



22 September 2026

OFFICIAL NOTICE

AMENDMENT TO HARNESS RACING NEW ZEALAND REGULATIONS

- QUALIFYING REGULATIONS - MAXIMUM DISTANCE FOR HORSES UNDER TWO YEARS OF AGE

On 15 September 2026, the HRNZ Board considered and approved an amendment to the Qualifying Regulations to reduce the maximum permitted distance for horses under two years of age from 2400 metres to 2000 metres, effective from 1 October 2026. The background and details are as follows.

Under the Qualifying Regulations, horses are eligible to participate in workouts and trials from 1 October in the year before they become two-year-olds. HRNZ considered it appropriate to review the maximum distance permitted for these horses, recognising their stage of physical development and that their participation during this period is principally about education, preparation and progression towards their two-year-old racing season.

The rationale for reducing the maximum distance from 2400 metres to 2000 metres is to provide an appropriate safeguard against horses at this early stage of their development being required to compete over unnecessarily extended distances. The regulation change is not intended to restrict the progressive education or preparation of young horses. Rather, it seeks to ensure that the regulatory framework reflects contemporary expectations around animal welfare and the responsible development of young standardbreds.

This amendment was consulted on with the National Forum and NZ Trainers & Drivers' Association and received widespread support.

Accordingly, clause 3.2 of the Qualifying Regulations will read as follows:

"3.2 A horse under the age of two years is not eligible to compete in any workout, trial, or qualifying race that exceeds 2000 metres in distance."

This change will take effect from 1 October 2026.

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a series of loops and a long, sweeping tail that extends to the right.

Matthew Peden
Head of Racing & Wagering

A handwritten signature in black ink, featuring a large, circular loop at the top with several vertical strokes extending downwards and a wavy line at the bottom.

Anna Flynn
Commercial Director