



# NEW ZEALAND THOROUGHBRED RACING

## HANDICAPPING REVIEW 2024

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PUREI HŌIHO NĀTI O AOTEAROA

# OUTCOME OF HANDICAPPING REVIEW 2024

The 2024 Handicapping Review has now been completed. The review was carried out by a panel comprising Tim Aldridge, Craig Baker, Mike Breslin, Andrew Castles, Tim Mills, Bruce Sherwin, and Brad Taylor.

The changes to the Handicapping Policy have been agreed and are set out below. Handicapping Policy and the Standard Regulations will be amended and updated to reflect all changes that came into effect from August 1, 2024.

## **MINIMUM WEIGHT IN GROUP 2 HANDICAPS RAISED BY 1KG TO 53KGS.**

The change effects only 3 races and creates alignment with Group 3 handicap races. Increasing the minimum weight provides a greater depth of jockey availability and has less jockeys riding overweight.

There was also a directive from the panel to maintain a minimum 6kg spread, if possible. The recent Winter Cup (Group 3) had a 7kg spread.

## **BALLOTING CONDITIONS**

Separation of horses entered on equal ratings will be by handicapper discretion. More emphasis will be placed on what level of races the horse(s) have been competing in – for example Group and Listed races, rather than the current system of the raw finishing position.

Further, separation of horses entered on equal ratings in Group 1 races will consider international ratings.

## **3YO NON-BLACK-TYPE RACES**

3yo races present a challenge in terms of encouraging participation across all horse profiles. The current Set Weights and Penalties (SWP) conditions, form a handicap/weights perspective, tend to advantage the well-performed Group winners and placegetters, and disadvantage progressive and/or lightly raced horses. The panel recommends trialling a selection of 3yo SWP races as 3yo Handicap races - 60kg topweight, 54kg minimum.

This will be progressed at regional programming meetings.



## 2YO'S IN MAIDENS

All maiden races 1400m and below opened to 2yo's from May 1st each season.

## EARLY ENTRY RACES

Lengthy discussion by the panel on early entry races – numerous benefits and negatives.

Early entry to be removed from Winter Cup, QEII Cup, and Railway Stakes.

Early entry time shortened for NZ Derby and Auckland Cup.

RACE Group to review their early nomination races and report back.

Removal of early entry conditions also requires a check of Club funding connotations.

Elsewhere, early entry will be added for conceptual races – Rangitoto Classic, Karapiro Classic, Remutaka Classic, Southern Alps Challenge, Polytrack Final races, and the Aotearoa Classic. The details are to be confirmed, but circa 2 weeks advance and a nominal fee. This will give participants targeting these races some certainty in terms of entry order, especially those needing to travel.



The Dunstan and Stella Artois series are working well.

A review is underway into the Whangarei RC Winter Championships.

## DECLARATION OF WEIGHTS FOR FEATURE RACES

The current timings around declaration of weights for feature races were reviewed. Again, several benefits and negatives. The panel settled on a status quo, although the length of time between weights release and raceday will be reduced, if practical.

## OPEN HANDICAP RE-RATINGS

The handicapping team are employing a pragmatic approach to re-rating Open handicaps. The pool of open grade horses is at times limited, and often supplemented by numerous horses out of the handicaps. In certain circumstances winners and placegetters will not be systematically brought back into the handicaps when re-rating. An assessment of the individual horse profile, race result/margins, race profile/value will be factored in.

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## RE-RATING PARAMETERS FOR INNOVATION RACES

The current maximum re-handicaps for non-black type races - 10-points for winning and 5-points for placings, has proved problematic for Innovation races. Given the status and prizemoney for these races, the re-rating restrictions have been removed for these races. This will also be applied to races removed from the NZ Pattern, races now termed "Heritage".

## OFFICIAL PLACINGS BARRIER TRIALS

Official placings to be recorded for all barrier trial runners.

Note - This was agreed by the panel via circular email resolution earlier this year.

## RATING RE-INTRODUCED

As a matter of function/directive, the horse rating of 66 has not been used for several years.

The current 67 directive was to aid horses gaining a start in Benchmark 75 races, but generally these horses order behind 67 horses on form, and technically carried 0.5kg too much.

The horse rating of 66 has been reintroduced.

## HANDICAPPING BLOG

An initiative from this Handicapping Review is for the handicapper to regularly communicate handicapping topics of interest and race re-ratings via a "Handicapping Blog". It is hoped these updates will be both informative and educational.



## REMINDERS

### REVIEW OF RATING AFTER LONG ABSENCE

The trainer of a horse that has not raced for twelve months or more may apply to have the horse's rating reviewed and potentially reduced at the discretion of the handicapper.

### RATING 60 RACE WINNERS TO MINIMUM RATING 61

This directive currently can see the possibility of an 11-point re-rating – for example, a rating 50 horse moving to 61, but the minimum of rating 61 has synergy, and equivalent with a maiden race winner moving to a minimum rating of 61.



### NOT IMPLEMENTED

### CHANGES TO CURRENT RATING BANDS

Pre-meeting submissions and discussion papers regarding current rating bands were reviewed.

Rating 65 grade congestion is being alleviated by splits and consolations and extra races programmed during peak demand.

Rating 60 grade is working well with solid numbers. Benchmarking this grade was considered and rejected as it could defeat the purpose of the moderate grade.

Handicappers were directed to be pragmatic and proactive in moving horses to rating 60.

### ALL-WEATHER RATING

The implementation of a new all-weather/synthetic rating was discussed, and data analysed. There are challenges around the size of the pool of horses and some horses needing to increase ratings through the spring (eg. 3yo's). The handicappers will continue to monitor.

## REDUCTION IN FILLY/MARE ALLOWANCE

The 2kg allowance will remain unchanged, given alignment with international rating practices.

Note: Related, a review of WFA weights in Europe is currently ongoing.

## PENALTY-FREE RACES

The potential of penalty-free races, especially for industry days leading into carnivals was discussed. The proposal was not supported by the panel given negative implications for beaten runners.

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