Breeds Report AGM 2025

The breed committee of 2024/2025 consisted of Mr Daniel Cracknell (Breed Chair) Mrs Catherine Lea, Mrs Maggie Brown, Mrs Karen Wylie and Mr Matthew Stonehouse.

The breed committee held 5 meetings through this season. Main points of discussion this season were Grassroots, future stallions and stallion licensing. In addition to the breed committee meetings, a HBLB meeting was held to discuss future grants using HBLB grant money.
This season has seen many issues for horse owners regardless of breeds in the UK. A very wet winter in 2024 moved into a very dry 2025. A record lack of rainfall across most areas of the UK has seen fodder and straw prices rise very sharply due to the shortage. This coupled with the rising costs of living has put strain on people owning and breeding horses. Sadly, the Cleveland Bay horse is not exempt.

Grassroots / SPARKS

New for the 2024/2025 season was the integration of SPARKS data into Grassroots. This was a topic that came out of the dark for the council in November 2024. Dr Andy Dell had started the planning to future proof the SPARKS data should he be hit by a bus. (His words)

The options faced by the CBHS were:

A – SPARKS with Grassroots at an increase in the monthly subscription to Grassroots by £48

B – Loose the SPARKS data and are no longer using this tool for the breed matings moving forward.

Grassroots have taken the base of SPARKS and added the interactive element. With the integration, all members have access to the Grassroots software and the horses that are currently registered to them. This point caused a few issues due to the data held by Grassroots/CBHS was not completely accurate due to horses changing ownership or sadly being deceased.

The CBHS have worked with Grassroots for the solution of loan horses. This did take a little while to come into practice due to the manual human intervention in linking horses and members. For this point it is essential that any members who either have a horse on loan or are putting the horse out on loan to another member, the agreement is sent to the CBHS office and is then stored on file. The period of the loan is also needed, so that the linking of horses can be changed at the end of the loan period.

The SPARKS with Grassroots is still a work in progress, but today it is functioning to the best it can with the data held.

If you have used the new SPARKS and can see errors in the horses listed under your membership, or an error in the SPARKS data, please contact the CBHS at CBHSbreed@gmail.com

Stallions

The discussions regarding the shrinking stallion population have taken place currently no best solution has been found. Planning for 2026 and semen collections on stallions not being used will be a focus.

Three stallions have been put forward to the CBHS for licensing. Two in the USA and one in the UK.

Future colts sounds like an easy solution for any society to solve, but with a deep dive this is far from the case. Selecting the colts that will have genetic benefit would be the easy part of the case. Having them housed, handled and cared for from 6 months to 28 months is the problem. For these colts to progress into success stories, the handling is crucial. This requires human contact and training which is time consuming and if at a professional, costs a lot of money.

Current options being investigated include:

1 – Breeder Co-op. EG: A pool of 5 breeders, purchase 5 colts, each breeder then runs the colt to licensing and then use that colt for two years, after that period, the stallions in the Co-op move round. This would provide 10 years of new bloodlines. In year 8 of the program, a further 5 colts are introduced ready to take over in year 10.

This is just an idea, and finer details would need ironing out to make this successful.

2 - A group of members/ breeds create a syndicate to help to fund the purchase, upkeep and maintenance of a colt. (this point is still very much at very early stages of the idea)

If anyone has any further suggestions on future colts the breed committee would love to hear from you.

HBLB

The HBLB grant changed for 2025, the grant ran from April to December 2025. This was so that the HBLB moved the grants from a tax year to a calendar year. The new HBLB grant period for 2026 will run January to December.

A meeting to discuss the HBLB grant and how it is distributed was held back in July. Some fantastic suggestions from members were made and we are looking to introduce some of those into the 2026 grants. It would be great to introduce the new ideas into the scheme in addition to those already running but unfortunately it is a balancing act. If we add a new grant, another must be cut. Each time the question of what is best for the breed comes up. The grant from 2025 has the best of everything. Support for Breeders, Support for the show ring, support for the promotion of the breed and support of the day to day running of the office.

As a condition of the grant, the society must contribute 20% of the amount from HBLB. This has highlighted the need for fundraising and income for the society.

Summary

The points listed above are the major points that the breed committee have worked on over this season, many smaller points have been attended to as well.

The major points are the most important to the breed. The introduction of SPARKS into Grassroots is a big change from the PDF sheets previously published. This is only the start for this program. Grassroots are planning in the future to have an app; this would allow pictures of the horses to be added for members to view.

Future stallions are another important factor in increasing breed numbers; this is a difficult point to find the right solution for the right horse. There will not be a blanket solution.

The HBLB continues to be a very welcome addition to the CBHS and one which sincere thanks goes to the Horse Betting Levy Board for the continued consideration when it comes to the annual grants. The grants help the members who are breeding and showing to get a little financial support for the continued efforts in promoting the breed.

Daniel Cracknell

Cleveland Bay Horse Society Breed Chair.