Under the current GLAS scheme, there is no requirement to meet the Breed Improvement objectives of the Studbook to qualify for payment of the Rare Breed premium.

As a Rare Breed the Kerry Bog Pony is heavily dependent on the GLAS Scheme. Within a working population of about 300 ponies, currently 100 ponies are claiming premiums. We have no idea how many of these are adult breeding mares and whether they conform to the Breed Standard. The scheme requires that each female must produce 1 purebred offspring within the duration of the scheme. To qualify, stallions over 3 yrs of age must be inspected.

KBP Foal registration figures:

- 2018 (to date) 45 foals
- 2017 35 foals
- 2016 40 foals
- 2015 55 foals
- 2014 33 foals

As there is no requirement for mares or their offspring to be inspected in order to qualify for the grant, we have no idea if the foals being produced are in line with the Breeding Objectives of the Studbook.

The importance of the leisure market was recognised and it was noted that care should be taken to ensure that specific breeding goals and objectives cater for all market requirements. It was acknowledged that native breeds are an important element of the leisure market and that breed conservation is also a core consideration for the breeding improvement programmes for native breeds.

**THE FUTURE**

The Kerry Bog Pony Co Operative society recognises that it is responsible for undertaking more actions to preserve and promote the pony, such as:

- Greater recognition of the value of what the breed has to offer. Greater utilisation of the ponies under a variety of different headings eg. Heritage, Tourism, Leisure.
• Compatibility with other heritage objectives – preservation of associated crafts such as Harness making, basket work, Wheelmaking etc.
• A development of the potential of the breed in the area of Conservation grazing on Commonages, Coillte land, Bord na Mona lands and National Parks and Wildlife lands.
• Targeting the older farmer, small farmer and hobby farmer where it is not a high density numbers game. Ponies are hardy and easy to do. They are suitable for marginal land and commonages.
• Target Niche market for showing of Mountain and Moorland breeds, in hand and under saddle.
• Targeting and education/informing of Glas advisors
• Support for Training – training people to train the ponies. Traditional skills have been lost.

CONCLUSION

The Kerry Bog Pony is the rarest of Ireland’s native equine breeds with just 40 foals approximately born each year. This compares with the Irish Draught Horse which has approximately 800 foals and the Connemara pony which has approximately 1,500 foals registered a year. While we appreciate that 1 pony equals 1 LU, the rate paid per livestock unit is the same for all three breeds regardless of their level of endangerment.

The Kerry Bog Pony only draws down 2.67% of the total drawn down by the Connemara pony despite the difference in the health of the population of both breeds.

The Pony is critically endangered and it is hoped that additional measures may be introduced to aid its survival.

1) Request for a foal grant similar to that currently being received by the Kerry Cow c. €86.00 per live calf registered. To be paid on the offspring of inspected parents
2) Given the extremely small population perhaps a higher annual grant might be paid on Kerry Bog Ponies compared with the Irish Draught and the Connemara Pony both of which have far larger populations.
3) Request that the ownership date requirements for entry into the GLAS Scheme be eased to encourage the purchase and breeding of ponies
4) Allow participants to opt for Rare Breeds during the course of their GLAS Plan
5) Increase the number of Livestock Units eligible for grant aid from the current 10 LU.
6) Pony Owners should be encouraged to bring their ponies out for inspection to upgrade them within the Stud Book as per the Breed Improvement Directive within the Stud Book Rules/Breeding Programme. There should be incentives for compliance and/or penalties for non-compliance.

We would propose that an increased payment be allocated to the Kerry Bog Pony because of its Critical status and further that an increased premium be paid on inspected ponies.

We realise we must have an objective in mind for the end product and we constantly promote the pony at Equestrian and Rare Breed events around the country. The pony does not fall under the Food Production umbrella and so must be treated differently to rare breeds of cattle or sheep. It is part of our living heritage, representative of the tradition of small farming which has disappeared in the last 70 years. It has a value under the headings of Heritage, Tourism, Biodiversity, Local history.
Traditionally it was a small working pony. Its preservation should involve the protection of its original attributes, its appearance, its good temperament, its strength and its hardiness. Ponies benefit greatly from human interaction and actively enjoy being busy and working, whether that is under saddle or driving or walking with tourists. If the ponies are not brought out for inspection many of them are completely unhandled. An older unbroken pony has very little commercial value. In the past it has been noted that individuals leaving REPS, AEOS and GLAS have sold these unhandled ponies at very low prices to dispose of them, often to the Factory. They do not contribute positively to the image of the breed or the future of the breed.

**We would like to make the issuing of an increased premium contingent on the ponies meeting the basic handling requirements to participate in the Breed Improvement programme.**

Attending inspections would have the added benefit of identifying good quality ponies, especially stallions. This will benefit the owners as well as the breed. It would also ensure the production of a saleable product once it exits the scheme.

Mary McGrath  
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