



STATEMENT OF STRATEGY 2024 – 2027

IHRB

Irish Horseracing
Regulatory Board

Foreword from the IHRB Chairman and CEO

The Irish Horseracing Regulatory Board CLG (IHRB) is an all-island body which was established in 2018 as the independent regulatory body for horseracing in Ireland, an industry that supports over 30,000 jobs and is worth €2.46bn to the economy, to carry out the regulatory and licensing functions assigned to the Racing Regulatory Body under the Horse Racing Ireland Act 2016. We are pleased to present this Statement of Strategy 2024-2027, which sets out our strategic direction and priorities for the next four years.

The previous strategic plan for the organisation, our first, was prepared at a time when the IHRB had just been established and change was being introduced. Significant progress was made throughout the period encompassed by our previous plan, especially in the areas of health, safety and care of our participants, equine anti-doping and medication control, and the integrity of regulatory practices. This was achieved despite the disruption caused by the Covid-19 pandemic and during a period when horseracing activity increased.

Over recent years we have also made significant advances in critical areas including the strengthening of the organisation's board and governance, and closer collaboration with the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Horse Racing Ireland, Veterinary Council of Ireland and other important stakeholders. Throughout our recent consultation with stakeholders, both external and internal, the overriding theme was a passion for Irish horseracing, a dedication to the welfare and safety of all participants, and an expectation of the highest standards of regulation across horseracing and Point to Points. This new strategy positions us to make further progress as we continue to improve our efficiency and effectiveness, with communication, consultation, collaboration and collegiality the hallmarks of how the IHRB seeks to engage with stakeholders and deliver on its responsibilities on a daily basis.

This Strategy is built around five key strategic pillars and charts our path to further modernisation through an ongoing programme of change, as we continue to learn and improve as an organisation, applying the highest professional standards within a robust governance framework and rigorous probity regime, supported by best-in-class information systems which underpin effective decision making and efficient operations.

It is an ambitious strategy which builds on work done since 2018 and will bring ever greater knowledge and professionalism, uncompromising integrity and a relentless focus on safety and well-being of participants. We are confident that we can achieve the objectives set out in this document. The ongoing support of the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine and our colleagues in Horse Racing Ireland will be critical to the success of this plan, which will be driven by a dedicated team of staff and volunteers in the IHRB who are committed to the sport and who share the vision, purpose and values of the IHRB. This strategy will be a living, breathing document that will frame the approach and guide the efforts of the IHRB for the next four years.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Martin O'Donnell'.

Martin O'Donnell
Chairman

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Darragh O'Loughlin'.

Darragh O'Loughlin
CEO

The Process

One of our priorities in developing this new Statement of Strategy was to engage with and hear from a wide range of people from across horseracing and Point to Point, both within the organisation and also external stakeholders.

The IHRB Board of Directors appointed an independent facilitator, Valerie O’Keeffe of Clarity VP, to assist and support the process, and established a Strategic Plan Steering Group comprising Martin O’Donnell, IHRB Chairman, Angela Flanagan, IHRB Director, Darragh O’Loughlin, CEO and Niall Cronin, Head of Communications and Strategy, which reported monthly to the IHRB Board on the Statement of Strategy development.

The steering group reviewed the previous IHRB Strategic Plan 2019-2023 to evaluate progress. Despite the disruption of the Covid 19 pandemic, most of the objectives that the IHRB had set itself at that time were substantially achieved. Of those that were not, any that remained relevant were incorporated into this new strategy to build on the work initiated during that period.

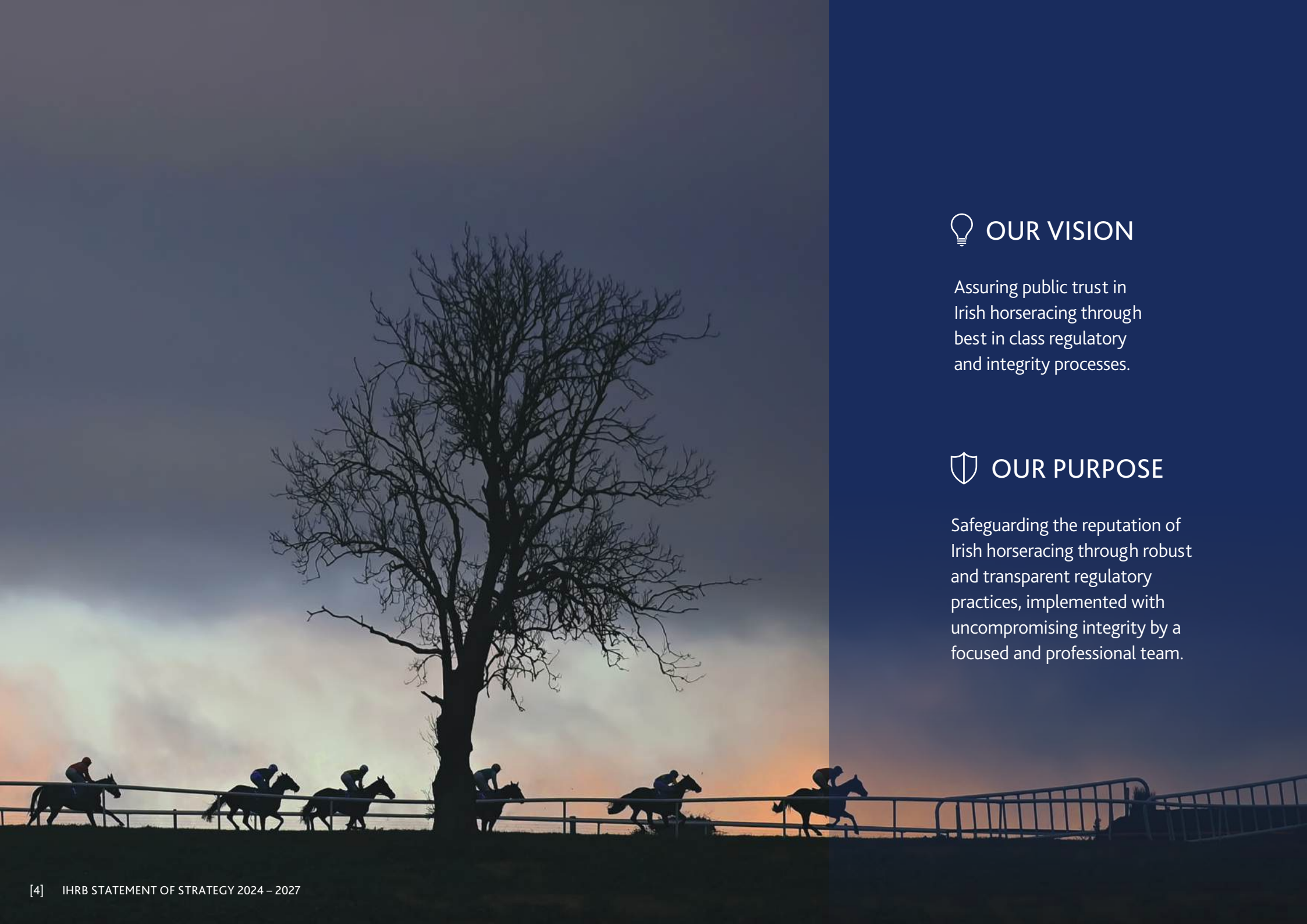
In July 2023, we commenced a public consultation. It was published on the IHRB website, on social media and in racing media and remained open until November. More than 250 responses were received and the central themes from each of those responses were considered as part of the process. IHRB staff and Raceday Stewards were also invited to submit their views.

Lastly, we held several independently facilitated focus groups, both internal and external, with the latter involving trainers, Point to Point handlers, jockeys, jockeys’ agent, racecourse management and racing media contributors, as well as representatives of racehorse owners, breeders and sales houses. Senior personnel in the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine and Horse Racing Ireland were also consulted and contributed greatly to the process.

We extend our thanks to those who gave their time to participate in and contribute to the development of our Statement of Strategy. The perspectives and insights which were shared, both internally and externally, were pivotal to the strategy development process and we have endeavoured to ensure that all contributions were considered and their key themes reflected in the final document.

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The IHRB wish to acknowledge the time given as part of our external stakeholders focus groups by Billy Lee, Danny Mullins, Dave Keena, Eoin Griffin, Jane Mangan, John McConnell, Kate Harrington, Kevin Blake, Richard Pugh, Richard Galway, Sam Curling, Tom Ryan.



OUR VISION

Assuring public trust in Irish horseracing through best in class regulatory and integrity processes.

OUR PURPOSE

Safeguarding the reputation of Irish horseracing through robust and transparent regulatory practices, implemented with uncompromising integrity by a focused and professional team.

 OUR VALUES



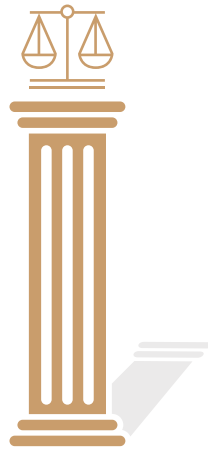


STRATEGIC PILLARS



PEOPLE

Empowering all our people to openly and consistently achieve the highest professional standards



INTEGRITY

Maximising our knowledge and professionalism to deliver with uncompromising integrity



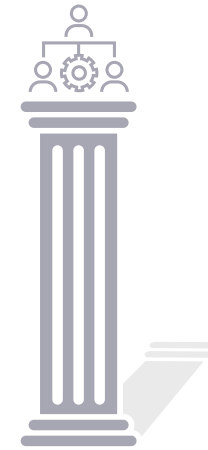
WELFARE

A relentless focus on the safety and well-being of our human and equine participants



DIGITAL FIRST

Providing best-in-class information systems to support effective decision making and efficient operations



GOVERNANCE

Consistently applying a robust governance framework and rigorous probity regime



Identify and apply resources and structures needed to deliver and achieve our objectives in an optimal manner.

Place resilience, succession planning and effective operational structure at the centre of our people policies.

Provide relevant training, development and well-being initiatives for our people.

Continually develop IHRB staff and Raceday Stewards to ensure the highest standards of professionalism and expertise.

Attract high quality talent by showcasing IHRB activities and roles.

Key Actions

- Review the structure of our teams and roles across the organisation to align with strategic objectives and ensure success.
- Increase options for development and career progression to assist with staff recruitment and retention.
- Put in place effective performance management and identify relevant training requirements in the pursuit of excellence.
- Develop initiatives for staff to enhance well-being, inclusivity and collegiality.
- Identify relevant opportunities for our people to exchange knowledge and experience with other international horseracing authorities.
- Develop and implement an appropriate CPD model for licence holders.
- Collaborate with EQUUIP and other key stakeholders to develop CPD opportunities and support welfare initiatives for licensees.
- Review our licensing process and licence categories to ensure that they remain fit for purpose and relevant to the needs of the horseracing industry.





INTEGRITY

Commitment to excellence through agility and continuous improvement of rules, structures and processes

Fair, consistent, proportionate and impartial enforcement of our rules and imposition of sanctions

Enhanced transparency in relation to processes and disciplinary hearings

Ensure safety and well-being for participants on Raceday through a standards-based approach across all racecourses

Exercise a leadership role in global horseracing and benchmark ourselves against best international practice



Key Actions

- Conduct a thorough review and revision of the Rule Book to ensure it remains fit-for-purpose and supports highest standards of integrity.
- Create a cohesive sanctions framework and review annually, benchmarking against other leading racing jurisdictions.
- Carry out case reviews and sanctions audits to promote consistency and as a basis for education and training for Stipendiary and Raceday Stewards.
- Refine our investigation process to ensure robust and efficient case management and open disciplinary hearings to the media to enhance transparency.
- Move to a documented standards-based approach to the regulation of training establishments and horseracing events.
- Develop racecourse veterinary standards for implementation on Raceday.
- Continue to refine the equine anti-doping programme and implement the Suann report recommendations.
- Publish monthly integrity statistics to increase visibility and understanding of our regulatory activities.
- Maintain close engagement with international horseracing bodies, exercising leadership where appropriate, to ensure consistency of regulatory standards.





A relentless focus on safety to minimise the risk of racing related injury or harm to all participants – human and horse.

Engage and support relevant research and use findings to support evidence-based policies and decisions.

Work closely with key stakeholders, particularly the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine and Horse Racing Ireland, to protect equine health.

Partner with the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine and Horse Racing Ireland to play our part in ensuring traceability of Thoroughbreds throughout their racing career.

Develop and publish care and safety standards for Thoroughbreds in Irish racing.

Key Actions

- Continue to lead and develop relevant research and projects, including Jockey Research Projects, Racecourse Safety Project, Equine Injury in Irish Racing Risk Reduction Project, Suitability to Race Programme, and Jockey Injury Database.
- Operationalise research project outputs and measure their impact.
- Continued training and upskilling of medical teams on pre-hospital trauma care provision.
- Update and implement concussion management procedures based on latest international standards.
- Continued focus on rider injury reduction including through safety equipment and proper fall technique.
- Keep abreast of and implement best practice in management and follow-up of Raceday equine injury.
- Draft and publish equine care standards for licensed training establishments.
- Work closely with the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine and other key stakeholders regarding biosecurity, equine infectious disease management and Thoroughbred welfare.
- Exercise our role under the Animal Health and Welfare Act through judicious use of the functions of our Authorised Officers.
- Put in place appropriate rules and regulatory processes to enforce traceability obligations.

DIGITAL FIRST

Deliver agile, efficient and secure systems that support modern ways of working, and that record and report relevant operational and integrity data and analytics.

Streamlined and integrated systems to eliminate duplication and reduce manual processes throughout the organisation.

Make online interaction the first choice for licensees and other stakeholders.

Robust business continuity strategy to ensure we remain resilient and proactive in the face of any business disruptions.

Implement best international standards for information and data security.

Key Actions

- Develop / procure online or cloud-based systems to facilitate remote working for office staff and enhance functionality for Raceday Officials.
- Improve robustness and usability for Raceday and integrity systems, including real time information update.
- Develop intuitive and responsive online systems for our licensees and stakeholders to conduct routine business with the IHRB including all licence and permit renewals.
- Collaborate with HRI to integrate workflows where appropriate and enhance IT structures across both organisations to improve processes and/or eliminate unnecessary duplication.
- Invest in a comprehensive Business Continuity Plan to minimise risk of business interruption and ensure that critical operations are maintained in the event of a systems failure or catastrophic loss.
- Invest in technology, training and structured procedures to ensure that all data remains safe and secure in the digital age.
- Adhere to guidance provided by national and European bodies such as the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) and the European Union Agency for Cybersecurity (ENISA).
- Achieve certification under ISO 27001, the international standard to manage information security.





GOVERNANCE

Compliance with the Code of Practice for Governance of State Bodies and implementation of independent reviews, reports and recommendations where necessary.

Continued focus on probity and effective, efficient and appropriate use of public funds.

Constructive stakeholder engagement through strong communication, consultation and collaboration.

Promote understanding of the IHRB identity, independence, functions and activities as the racing regulatory body.

Partner with other organisations including Horse Racing Ireland to meet our environmental and sustainability obligations.

Key Actions

- Record and track our compliance with Code of Practice for Governance of State Bodies with regular reporting as appropriate.
- Put in place properly resourced and appropriately skilled Compliance and Risk function.
- Commission independent reviews or reports as required, with appropriate implementation of recommendations.
- Establish a joint working group with HRI, consisting of senior executives from both organisations, to ensure effective joint working and efficient delivery of shared objectives.
- Engage in meaningful consultation with licensees and other stakeholders on material change that affects them and hold regular meetings with key representative groups to identify and discuss relevant issues.
- Assert a strong independent identity as the Racing Regulatory Body, including through a new brand image and a clear communications strategy to foster greater awareness across the industry and the public of the duties and functions of the IHRB.
- Collaborate with HRI on development and implementation of a sustainability strategy for Irish horseracing and take responsibility for delivery on our part.
- Consider and minimise our own environmental impact through best practice in areas such as rostering, travel and office considerations.





IHRB Raceday Team at a Typical Racing Fixture



Clerk of the Course



Stipendiary Stewards



Raceday Stewards (Voluntary)



Clerk of the Scales
& Clerk of the Scales Assistant



Judge



Starter



Veterinary Officers
& Veterinary Assistants



Security Officers



Handicappers



Medical Officer

Office Departments



- Administration
- Disciplinary
- Finance
- Licensing
- Point to Point
- Veterinary

IHRB IN NUMBERS



1,300
licences issued

Approximately 1,300 licences are issued yearly to trainers, jockeys, racecourses, jockeys agents' and jockeys' valets.



500
Racecourse and
Point to Point fixtures

IHRB regulates almost 500 fixtures between the Racecourse and Point to Points each year.



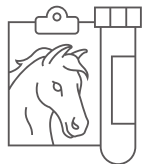
1,600+
days of volunteer
service per year

IHRB Raceday Stewards will provide over 1,600 days of volunteer service annually.



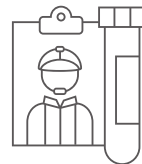
300+
concussion tests

Over 300 neuropsychological baseline concussion tests are conducted per year under the remit of the IHRB Chief Medical Officer.



6,000
equine samples

Up to 6,000 equine anti-doping samples are taken by the IHRB Veterinary Team each year.



800+
human samples

More than 800 human anti-doping samples are taken yearly by the IHRB.



3,500+
stable employees

In excess of 3,500 stable employees are registered with the IHRB.



500+
CCTV cameras

IHRB Officials have access to footage from more than 500 CCTV cameras across racecourse stable yards in Ireland.



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