

EQUINE SUMMIT 2026



Pathways & Possibilities
Careers in the Irish Equine Sector

Thursday 5th March 2026
8:00am - 5:00pm
The Curragh Racecourse
Kildare, Ireland



Comhairle Contae Chill Dara
Kildare County Council


Oifig Fiontair Áitiúil
Local Enterprise Office



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Agenda

Ireland's equine industry is not just a cornerstone of our cultural heritage—it's a driving force behind our rural economies, a global leader in breeding and racing, and a sector brimming with innovative opportunities for the next generation. Join us for a number of engaging panel discussions where you'll hear from leading voices in the industry about why this sector matters so profoundly to Ireland's present and future.

Discover how the equine sector sustains thousands of jobs, supports communities, and contributes to our reputation on the world stage. With rapid changes in technology, education, and international competition, new skills are now more vital than ever. If you're passionate about Ireland's success or considering your own career path, this is your chance to explore how you can make a difference in a dynamic and rewarding industry.

Brendan McArdle MC and Moderator for the event

Brendan McArdle is Advertising Sales and Marketing Manager at The Irish Field and a respected RTÉ showjumping and horseracing commentator. Known for his expert insights and engaging delivery, he regularly hosts major equine events, bringing deep industry knowledge and a dynamic presence to audiences across Ireland's racing and sport horse sectors.



08:00 – 09:00 | Registration, Networking, & Exhibitors with Refreshments

09:00 – 09:30 | Welcome & Opening Remarks



Welcome Cllr Carmel Kelly
Cathaoirleach Kildare County Council



Minister James Lawless
Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science



Minister Martin Heydon
Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine

09:30 – 10:00 | Launch: Young Equine Innovator's Guide to a Career in the Equine Industry

Nina Carberry Member of European Parliament

Keynote Speaker

Nina Carberry is a Member of the European Parliament (MEP) representing the Midlands Northwest with Fine Gael and the European People's Party. She serves on three EU committees: Transport and Tourism, International Trade, and Budgets. A former champion jockey and 2011 Irish Grand National winner, as well as breeder, trainer, TV personality, and author, she brings deep equine and entrepreneurial expertise to European policymaking.



Orla Casey Young Equine Innovators a European Perspective - Momentum Innovate + Educate



Jacqui McNabb Head of Enterprise and Economic Development – Kildare County Council



10:00 – 11:00 | Panel 1

Ireland's Equine Industry: Opportunities & Outlook

Understanding of the structure, scale, and future direction of the Irish equine industry.

Panelists will:

- Explore the dynamic structure and vast scale of the Irish equine sector, hear directly from leading figures and decision-makers, and discover the career pathways shaping the next generation.
- Offer unique insights into racing, breeding, sport horses, veterinary, and education, and a clear understanding of how this industry underpins rural communities and drives economic growth.
- Explain why attracting fresh talent is now more crucial than ever—making this session essential for anyone considering their future in a thriving, globally recognised field.

Panelists



Prof. William Hynes
Managing Director – KPMG Future Analytics, Ireland

William is a Chartered Urban Planner, Surveyor, and Spatial Economist with extensive experience leading strategic economic and development projects. He has coordinated 20 EU research projects, lectures at UCD, and led the Kildare Skills Strategy 2024-2030 for Kildare County Council.



Joe Osborne
Director - Godolphin Flying Start

Joe Osborne served as Managing Director of Godolphin Ireland from 1994-2025 and held director roles across Godolphin's global entities. He is a director of Godolphin Flying Start, involved since its 2002 launch, and also serves on the boards of the Irish Thoroughbred Industry Employee Awards and the Irish Farriery Authority.



Denis Duggan
CEO - Horse Sport Ireland

Leading the national governing body for equestrian sport and the Irish Sport Horse/Irish Draught studbooks. Former Macra na Feirme CEO and Enterprise Ireland executive, he focuses on breeding innovation, welfare, and digital services like HorseSource.



Carol Nolan
Director of People and Industry Education – Horse Racing Ireland

She founded HRI's Careers and Racing Education Department in 2015. Her mission is to expand access to racing and breeding career pathways nationwide, supporting employers, stakeholders, and individuals across the sector.



Joey Cullen
Marketing Director - Goffs

Joey Cullen, Marketing Director at Goffs since 2011, previously expanded global markets for Irish Thoroughbred Marketing. A University of Limerick Equine Science graduate, he has worked at Hollywood Park Racecourse in California and Taiki Farm in Japan. He leads Goffs' marketing efforts, strengthening client relationships and driving sales across all bloodstock sectors.



Sharon O'Regan
CEO - Weatherbys Limited

Sharon became CEO of Weatherbys in 2025 after serving as Deputy Chief Executive and General Manager of Weatherbys Ireland. With over 25 years in breeding and racing administration, she brings deep expertise and strong stud book partnerships, driving growth and diversification across Weatherbys at the heart of the Thoroughbred industry.

11:00 – 11:15 | Morning Coffee Break & Networking

Refreshments and informal discussion in exhibition area.

11:15 – 12:15 | Panel 2 The Team Behind a Champion

Exploring Diverse Careers in the Irish Equine Sector: The Irish equine industry presents a broad range of career options.

Panelists will:

- Clarify the variety of professional paths available in the equine industry.
- Showcase personal stories and successful career journeys.
- Offer practical guidance and expert advice on entering and thriving in the field.
- Inspire attendees to consider rewarding roles within a globally respected industry

Panelists

Ross O Sullivan Dual Purpose Kildare Based Horse Trainer – Ross O’Sullivan Racing

Ross O’Sullivan’s career is rooted in Irish racing. A former amateur jockey for 12 years, he refined his skills during five years with Jessica Harrington and three with Colm Murphy. He now runs a disciplined, results-driven training operation, sharing authentic behind-the-scenes insights with visitors through Horse Country.



Valerie Keatley Head Girl - JP Murtagh Racing

Valerie grew up surrounded by horses in County Kildare and held her own trainer’s licence for six years. Over a decade ago, she joined Johnny Murtagh at Fox Covert Stables, where she has become an integral member of the team and now serves as head girl.



Dr. Marcus Swail Equine Veterinary Surgeon - EquiVET Ireland

Marcus Swail is an equine sports medicine veterinarian, founder of EquiVET Ireland, and long-time team vet for Irish Sport Horse teams. He has attended multiple Olympic and World Equestrian Games and frequently presents at major international veterinary conferences.



Nicole Groyer Equine Nutritionist - Connolly Red Mills

Nicole, an Animal Science Equine graduate, is a key member of the Connolly’s RED MILLS nutrition team, providing international technical support. With broad industry experience, she works closely with sport horse stables, stud farms, and trainers, supporting customers through tailored nutrition advice, forage analysis, and diet planning.



David O’Callaghan Thoroughbred breeder - Yeomanstown Stud

David O’Callaghan is a leading bloodstock professional and manager at Yeomanstown Stud in Co. Kildare, renowned for breeding elite thoroughbreds and champion stallions like Dark Angel. He has played a key role in Yeomanstown’s global reputation for producing top-class runners and commercial success at major sales.



12:15 – 13:30 | Networking Lunch

Buffet lunch served in the exhibition area
Exhibitors include: universities, training providers, equine employers, and student groups

13:30 – 14:30 | Panel 3 Innovation & the Future of Equine Careers

As technology transforms the equine sector, this panel explores how innovation is reshaping everything from animal welfare to data-driven performance analysis:

Panelists will:

- Offer insightful perspectives from pioneering leaders at the forefront of equine innovation, revealing how emerging technologies and forward-thinking approaches are shaping the future of the sector.
- Demonstrate inspiring career pathways for those eager to make their mark in fields such as equine genomics, veterinary advancements, smart data analytics, sustainable nutrition, and digital record management.
- Offer insights to attendees that are passionate about animal welfare, technological transformation, or expanding the boundaries of equine professions the many dynamic roles and new opportunities available within a rapidly evolving industry.

Panelists



Anne-Marie O'Brien
CEO & Founder - Equimetrics

Annemarie is a former champion trainer, leading amateur rider and current owner and breeder of flat and NH horses along with her husband Aidan. She is CEO of Equimetrics Ltd, a company that is developing smart wearable technology for the Equine industry and is a current board member of HRI.



Dr. Kevin Corley
Director & Founder - Veterinary Advances

Kevin Corley is an equine specialist veterinarian and co-founder of EquiTrace, a global equine technology company. EquiTrace delivers AI-driven health compliance through EventPass for major US competitions and a leading stud management platform used by stud farms worldwide. Kevin continues to practise and lecture internationally in equine critical care.



Prof. Emmeline Hill
Equine Genomics University College Dublin & Co Founder - Equinome

Professor of Equine Genomics at UCD; co-founder of Equinome and lead researcher behind the Thoroughbred "speed gene," applying genomics to performance, breeding and welfare.



Wendy Conlon
Equine Specialist - Teagasc

Wendy Conlon is an Equine Specialist with Teagasc, Ireland's Agriculture and Food Development Authority. She supports horse owners and breeders through advisory services, knowledge transfer, and industry engagement, with a focus on equine management, equine health, and sustainable production systems.



Pierce Dargan
Former CEO & Founder - Equine MediRecord

Founder & CEO, Equine MediRecord (now within Business Infusions), the first regulator-approved digital platform for equine welfare/anti-doping compliance — used by Breeders' Cup, The Saudi Cup and more. Named in Ireland's "30 Under 30."



Emelie Andersson
Founder - Ridhjälpmedel

An equestrian instructor with 14 years' experience in riding education for people with disabilities, specialising in adaptive teaching and inclusive sport. An entrepreneur and innovator, she has earned a New Entrepreneur Scholarship and awards from DHR and the Swedish Inventors' Association, pioneering advances in adaptive equestrian assistive equipment.

14:30 – 15:30 | Panel 4

Equine Tourism: Showcasing Ireland to the World

Discover how equine tourism is opening doors far beyond Ireland's borders, creating exciting career pathways across the globe :

Panelists will:

- Showcase how the dynamic blend of heritage, horsemanship, and hospitality is creating exciting opportunities and driving demand for skilled professionals both in Ireland and internationally.
- Invite you to discover how you can actively contribute to and thrive within this globally expanding sector , whether your passions lie in travel, animal welfare, or pioneering guest experiences.
- Share insights on shaping the future of equine tourism, and learn how you can unlock its international potential for your own career journey.

Panelists



Laura Magee
CEO - Horse Country

Laura Magee, CEO of Horse Country, leads Ireland's immersive equine tourism initiative, showcasing behind-the-scenes experiences at top stud farms and training yards. A CAFRE Enniskillen alumna with experience in racing and hospitality, she develops unique visitor experiences that celebrate Irish equine heritage and broaden public access to the industry.



Shauna Harrington
Visitor Experience Coordinator - Kildangan Stud (Godolphin)

Supporting daily breeding operations in Godolphin Ireland's Stud Office. Shauna also runs Horse Country Tours, welcoming visitors and showcasing Ireland's thoroughbred heritage. With industry experience and a passion for storytelling, she helps connect people with the history and tradition of Irish bloodstock.



Evan Arkwright
Racing & Sponsorship Manager - Curragh Racecourse

Evan Arkwright is a seasoned Irish racing executive at The Curragh Racecourse, serving as Racing & Sponsorship Manager. He manages major national and international sponsorships and develops racing programmes, drawing on previous management roles with Weatherbys Ireland and the Emirates Racing Association. Arkwright has worked at The Curragh since 2002.



John Osborne
Director of Equine Welfare & Bloodstock - Horse Racing Ireland

John Osborne is Director of Equine Welfare & Bloodstock at Horse Racing Ireland, bringing deep veterinary, breeding and racing expertise. Formerly CEO of both the Irish National Stud and HRI Racecourses, he has held influential leadership roles shaping industry standards, strategy and welfare across Ireland's thoroughbred sector.



Aideen Morrin
Co-Founder of Stories Ireland DMC

Globally respected expert in incentive travel, events and luxury group experiences. With 25 years' international experience, Aideen has curated award-winning programmes for global brands and served on the boards of SITE Ireland and the ITOA.



Dr. Ingibjörg Sigurðardóttir

A leading academic in rural tourism and equestrian studies, with expertise in equestrian tourism, rural innovation and small business development. An Assistant Professor shaping research, teaching and curriculum at Hólar University, contributing internationally through published work, project leadership and industry engagement. A recognised specialist advancing Iceland's equestrian tourism landscape.

15:30 – 16:00 | Closing Session – Reflections & Looking Ahead

Panel Reflections

- A review of the most significant insights and achievements from today's sessions
- Discussion of new directions in education, training, and innovation identified during the event
- Guidance on where to find professional support, placement opportunities, and mentorship in the sector

Speakers



Cathal Beale

CEO, Irish National Stud & Gardens & Chair, Irish Thoroughbred Breeders' Association (ITBA)



Eileen Cullen

Head of Innovation and Training – Kildare & Wicklow Education & Training Board (KWETB)



Alan Dunney

Director of Planning, Enterprise, Economic Development – Kildare County Council

16:00 – 17:00 | Networking & Close

- Final networking opportunity on exhibition stands
- Acknowledgements and thanks to partners and sponsors





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