

# THE IFCE : DEDICATED TO THE EQUINE SECTOR

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institut français  
du **cheval**  
et de l'**équitation**

## **Expertise dedicated to the stakeholders of the equine sector**

The Institut Français du Cheval et de l'Équitation (IFCE) is the public body which supports the professional development of the equine sector. It arose from the merger of two entities in 2010: the Haras Nationaux (French National Stud) and the Cadre Noir de Saumur.

The IFCE is a technical institute which provides support and expertise and undertakes applied research. It works to produce and promote knowledge about horses in all the aspects and ways in which they are used: genetic, agricultural, environmental, economic, social, sporting, leisure and animal well-being.

The main activities of the IFCE are:

- the production and transfer of knowledge about horses and riding through:
  - \* Research, expertise and the communication of information;
  - \* Training professionals in the sector;
- Promoting tangible and intangible equestrian heritage;
- Contributing to policies to support equestrian sports;
- The health and zootechnical traceability of horses.

Particular attention is paid to developing relations between the IFCE and innovative companies, particularly in the fields of animal health, new materials (sports equipment and clothing) and NITC (connected objects, software, big data). A partnership signed with the Hippolia competitive cluster and the IFCE offers companies the possibility of developing their products at one of the four IFCE experimental platforms (Le Pin, Saumur, Chamberet and Uzès). The presence of the Cadre Noir on the Saumur site, within the IFCE, is a significant advantage for the development of research and training in the field of riding.

The IFCE received its qualification as an Institut Technique Agricole through a Ministerial Decree of 8 February 2018. This recognition strengthens the IFCE's activities regarding research and development, technical support and training for all those involved in the equine sector.

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## Applied research and expertise

The scientific advice that the IFCE provides to the equine sector brings together professional representatives and scientists. It defines R&D needs and funds research proposals for the Fonds Eperon, the French Ministry of Agriculture and Food, and the IFCE.

IFCE researchers have joined internationally-recognised research teams, including INRA. At the same time, the organisation's own applied research continues to develop at the four technical platforms at Chamberet and Le Pin for breeding, and Saumur and Uzès for riding and other uses of horses.

The IFCE's areas of competence cover the following fields:

- breeding and upkeep of horses (managing sires, agroecology, well-being, etc.);
- riding (teaching, performance) and other uses of horses (harnessing, traction, equine-assisted therapy sessions, etc.);
- stakeholders in the sector (economics, sociology).

## Transferring knowledge

The knowledge obtained is promoted in the form of scientific publications and communicated to users through the work of development engineers.

The economic and social horse observatory promotes research and uses all the sector's databases to provide decision-making tools for bodies and companies.

The results are transformed into tools which can be appropriated by users and are presented during information days. They are available in the form of books, practical guides and on-line resources. For example, the on-line horse encyclopaedia, "équi-pedia", offers more than 650 files on 18 different themes. The twice-weekly 30-minute web conferences are available free-of-charge on line and enable people to communicate directly with the specialist.

Communication also takes place through training for professionals in the sector.

## Professional training

The IFCE offers high-level training at its two main sites, in Saumur and Le Pin, in the fields of reproduction and riding, and targeted ongoing professional training for teachers and trainers and trainers. This complements existing training in the sector and covers a wide range of practices related to riding, breeding and saddlemaking, through short courses, qualifications and diplomas.

The organisation offers 19 training courses leading to a qualification or diploma and three apprenticeship training courses, with a total of 202 graduate apprentices and approximately 141,000 apprenticeship hours in 2016.

At Saumur, the IFCE develops equestrian training leading to a qualification or diploma as well as development courses for riding professionals, teachers and amateur riders. All courses are provided by horsemen and women from the Cadre Noir and qualified instructors-trainers.

The IFCE site at Le Pin provides training leading to qualifications and diplomas and apprenticeships in the fields of breeding, saddle-harness making, harnessing and riding. The teaching team consists of qualified trainers, whose skills come from the expertise and knowledge of the Haras Nationaux.

The Uzès site provides specialised training in harnessing, animal traction and saddle-making.

New work, approaches and research are monitored to refine knowledge in all fields relating to pedagogy, didactics, sport and breeding. This involves investing in different scientific fields and the human sciences to cement the organisation's position as the cutting-edge body in the field of riding and horses. This indispensable connection between scientists and front-line professionals generates new knowledge (research, observations, expertise) which is transmitted through training work.



# Promoting equestrian heritage

As the heir to a unique equestrian heritage, the IFCE cultivates and transmits knowledge and expertise for future generations. Ensuring that expertise regarding the traditional trades of the Haras Nationaux and the Cadre Noir, such as saddle-making, riding and harnessing, does not die out, allows skills to be developed through training and the communication of knowledge. This work contributes to showcasing French culture around the world.

## The Haras nationaux

The Haras Nationaux brand can be identified through history as a government authority which has received public funding since its creation in 1665. Its heritage is both tangible, with the premises that have been built or transformed, and intangible, with knowledge and expertise regarding the trades of breeding, stallion handling and training horses and other horse-related techniques.

In addition to its historic sites, the intangible and tangible heritage of the Haras Nationaux also consists of expertise relating to the use of traditional harnesses worn by the Haras Nationaux, saddlemaking and horse-drawn vehicles.

Transferring the physical heritage of the Haras Nationaux has enabled the IFCE to maintain a regional presence at the Haras Nationaux facilities. Although the organisation has now withdrawn from or sold a large proportion of the historic sites of the Haras Nationaux, the majority of new owners are committed to promoting the heritage and tourist value of their site. This promotion takes into account the presence of horse-related vehicles and saddle-making.

## The Cadre noir de Saumur

Inscribed on UNESCO's "Intangible Cultural Heritage" list, Equitation in the French tradition, is performed by the Cadre Noir, in France and around the world. The transmission of exceptional knowledge and part of the French riding identity takes place through performances and galas given by the Cadre Noir.

As the heir to this prestigious heritage, the Cadre Noir performs its functions at the IFCE's Saumur site. The site is open to the public who can visit its facilities and discover its equestrian sports training programmes as well as the work that it does for equestrian cultural heritage. Research and documentation help improve and diversify teaching in both the technical and educational domains, and many talks and research days are held every year on the Saumur site.

Through its galas and public performances, the Cadre Noir also contributes to promoting equitation in the French tradition, its views on equestrianism are expressed through the teaching it does, its competition results and its public performances in France and abroad.





## Responding to the needs of the equine sector

Supporting the sector is a major component of the IFCE's work and it focuses on expressing the needs of the sector in close collaboration with stakeholders. To do so, the IFCE leads four national cross-disciplinary committees with professionals: the sectoral committee, scientific advice, employment and training advice (currently being implemented) and the SIRE committee. The IFCE participates as an expert in the meetings of the governance committee on the equine sector, is the French representative, and contributes to consultations as needed. The sectoral committee addresses technical subjects in line with directions given by the governing authorities.

IFCE experts on the national and regional level are used to respond to questions raised by the sector.

Finally, the public establishment provides expertise and monitoring of European regulations, carries out work to support exports or other international activities, and manages the equi-resource service (observatory, employment and trade training guidance) in connection with its partners.

The équi-ressources centre was created in 2007, as the result of a partnership between the IFCE, Pôle Emploi, the Pôle Hippolia, the Conseil des Chevaux de Normandie and the Conseil Régional de Normandie. A genuine "employment centre for horse-related trades" now led by the IFCE and the Conseil Régional de Normandie, it has four aims: to match supply and demand through its employment service, to guide and advise future professionals and, through its observatory, to analyse the match between employment and training and suggest areas for reflection and improvement to the relevant stakeholders.



## Managing the SIRE database and associated services

The horse information system (SIRE) is the central health and zootechnological resource on horses in France. The SIRE is a hub of interaction within the equine sector: a basis for exchanging information from numerous databases, and is also the financial collector on behalf of its partners.

As the civil guarantor of horses, it ensures, through delegation to selection bodies, assistance with selection, holding genealogical books and transmitting ID documents for

56 managed breeds and 17 breeds on an agreement basis. The SIRE is a hub of interaction within the equine sector: a basis for exchanging information from numerous databases, and is also the financial collector on behalf of its partners.

Collaboration with the SIRE committee, consisting of bodies in the industry, allows this shared and self-financing tool to continue to evolve while taking into account the shared opinions of the various stakeholders and their specific needs.

## Ensuring compliance with identification and inspection regulations

The IFCE plays an important role on the ground in terms of the health traceability of the equine sector. Through its identification teams and inspection work, the IFCE secures the information recorded in the central database, which is essential in the event of a health crisis.

The IFCE continues to be involved in field identification, supporting vets with the objective of maintaining quality and expertise.

Knowledge of all horses in the country and the people connected to them is essential to enable health actions to be taken in the event of an epidemic. In this context, the Ministry for Agriculture and Food strengthened health prevention work for horses in 2015 by giving the IFCE the role of policing the identification of horses. A body of approved inspectors researches and identifies violations relating to the identification of horses and the health obligations of horse owners.

## Contributing to policies to support equestrian sports

The IFCE's high-level sport mission takes place within a partnership context with the Fédération Française d'Équitation (FFE).

In close connection with the FFE and the management teams, the IFCE

hosts or supports clusters on its site:

- The French junior and senior eventing cluster,
- The French vaulting cluster,
- The expert dressage centre.

These are leading facilities for applying policies relating to high-level sport developed by the IFCE. Supporting athletes from a “double project” perspective is a major objective of the scheme.

In this context, the Saumur site hosts a support project for the para-dressage discipline, making available facilities, horses and human resources.

A key establishment for riding within the “Grand INSEP” network, the IFCE promotes technical and behavioural innovation. The IFCE contributes towards the performance of French riders by developing its scope, particularly by helping the riding world to benefit from good practices and training procedures or preparation sessions developed in other sports and applying them to riding.



The Institut Technique Agricole (ITA) label was granted to the IFCE by the French Ministry for Agriculture and Food by Decree on 8 February 2018.

This recognition cements the organisation's research and development, technical support and training activities for all stakeholders in the equine breeding sector in all forms of use.

## An Institut Technique Agricole with specific features

The IFCE is an ITA which has specific features in term of its scope, mission and history; it combines these strengths to support the equine sector:

- Its **scope**: the leading body in terms of human resources and budget, ahead of Arvalis – the plant institute - it has a significant training network (number of trainers, training courses),

- Its **supporting missions**: beyond the work of the technical institute, the IFCE also carries out regulatory missions regarding security and health inspections, as well as work to develop high-level sport and promote riding heritage, particularly equitation in the French tradition,

- Its **history** and expertise in terms of heritage and an emblematic equestrian culture: the Cadre Noir de Saumur and the Haras Nationaux.

## The benefits of recognition

The recognition as an Institut Technique Agricole opens the organisation and the equine sector up to other agricultural sectors and professional networks. It helps the IFCE to be visible in recognised networks and to be involved in the transformation of the equine industry. The IFCE has also joined the network of the Instituts Techniques Agricoles led by the ACTA (*Association de Coordination Technique Agricole*).





This opens the equine industry up and enables it, among other things to:

- Pool resources and skills with other institutes,
- Join inter-breed programmes and open up to other activities and considerations in agricultural sectors,
- Join European research projects such as the theme on “genetics in the animal industries”,
- Address the API-AGRO service, the joint IT platform for all institutes which helps better manage data and better communicate electronic data,
- Participate in ACTA’s scientific groups,
- Create UMTs (mixed technological units) in partnership with research bodies.

## Help with decision-making

Some IFCE missions are strengthened through the ITA. The organisation’s own research is developed even further, particularly through the four technical platforms, as well as through the communication of development and knowledge-building activities. The IFCE continues to develop its communication networks and its training, supervision, prospecting and forecasting activities.

This all takes place with a view to responding to the demands of the industry. Anyone in the sector can address the IFCE through its representatives, including breeders’ associations, socio-professionals, etc. Companies and research bodies can access IFCE resources such as the technical platforms (site, infrastructure, horses, experts, equipment in the form of services, collaboration) to develop their products or research protocols. The organisation is committed to supporting the industry by offering a range of tools, methods and techniques required to transform the equine sector.



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