

# HORSE NAMING GUIDELINES

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Except where the British Horseracing Authority (BHA) directs otherwise, Horse names will only be accepted in accordance with the [Horse Naming Code](#) (The Code). Elements of The Code are reproduced below along with any relevant accompanying detail which should be considered by the applicant wishing to reserve or register a horse name.

Capitalised terms used within this policy take the meaning as defined by the Rules of Racing.

## PROHIBITED NAMES

1. A horse cannot be registered with the following names:
  - 1.1. a name already in the Register of Horse Names unless paragraph 5 applies;
  - 1.2. a name followed by a number (names beginning with numbers may also be considered to cause too much confusion);
  - 1.3. a name designated as a protected name. This includes names that exist on the International Protected List, and can extend to be famous names that fall outside of this list which the BHA considers may cause confusion or attract adverse public comment (referred to as domestically protected names, see Appendix 1);
  - 1.4. a name of more than 18 characters, including signs or spaces;
  - 1.5. a name made up entirely of initials, or ones that include figures, hyphens, full-stops, commas, signs, exclamation marks, inverted commas, forward or backward slash, colon and semi-colon;
  - 1.6. a name that starts with a sign other than a letter;
  - 1.7. a name containing more than seven syllables; or
  - 1.8. a name which the BHA considers offensive or inappropriate. This includes, but is not limited to names that are suggestive of or have a vulgar, obscene or insulting meaning, names considered in poor taste, or names that may be offensive to religious, political or ethnic groups.

## NAMES THAT MAY BE REGISTERED SUBJECT TO CONDITIONS

2. A horse may be registered with a name of:
  - 2.1. A well-known person, if the person gives permission. No permission is often required if the person has been deceased for over 50 years or a surname is used on its own (as long as this surname is not readily identifiable with a public person);
  - 2.2. Commercial significance if the BHA consents. To acquire BHA consent the applicant will often be required to obtain permission from the relevant person if the name is trademarked *N.b. it is not possible for the BHA to check all names against all trademarks and, as such, it is the applicant's duty to carry out appropriate searches to ensure that a proposed name submitted for registration does not infringe any legal or proprietary rights. For the avoidance of doubt, Weatherbys/BHA accept no liability whatsoever for claims that may arise resulting from the registration of a name which infringe such rights.*
  - 2.3. A prominent company, product or trade if:
    - 2.3.1. the relevant person consents; or
    - 2.3.2. the BHA is satisfied that the name has an alternative common meaning.
  - 2.4. Names containing the words Dot Com. If the domain name is not owned by the applicant, they are required to obtain written permission from the domain name holder. These names

should also be carefully checked for unacceptable pronunciation (see below) or whether they might cause confusion in the administration of racing or betting (also see below). The content of the site may also be relevant to acceptability.

## **NAMES ALLOWED ALREADY IN THE REGISTER OF HORSE NAMES**

### Foreign bred horses that are already named

3. An already named foreign bred horse may retain its name regardless of its races/unraced status. There are some possible exceptions to this:
  - 3.1. If the name is on the International Protected List;
  - 3.2. The name is the name of a Famous domestic horse not on the Protected List; or
  - 3.3. Where acceptance of the name would be extremely contentious e.g. obscene, identical (suffix apart) to a horse in the same ownership e.g. Maktoum problem.
4. If a naming application is received for an Arab Horse for entry to the Non-Thoroughbred Register and the name has already been taken it is to be distinguished by adding the Roman numeral (V) after the name.

### GB/IRE Horses and Foreign Bred Horses (not already named in their country of foaling)

5. A name in the Register of Horse Names shall become available for registration to a different horse as follows:
  - 5.1. A name registered to a broodmare, the earlier of:
    - 5.1.1. 10 years after the mare's death;
    - 5.1.2. 10 years after the last recorded year in which the mare was covered or foaled; or
    - 5.1.3. The year when the mare reaches 30 years of age.
  - 5.2. A name registered to a stallion, the earlier of:
    - 5.2.1. 15 years after the stallion's death;
    - 5.2.2. 15 years after the last recorded year in which the stallion covered a mare; or
    - 5.2.3. The year when the stallion reaches 35 years of age.
  - 5.3. A name registered to any other horse, the earlier of:
    - 5.3.1. 5 years after the horse's death; or
    - 5.3.2. the year when the horse reaches 20 years of age.
6. These time frames only apply to progeny recorded in the General Stud Book or Non-Thoroughbred Register and not to horses who have been exported and may have subsequently produced progeny that have been recorded in Foreign Stud Books.
7. It should be noted that GB/IRE suffixes are not distinguishable as both these are entered into the same stud book and have the same naming authority.
8. The BHA may allow a name in the Register of Horse Names to become available earlier than above if the horse never raced.

## **NAMES PHONETICALLY SIMILAR TO ONE ALREADY REGISTERED IN THE REGISTER OF HORSE NAMES OR LISTED ON THE PROTECTED LISTS**

9. A name which is spelt differently, but is phonetically similar to another name, may be registered if it is deemed unlikely that the horse will cause confusion in racing or breeding.
10. Where a name may be allowed, the following will be considered:
  - 10.1. Performance history and date of last run
  - 10.2. Training status
  - 10.3. Export certificates
  - 10.4. Non-Racing Agreements
  - 10.5. Death of horse
  - 10.6. International vs Domestic protection

## **CHANGES OF NAME**

11. The BHA reserves the right to demand the change of name of any animal at any stage.
12. The following guidelines will normally apply when considering a request for a name to be changed:

### Animals that have not raced:

- 12.1. *Change of name following receipt of passport/publication in the racing calendar and before the horse has run* – If requested due to a mistake then the change will be made without an additional fee;
- 12.2. *Minor change of name request submitted following publication in list of race entries for first time* – Changes would be made for spelling and punctuation mistakes only (a lesser naming fee would be charged); and,
- 12.3. *Change of name request for an unraced horse following purchase of horse named by breeder or previous Owner* – Name changed with full fee charged.

### Animals that have raced:

- 12.4. *Change of suffix- IRE to GB or vice versa* - These occur when the General Stud Book is notified by the breeder of an incorrect country of foaling on the foaling certificate. A correction will then subsequently be published;
- 12.5. *Change of Name following resolution by General Stud Book Committee of horse interchange* - In such cases it is more normal for the pedigrees to be swapped with the horses' names remaining the same. The BHA should be made aware and must agree to any name change;
- 12.6. *Change of Name for GB/IRE horses that have raced exclusively abroad* - These are normally picked up by Statistical Record and would normally refer to horses whose name has been registered by the Foreign Turf authority with a slightly different spelling to how it has been registered. These names would normally be changed to replicate the foreign spelling without a fee being charged on the basis that such a change is the simplest method of dealing with the capture of future performances;
- 12.7. *Change of name for horse which has raced both here and abroad in two differing*

*names and is returning for a major race* - In such cases the name can only be changed following consultation with the country where the horse is entered to run and the country where the horse was bred; and

- 12.8. *Exceptional Circumstances* - Apart from 12.4- 12.7 above, any other change to a name for an animal that has already raced would not normally be allowed, and no changes of name will be allowed after the entry stage (or confirmation stage in the case of an early closing race). However, in special cases where an error is deemed to have occurred the name can be changed. The decision on whether any such name should be changed will ultimately rest with the BHA. In addition, for proposed changes of name for horses in training in Ireland or foaled in Ireland, Horseracing Ireland must be consulted.

#### Unofficial name changes:

- 12.9. Change of Name for GB/IRE bred horses which have been officially named whilst domiciled in GB/IRE but have subsequently been exported to countries who are non-signatories to the International Agreement. In these instances NO official name change should be undertaken.

### **APPEALS**

13. Name checks will be completed daily by the team at Weatherbys. An appeal against the rejection of a name must be referred to the BHA via Weatherbys. The applicant must put their case in writing and this, together with all relevant details, are forwarded to the BHA so that they are in full possession of the facts before giving a decision.

**May 2025**

## **Appendix 1 - DOMESTICALLY PROTECTED NAMES OF FAMOUS RACEHORSES**

### **Flat Races**

- I. Automatic protection for the winners of the 2,000 Guineas, 1,000 Guineas, Derby, Oaks, St. Leger, and Ascot Gold Cup right back in history to the races' first running.
- II. Winners of the Irish Classics on behalf of the Horseracing Ireland (namely the Irish 1,000 Guineas Irish 2,000 Guineas, Irish Derby, Irish Oaks, and Irish St Leger.
- III. Twice winners of the same Group 1 all aged Flat contests in Great Britain.
- IV. Winners of two of the leading GB/IRE Group 1 Flat contests over the same distance e.g. at 10f.
- V. Individual horses which have been protected because it is thought the public would be sensitive to seeing their names made re-available.
- VI. Individual winners which have been protected due to the merit of their performance. This has been determined by averaging the Timeform ratings of the winners of the leading Group 1 Flat races including those restricted to three years olds only.

### **Jump Races**

- I. Dual winners of a selection of the major Jump races (including handicaps & Grade 1 races) covering the major distances two, two and a half, three and four miles. All Grade 1 races are included apart from those restricted to Novices - not the Arkle Chase for example. The list is revised annually considering race status/penalty value fluctuations.
- II. Winners of combinations of the above major races (restricted to roughly the same distance only).
- III. Individual horses which have been protected in the belief that the public would be sensitive to seeing their names made re-available.
- IV. Automatic protection for the winners of the Cheltenham Gold Cup, Champion Hurdle, Grand National & King George VI Chase.
- V. Individual winners which have been protected due to the merit of their performance. This has been determined by averaging the Timeform ratings of the winners of the races listed above.