

CUMANN LUCHT CAPAILLÍNÍ CHONAMARA

**CONNEMARA
PONY BREEDERS
SOCIETY**



Report of the CPBS Education Committee 2024

The 2024 Education Committee, following the 100th CPBS AGM in Oughterard in November 2023, were tasked with attempting to sort an unprecedented state of unrest due to lack of information and misunderstanding amongst breeders and owners of Connemara ponies, that existed at the end of 2023 following a disastrous year for the pony, where the bulk of passports for 2023 foals and older progeny DNA typed throughout 2023 were not yet issued, causing breeders/owners being unable to sell their foals or older progeny at sales throughout the country or abroad. This had come about as a result of lack of preparation and timely dissemination of information in relation to the introduction in 2023 of the new single nucleotide polymorphism (SNP) testing introduced by the Department of Agriculture, Food & the Marine commencing in March 2023 and notified to all studbooks throughout 2022 in order for them to prepare for the transition.

The Education Committee immediately commenced a series of meetings with DAFM, Weatherbys Scientific and Horse Sport Ireland to identify and analyse the problems arising with the SNP transition and liaised with other Passport Issuing Organisations throughout the country to discuss how they had dealt with the transition. Training days were organised for the CPBS Office staff, who had received no previous training in the systems changes in Weatherbys Scientific and ongoing weekly online meetings organised to help with the week-to-week troubleshooting and updating of staff. Arrangements were made for HSI staff to attend the CPBS office to train staff in the new processes resulting in a support and liaison network that had not previously existed between PIOs. From the beginning of 2024 breeders and owners began to receive their passports and a huge backlog from 2023 was cleared prior to the 2024 crop of foals being registered.

A Seminar was organised with all Council members, who were receiving numerous calls of complaint from breeders/owners to inform them of the legacy problems and reasons for the backlog from 2022 and 2023 so they could also inform the members who contacted them.

A Seminar took place at the Spring Festival in Clifden in 2023 on the transition to SNP testing and clarification on the problems that had been identified and sorted in 2024. The breeders/owners were instructed in the processes they now had to follow in order to collect and submit viable samples to the lab to prevent costly resampling and retesting of samples.

Following the AGM in November 2023 the President requested all former Committees to arrange for a handover of their files to the incoming Committee chairs. The President asked that Council members who had served on the previous committee and had commenced courses, ie. ridden judges in 2023 that were to conclude in 2024, continue to oversee the completion of those courses, and although this was agreed at Council no committees from 2023 effected a handover.

In June 2024 a number of council members resigned their positions en masse, abandoning the completion of the Ridden Judges course without having completed oversight or organisation of the second phase of the course, and the Education Committee received no handover files for this course in order to proceed to completion in 2024. It is envisaged by the Education Committee that, in conjunction with the in-hand judges and inspectors' courses for beginners and refresher courses for existing judges and inspectors, currently in planning at committee level, that the ridden judges' course will take place at the earliest opportunity to do so.

In August 2024 the Education Committee in association with the Marketing Committee organised the CPBS Stand at the 2024 RDS Dublin Horse Show. The stand was manned on rotation on all five days by two council members and ordinary members as well as a member of the CPBS Office staff and there was huge interest from visitors to the stand this year for educational queries on breeding, event information, general chat and replies to queries.

Throughout October/November 2024 Education Committee organised three regional seminars for members to attend for discussion on the CPBS Inspections. These were held in Ballinasloe, Sligo and Portlaoise. The format of the seminars was round-table discussion between 5 separate groups with their replies and proposals under the topics outlined in a discussion document presented to each table who then presented the Committee with a bullet point list of their recommendations and ideas under each topic discussed. The headline topics were:

- Height? Classification of the Pony:
- Breed Description from Breeding Programme:
- Inspectors / Inspection Training
- Any other Topic relating to CPBS Inspection:

The groups then came together to discuss the findings of each separate table and the reasoning and opinions behind their proposals and recommendations. The members who attended the seminars were extremely complimentary of the organisation of the discussions and found them to be informative and educational. The overall feedback from the attendees was that more such seminars should be organised by the CPBS to discuss a variety of other topics relevant to the Connemara pony. The Education Committee brought all the proposals to the Inspection Committee who, in consultation with members were commencing an overall review of the CPBS Pony Inspections with recommendations to be brought to Council in the coming months.

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