

How come racehorses all share the same birthday?

Horse races are all framed around the age of the participants - two-year-olds or three-year-olds only and various combinations of three-year-olds and upwards. Since racing didn't initially take place during the winter or spring in England, members of the Jockey Club agreed in 1833 that racehorses should all share the same birth date of May 1st. But this only applied at Newmarket as there were two factions of racing - those who followed the 'Newmarket rules' and those who had their own set of different regulations. It was only in 1858 that the current January 1st date was agreed and adopted for all racing countrywide. Once this new agreement had been in general use it was also widely adopted in the USA, although some southern states persisted with the May 1st ruling until the end of the Civil War in 1865 when they too agreed on January 1st.



World record priced broodmare *Magical Romance* produced a foal too early on December 21st

But meanwhile thoroughbreds born in the southern hemisphere all share a birthday of August 1st to allow for the differing breeding seasons. Obviously horses born earlier have an advantage over those born later meaning that breeders are always keen to get a foal born as close as possible to their official birthday. But a foal born on December 31st would unfortunately be deemed to be a year old just 24 hours later! There's a suspiciously significant number of foals registered around the earliest start date suggesting that foals born earlier may well have been kept hidden. Whilst a Christmas baby might normally be a great joy, it proved not so for Lady Serena Rothschild who paid a world record of £4.6 million for broodmare *Magical Romance* who gave premature birth to a Pivotal filly on December 21st.

Lambourn is on the up



The Jockey Club owns the Lambourn gallops and is responsible for upkeep having spent over £2 million on facilities in the past 7 years. In the last year the ratio of winners to runners trained in Lambourn showed a healthy increase and The Jockey Club expresses a determination to keep

growing Lambourn as a premier training centre which is currently only second to Newmarket. Over 1200 tonnes of new ActivTrak was added to the Short Gallop last year. The Kingsdown Gallop was refurbished with 900 tonnes and access roads to the gallops and starting stalls were improved. For the jumpers new plastic birch fences have been provided. Which all comes at a cost - The Jockey Club charges every horse using the facilities a monthly fee of £132.90. Given that there are over 1500 horses in training this will have earned The Jockey Club well over £15 million during the same 7 years. So something in the kitty to do even more?

Breeding success or failure?

A new study warns that inbreeding of thoroughbreds is akin to global warming. Analysis of the DNA of more than 10,000 racehorses revealed a significant increase in inbreeding over the past 45 years. No less than 97% of horses in the study traced to Northern Dancer, 55% to Danehill and 35% to Sadlers Wells. The problem is that inbreeding can compromise overall fertility and health resulting in offspring being at increased risk of recessive traits which could quickly weaken the biological fitness of the population and hinder its ability to reproduce and ultimately survive. Professor Hill (also discoverer of the speed gene) who undertook the survey warns that simply looking at pedigrees is a far less accurate way to measure relatedness compared to DNA testing.



provides a much better and more reliable method to measure the true relationship between individuals enabling identification of more suitable outcrosses. Professor Hill advises "Research shows that contrary to the widely held belief, higher inbreeding is simply not associated with superior racing performance". Whether this may alter Coolmore's current reliance on their super stallion Galileo is doubtful.

What's in a name?

Naming a racehorse is getting more and more difficult. At any one time around 250,000 names are already in use or protected as belonging to a previously famous or well-regarded horse and another 15,000 or so are added every year. All names need to be registered with Weatherbys and comply to the format of a maximum 18 characters, including spaces, and any punctuation. Names can be reserved for an annual fee if not initially given to name a specific horse. Inevitably there are frequent attempts to get risqué names

registered but the authorities are pretty wise to this - although one wonders what a lot of the current Arabic names might mean. One that did slip through the net was *Where's The Fox Hat?* which was to debut at the long lost Folkestone only to be withdrawn as a non-runner on the instruction of the stewards. In my book, still one of the best names remains *Vindaloo* - remarkably the winner of no less than 45 races (but none in his first two seasons) - being by *Indian Ridge* out of *Lovely Lagoon*.

Did you know?

Top jump jockeys averaging 500 rides per season are estimated to earn around £135,000 pa before tax

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THE REGULAR NEWSLETTER FROM HOMEBRED RACING

SPRING 2020

Making giant strides

Study *The Stars* leading *Eaux De Vie* home from the Lambourn gallops



Homebred Racing's lovely two-year-olds are now well into their work having joined Sylvester Kirk's Upper Lambourn yard just before Christmas. On our recent stable visit we were able to see our colt *Study The Stars* (by leading first season sire *Due Diligence* out of our own multiple winning mare *Celestial Bay*) working on the gallops with our filly *Eaux De Vie* (by top sprint sire *Swiss Spirit* out of our five times winning mare *Delagoa Bay*). Both are looking in great shape and Sylvester said:

"It's still early days, but your colt moves really well and is by the right stallion out of a mare who had a lot of speed - he's going to be a very nice horse - your best yet! The filly is looking exceptionally well too and, maybe not as forward, has started coming on in leaps and bounds recently and is improving fast and is a great mover." It'll be a few weeks before they start working upsides which will give us better clues on abilities - but the dream is still alive that we'll see them putting best feet forward this summer!



Welsh Assembly - our first 2-y-o winner

Reducing the risks...

A study of over 180,000 horses and 4.5 million races from around the world reveals that horses campaigned as juveniles are significantly less likely than their older counterparts to sustain career-ending injuries. Researcher Tim Parkin told leading bloodstock insurers that the skeletal strength of horses raced at two helps prevent injuries at a later stage in their careers. Interestingly, Parkin also revealed that horses transferring to jumps from the flat present with fewer injuries than those sent straight over jumps and suggested that trainers should ensure their charges have plenty of work before sending them over obstacles. These findings seem to fly in the face of long-held beliefs that giving horses time to mature before racing is misplaced.

Who'll be the champ?

With the 2020 turf season fast approaching who'll emerge as champion jockey? Will reigning champion Oisín Murphy retain his crown - or one of the new young guns - David Egan or Jason Watson - or perhaps the return of Jim Crowley or a candidate from the north like PJ Macdonald? Being retained by one of the top yards or owners used to be the key but long spells away from the domestic competition could help a freelancer like Ben Curtis. Watch this space.



2019 Champion Oisín Murphy

Did you know?

Average prize-money per flat race is £17,744 and £11,172 over jumps



Snapshot

During the winter we've been busy replacing existing fencing with new posts and rails as well as gates. It's a bit like the Forth Bridge - a never-ending task!



The speed gene test was developed by Professor Emmeline Hill

It's all in the genes!

Scientists have long been researching why some racehorses are better equipped to race over sprint distances and others over longer. At Trinity College Dublin they have discovered the inner workings of the 'speed gene' and developed a test that will determine optimum race distance for a horse with over 90% accuracy. The Speed Gene Test was launched by Equinome based on the pioneering work of Professor Emmeline Hill and has become the established genetic test for racehorses around the world. The test examines DNA within the

myostatin gene responsible for muscle development and muscle fibre type and then categorises horses into three distinctive types – sprinters, middle distance or stayers. The results are intended to help identify early types from late developers but ultimately speed is all relative and the test doesn't guarantee success or predict failure on the track. One wonders what the test would have made of the legendary Red Rum who won over 5 furlongs as a two-year-old but went on to win racing's greatest stamina test of the Grand National a record-breaking three times!

Winners & losers

The new apprentice deal put in place in March by the BHA has met with strong objections from the National Trainers Federation. The new arrangement is to help ensure that apprentice jockeys receive a fairer amount of their earnings, which historically have always been shared with the trainer who retains them. The new rule ensures that apprentices will receive 80% of the riding fee with the trainer able to retain 20% irrespective of the rider's claim. The old system was on a sliding scale allowing the trainer to share riding fees and prize-money percentage up to 50/50 for the least experienced riders claiming 7lbs. But many leading trainers including

Andrew Balding (whose 'academy' has produced many future stars including Oisin Murphy, William Buick and Jason Watson), Richard Hannon and Tim and Mick Easterby are adamant that apprentices may not benefit from the changes and may well see their number of rides diminish. Andrew Balding has said to the BHA "The financial implications of your new agreement make it far less appealing for us to take on apprentices. Through the NTF we have tried to warn you, but your pursuit of what might appear popular in the press has once again led you to ignore the voices of the people who genuinely understand the subject". This looks likely to be a

Flying colours

Choosing racing colours is as difficult as naming your horse to avoid the thousands of others as no silks can be identical. There are currently three different options for choosing your colours: Standard colours require silks to be created using a template of different shapes (plain, hoops, stripes etc) within a range of 18 standard colours. Bespoke allows you to choose almost any design you want – but you'll have to pay £5,000 + VAT for the



privilege. The final option is to buy a set of existing colours from owners who might be giving up and these range from £1,250 + VAT upwards. Plain colours command a huge premium since they are only very rarely available. In choosing Homebred Racing's colours we chose a design and colours to help easy identification during a race - especially if the field is tightly bunched - when our black and white hooped sleeves are always clearly visible. Eagle-eyed racing viewers will see that our silks currently feature fleetingly at the start of the buffers sponsored by William Hill between races covered by ITV!



Andrew Balding with progeny Oisin Murphy

disagreement that rumbles on throughout 2020 and, given that trainers are the ones allocating rides, it seems sure that they'll prove the point about apprentices losing out by simply not providing them with so many opportunities. Common sense is an asset that's frequently shown to be in short supply at the BHA.

Did you know?

Top flat jockeys getting 1,000 rides are estimated to earn around £190,000 pa before tax



So much at stake

July Cup winner Twilight Son's progeny look likely to be early types

The start of the new flat season represents a huge gamble for stallion owners as Britain's breeding industry steadily climbs to the top of the tree. This is borne out by two of the world's most expensive stallions standing here - Dubawi commands a fee of £250,000 and Frankel at £175,000. Most critical will be how new stallions with their first runners in 2020 perform, which as history shows, is more than a little unpredictable. Muhaarar and Golden Horn were widely hyped as those likely to succeed last season but finished 10th and 15th in the league table and only able to produce a single group winner between them. Their owners will have everything crossed that their three year olds perform significantly better to justify, or hopefully, increase, their respective £20,000 and £40,000 fees. Few amongst his year's young blades standing in Britain command such fees or lofty expectations but are led by Bobby's Kitten (£12,500), Territories (£12,000) and

Twilight Son (£10,000) whilst across the Irish Sea probable contenders include Coolmore's The Gurkha (\$25,000), New Bay (£20,000) and Harzand (\$15,000). Over the English Channel, Shalaa stands at \$27,500 in France. Whether a high stallion fee guarantees success on the racetrack is far from certain. Shalaa, a son of Invincible Spirit, won the July Cup and has a speedy pedigree that should produce sharp types but should he have sufficient numbers to make it to the top of the league table is a doubt. Of all those mentioned it's Cheveley Park's Twilight Son that ticks most of the boxes to be the likeliest to produce early, speedy types and his yearlings have sold to yards who typically do well in this sphere. But there's likely to be better value found amongst the lower priced freshman sires including Adaay, Coulsty, Kodi Bear, Mehmas and Pearl Secret. So watch this space – with perhaps a little less angst than the stallion owners!

Not everyone's worried about prize-money!

Although in the UK there's persistent grumbling about prize-money, there's still plenty to be won abroad. Just when you might have thought that winnings couldn't get much bigger than the \$10 million on offer in the Dubai World Cup, along comes the 2020 Saudi Cup in which runners competed for an amazing \$20 million! Announced by Prince Bandar bin Khalid Al Faisal the race will be run at Riyadh in February with the winning horse getting a staggering \$10 million and

horses down to 10th place earning a reducing share of the remaining \$10 million. The race is to be run on dirt over 9 furlongs and the field size restricted to a maximum of 14 runners all of whom will get free entry and also have their travelling costs met by the organizers. The prize-money on offer leaves the previously most valuable races such as the Prix De l'Arc de Triomphe, The Japan Cup, The Dubai Turf Classic, The Breeders Cup and The Melbourne Cup trailing in its wake. And just where this leaves The Epsom Derby, worth only 10% of the new Saudi Cup, but still claiming to be the world's most important horse race, is questionable.



Riyadh's dirt track where the race will be run

Vets warn about UK climate change

Whilst Australia scorches, the UK is experiencing the warmer and wetter weather predicted as a result of climate change. The Met Office confirms that rainfall has increased by 17% since 1961. Just a marginal climate change has already resulted in significantly increased grass growth and vets are warning

that horse owners should be aware of the potential danger increased grazing presents. The British Veterinary Association revealed that a study last year showed that 31% of horses are overweight and recommended that horses should be turned out on barer paddocks to prevent problems of over-eating.

Holy hay!

Or as it's more commonly known, sanfoin, used to be widely cultivated for its nutritious value as a grazing crop and also in hay. Sanfoin's superb grazing, providing an increase of 20% protein intake combined with its antelmintic (anti-worm) properties, is ideal for horses, cattle and sheep earning a nickname of 'holy hay'.

Once common, sainfoin has dropped out of fashion and mostly been replaced by lucerne but is now seeing something of a revival. This year were going to experiment growing sainfoin amongst our hay crop. It's a perennial suited to grassland and grows to around 3 feet producing long sprays of attractive pink flowers very attractive to bees and other pollinators. It'll be interesting to see how it grows and how attractive it is to horses!



Sainfoin offers more than just attractive flower spikes