

National Championships for Equine Young Breeders 2022

The Irish Sport Horse (ISH) Young Breeders National Championships, jointly supported by Teagasc and Horse Sport Ireland, is to take place at Kildalton Agricultural College on Saturday 2 April.

Wendy Conlon
Teagasc equine specialist.



The National Championships are a first step in selecting teams representing the ISH Studbook at World Breeding Federation for Sport Horses (WBFSH) Young Breeder World Championships (WC) in Ermelo, Holland in July 2022, hosted by the KWPN Studbook. Although the knowledge and skill of participants is challenged and assessed throughout training and Championships, there is plenty of support, guidance and feedback provided.

What skills and knowledge are assessed during the National Championships?

- Multiple choice theory test – topics include breeding, stable management, feeding, health and sport.
- Assessing conformation, movement and jumping traits – Judges first score two horses, with discussion on reasons for allocating scores, before competitors assess a further three horses aiming to match the judges' scores as closely as possible for the latter three.
- Presenting in hand – Resource material is available on the website and a demonstration on the day will explain how this discipline is assessed. Horses are also provided.

Who can enter?

Those aged 15-25 years of age on 1 January 2022. Although training events have been provided around the country, the Championships are equally accessible to those who have not attended training. While encouraged, it is not compulsory to progress to WC if successful at Nationals.

What do past participants say about their experiences?

David Bourke, Enniskerry, Co Wicklow, competed at 2009 WC in Ireland: "Young Breeders gave me the tool kit to objectively assess my own stock, stand back and be critical.



Wendy Conlon, Teagasc, and Andrew Hughes, Ennisnag Stud, at Hughes Horse Stud Kilkenny with training participants from around the country.

Contacts with other competitors from across Europe are sustained to this day."

Sarah Brashaw Newtownards, Co Down, competed at 2019 WC in Austria: "I've driven literally hundreds of miles around Ireland attending training. Not coming from an equestrian background myself, it just goes to show that anyone can do it if they are willing to put the work in."

David Browne, Castledermot, Co Kildare, competed at 2017 WC in Canada: "I knew very little about conformation or athleticism before participating in the programme and learned an awful lot on training and competition days with the guidance and feedback from trainers and judges."

Michelle Dunne, Sandyford, Co Dublin, who competed at 2019 WC, admits to "feeling a bit lost, at the first training event I attended as I was quite shy and my instinct was to not go back." Yet two years later: "I wanted to be more educated about how to assess a horse and not make silly mistakes or waste money when buying, and have not looked back since. I love it."

Dan Geaney, Castleisland, Co Kerry, competed at 2019 WC Austria after winning at National Championships: "Before the Championships, I hadn't attended training, knew a bit about loose jumping, but never presented on the triangle in hand and just followed gut instinct on conformation. It was a steep learning curve and challenging, but the only way to learn is to speak up and ask questions – it's very important to do that."

Conor Wixted, Sixmilebridge, Co Clare, won the National Championships senior section in 2019: "Training days provide a chance to visit some of the best breeders and producers, alongside experienced and generous trainers, imparting invaluable information you wouldn't get anywhere else."

How to enter:

All details are available on <https://www.teagasc.ie/rural-economy/rural-development/equine/ish-young-breeders/Events> section or contact Teagasc equine specialist wendy.conlon@teagasc.ie.

Booking at <https://teagasc.clear-bookings.com/> closes 20 March.