUNDED BY
HORSE
RACING
IRELAND