



Inserting a microchip is safe and easy.

# Make Time for Microchipping

If you've been putting off microchipping your horses, the time for procrastination is over.

By Nancy Jaffer

**T**he countdown is on, and positive ID for horses competing in classes recognized by the United States Hunter Jumper Association and the United States Equestrian Federation is on the horizon.

While previously only the Fédération Equestre Internationale required horses to be microchipped in order to obtain passports and compete in FEI-recognized classes, now the USHJA and USEF have followed suit with a new rule that will begin implementation next year.

The United States is following in the footsteps of other sport horse organizations around the world, such as the British Show Jumping Association, which enacted a microchipping rule in 2012. That organization's rule stipulates that all newly registered horses and ponies taking part in national competitions must be microchipped. So you can see that microchipping is more than a trend. Eventually, it will likely be made compulsory under the National Animal Identification System by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, as this has already been done by the European Union.

If you imported a horse from one of the EU countries, he'll have a microchip; it's required for all equines over 6 months of age, and the number is recorded in their passports.

But aside from a bureaucratic mandate, microchipping is important on many other accounts. It's a way of preventing fraud (making sure a horse is who his papers—which can be counterfeited—say he is), a way of locating an animal that gets

lost in a natural disaster or an accident, and a path to tracing a mount that's been sold or stolen. A brand or lip tattoo can be altered, but not a microchip.

"The positive horse ID or microchipping rule was passed for a variety of reasons, with one of the primary goals being to increase customer confidence when purchasing a horse," said USHJA Hunter Vice President Mary Babick. "We want an owner to be certain of the identity of the horse he or she is purchasing. It's far too easy to fudge a horse's age and history, which are sometimes done very innocently and other times with intent to conceal. In the past, a horse would sometimes receive a new name and USEF registration number when it was purchased, and its history would be lost. A microchip will help to connect the dots for owners, purchasers and breeders alike."

The new rule change, passed at the USEF Annual Meeting in January, will be implemented in two parts.

On or after December 1, 2017, if you are showing in USEF-recognized Hunter, Jumper or Equitation competitions, your horse must be microchipped to be eligible for Federation and/or USHJA programs and awards where horses are required to be recorded or registered.

Beginning on December 1, 2018, animals not in compliance with the rule will not receive points nor be eligible to compete in Federation-licensed competitions.

There is, however, no microchipping require-

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A microchip is about the size of a grain of rice.

ment for horses showing in Hunter, Jumper or Equitation classes restricted to breeds, such as Arabians or Morgans, whose classes are not USHJA-recognized.

For classes that require age verification—such as Young Jumper and Young Hunter sections—age can be verified through registration papers or a passport issued by a World Breed Federation Sport Horse-recognized registry, or registration papers or a certificate of pedigree from a breed or sport horse registry. Microchipping cannot be used for age verification.

While there was some opposition to mandatory microchipping when the topic was brought up for discussion at the 2013 USHJA Annual Meeting, the concerns expressed at that time have been answered. Education on the topic, most notably involving a myth-busting 2015 article by breeder Summer Stoffel, enabled the new rule to be

passed this year with little muss or fuss.

Happily, microchipping is safe, inexpensive and easy to arrange—your veterinarian is equipped to handle it. The cost usually runs from \$35-\$60, and it's easy to avoid the expense of an extra call visit by scheduling the microchipping when you set up a routine appointment for other purposes, such as a health certificate.

The process simply involves inserting a chip about the size of a grain of rice via a needle, and it takes just seconds—only as long as an ordinary inoculation. The chip is implanted in the dense nuchal ligament on the left side of the neck.

Once inserted, the microchip will not migrate to other areas of the neck, and if some nefarious person seeks to remove it, the animal would have to undergo surgery and general anesthesia. That process leaves a scar, an obvious clue that someone has tampered

with the chip (and went to a lot of trouble to do so).

The information contained within the microchip is a “read-only” number. Contrary to some rumors, it's not a GPS and doesn't include anything about the price of the animal or its history. There are universal scanners that can read nearly all microchips, because there's now an ISO standard.

The USEF rule requires that the microchip being implanted be ISO-compliant and a 15-digit 11784/11785 chip, such as those produced by Datamars. One of the leading global suppliers of high performance, unique-identification solutions, Datamars specializes in radio frequency identification, focusing on companion animals, livestock and textiles.

For more information about the new USEF and USHJA rule changes, including microchipping, please visit [www.ushja.org](http://www.ushja.org).

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- Proven to cause no stress reaction in horses during implantation
- ISO Compliant microchip - can serve as verifiable proof of ownership
- Meets the new USEF Rules(s): EQ103.2, HU 101.2, JP100.2, and FEI Passport requirements

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For more information about Datamars Equine microchips, call us at **781-281-2216** or email us at [ussales@datamars.com](mailto:ussales@datamars.com)

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