

## **Change of Birthday Consultation Round 2 key points**

*The following key points relate to the presentations made to a group of Harness Racing participants during the week of August 2<sup>nd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup>. These should be read in conjunction with viewing the videos of the sessions and interviews with those in attendance.*

***Please note that we are only about 50% along the journey of finalising a new racing programme.***

### What is the purpose of these sessions?

To seek feedback from a varied group of participants in our sport regarding when our age group and open class racing should happen now that the horse's birthday is changing to January 1<sup>st</sup>.

### Who was involved?

Groups invited to presentations

- Clubs – ATC, NZMET, Waikato BOP and Southern Harness reps
- Trainers – a range of trainers
- Breeders – a range of breeders
- Owners – a range of owners
- We did have trainers attend each session as well

### What are the key principles?

Our goal is to create opportunity and increase horse start numbers by:

- Creating an extended two-year-old season to 12 months
- Providing three-year old's, the opportunity to race at the best times of the year in the best races
- Consolidating the top echelon, by grouping together and putting on a pathway for a minimum stake that will keep them racing in New Zealand
- Enhancing opportunities for the trotting gait
- Enhancing the bottom tier
- Creation of new aspirational races for the middle tier
- Clear pathways with series racing for Mares of both gaits across the country

### What background information should we be aware of?

- Breeding numbers worse since 1965
  - However, if every horse started on average one more start in NZ each season, we can continue with the current level of racing
- Our Sport is funded through wagering
  - Export – now paid directly to the code (in the Racing Act 2020)
    - No export gained by racing on a Saturday
    - Australian market – Harness least preferred racing code
    - Actual export means 50% less funds than if paid an overall percentage of export
  - Domestic – agreed percentage
    - Domestic turnover is strong
- Export / Sale of NZ Horses
  - Currently horses being exported because not enough racing for them here
  - Owners tell us they would prefer to watch their horse race in NZ

- For best wagering return you should have
  - 11 starters on an all-weather track
  - 14 starters on a grass track
  - Above information is based on returns from TAB

**Feedback from the first round of sessions:**

*We did not receive a huge amount of feedback, in fact we got more from those who watched the videos and read the initial synopsis of what was presented. The feedback we did receive was well thought through and presented.*

**Key points:**

**Trotters**

- Two year-old trotters need an early race in the Autumn like the pacers
  - Agreed and one is being added
- Overwhelming support for the Dominion Handicap Trot to be on Cup Day
- Trotters should be on a par with pacers re number of races and group races to aspire to
  - The number of races does equate to the percentage of foal crop however they do fall behind on group races etc
  - We are recommending that
    - Sires Stakes Classique moves to Group 3
    - NZ Trotting Oaks moves to a Group one
    - A two year old fillies series is created
    - A Trotting Mares Group 1 series and final is created

**Age Group Races**

- Majority support for NZ Derby in December
  - Agree pinnacle event for 3YO's should be at the end of their season
  - Likely to stay in December but possibly a couple of weeks earlier
  - Northern Derby to stay in Autumn to spread 3YO racing as well as create opportunities for Auckland carnivals/events. Also, 3YO's already in the north for the Harness Million in February
- Derby Day and other days great – good marketing opportunities for Harness
  - We agree – big opportunity to market key events
- The plan should be for 99% of NZ horses to race in NZ
  - This is the main aim of the work being done but we do need to be cognisant of the impact of the Australian racing
- No feedback on the two year-old pacers

**Open class pacers**

REMINDER: key issue is the low number of horses rated R80+. Currently as at August 2 including mares and 4YO's:

**R80+**

- Northern Region (Whole of North Island) 10 horses
- North of the Waitaki 12 horses
- South of the Waitaki 4 horses

**R70 to R79**

- Northern Region (Whole of North Island) 10 horses
- North of the Waitaki 12 horses

- South of the Waitaki 4 horses

#### Feedback

- Most feedback was on this proposal however there was no feedback on the alternative option sent out to participants
- Love the idea of a new open class programme – concept is great
  - Agree we still need to group these horses together where possible
  - We believe R70 to R79 need an opportunity away from the R80+ fields so that they can graduate to open class ranks
- 4YO's should still have 4YO only racing e.g. Messenger
  - With current numbers it is felt 4YO's are needed to fill the open class ranks
- Key issues:
  - What if a horse can't go left or right-handed?
    - There will be plenty of races as not every horse is expected to start in every race.
    - Also, if in North Island there will be opportunities at Cambridge as well as ATC
  - Long time away for staff / horses – additional cost
    - We are looking to soften the time away if possible
    - Horses are often away for long times from their base now so not a lot different
  - Need a couple of races to decide if horse good enough to travel
    - Have added a couple of early spring races in the North Island
  - Move Auckland Cup to May – good idea but not same stake as NZ Cup
    - Good opportunity for ATC to have a wonderful race day.
      - Fits nicely with Brisbane carnival
      - Could attract Australian participation as easy to fly in and out of Auckland
      - Recommending a higher stake of 400K Auckland Cup and Rowe Cup 250k
    - Currently reviewing date of race in May

#### ***What are we doing for the rest of our horses – the majority 4YO and older?***

We are proposing a Ratings and Bonus Scheme that will provide for horses rated R40 to R60

- \$300 pay up fee December for these schemes
  - Ratings days
    - 3 pacing and 2 trotting races at 7 race meetings for R40 to R60
      - 5 races x 7 meetings = 35 races
      - All races mixed sex
      - All races higher stakes 15k to 20k
      - Spread throughout the regions
  - Ratings Finals Day
    - At Addington
    - Six 30k finals suggested in the Autumn
  - Pacing and Trotting Mares Races
    - 2 pacing and 1 trotting mares' races at 7 meetings
      - 3 races x 7 meetings = 21 races
      - Spread throughout the regions

- All race stakes higher 15k to 20k
- For R40 to R55 or R60
- New pathway called the Silk Road
- 40 races x \$5000 breeder and owner bonuses
- 68 races – majority R40 to R60 – breeder bonus
  - Both gaits
  - Spread throughout NZ \$1000 bonus per race
- Sires Stakes Aged Features
  - All horses will be eligible for 12 feature races
    - Southern Mares Classic
    - Northern Mares Classic
    - Aged Trotters Classic
    - Uncut Gems (3 races)
    - Springtime Gems (3 new races)
    - Country Grass Gems (3 new races)

*What else has been happening?*

Stakes have been increased across the board for all race meetings. Clubs get two payments from HRNZ: a venue payment and a stakes payment. In previous years clubs were recommended to pay out at least 85% of stakes funding. This year (2021- 2022) clubs are required to pay out 100% of their stakes funding therefore more money back to the owner.

Several handicapping changes have been put in place which helps many of our horses. A junior driver concession scheme is being developed which will be launched on January 1<sup>st</sup> 2022. More details to come.

**Next steps:**

- 6/8/21 - Information to all session participants
- 20/8/21 – feedback on what has been presented due back to HRNZ
- 2/9/21 – team has reviewed feedback and has a revamped programme to present again
- 2/9/21 – presentation to HRNZ Board on feedback and changes to date
- 6/9 to 9/9 21 – another round of consultation with the groups
- 9/9/21 information to all session participants
- 24/9/21 – feedback on what has been presented due back to HRNZ
- 8/10/21 – revamp and draft final racing programme
- 15/10/21 – present to all clubs at HRNZ Annual Conference

This second draft is to promote discussion and garner feedback from those involved – it is not a final document by any means.

If anyone has feedback, they would like send to HRNZ then please send directly to Catherine McDonald, GM Racing, email: catherine@hrnz.co.nz or phone 0272410021