

20 August 2025

OFFICIAL NOTICE

AMENDMENT TO HARNESS RACING NEW ZEALAND REGULATIONS CONDUCT OF MEETINGS, PROGRAMMING, HANDICAPPING AND RATING REGULATION

On 19 August 2025, the HRNZ Board considered and approved a revision to clause 17.4 of the Conduct of Meetings, Programming, Handicapping and Rating Regulation.

The amendment addresses an unintended consequence arising from a recent regulation change intended to provide additional race start opportunities for horses driven by concession junior drivers.

Under the previous rule, if a horse won a race - say on a Friday night - and earned five rating points, it would become ineligible for a subsequent race for which it had already accepted (eg, on the following Sunday) due to now exceeding the programmed rating band. In such cases, the horse would either be scratched (in the case of a mobile start) or receive a distance penalty (for a standing start).

Earlier this year, during a redrafting of the regulations, an additional provision was introduced. This new option allowed the horse to retain its barrier position - regardless of start type, if the driver was changed to a concession junior. The aim was to increase race participation and create more opportunities for junior drivers.

However, with the evolving wagering environment, particularly the earlier opening of betting markets, maintaining market integrity and punter confidence has become increasingly important. It has become apparent that the amended clause may unintentionally compromise these principles. After further reflection, the Board determined that the potential reputational and integrity risks outweigh the limited benefits of the change.

Accordingly, the decision was made to revert to the previous rule to ensure a more consistent and transparent approach aligned with industry expectations.

The new clause 17.4 will now read:

17.4 If a horse has nominated or accepted for a race and in the meantime incurs rating points that takes it outside the parameters of the race for which it is nominated or accepted, the trainer may:

- (a) in the case of a nomination, request the horse be transferred to another rating race for which it is eligible. Such horse will be treated as an original nomination in the new race;*
- (b) in the case of a horse holding a place in a published mobile start race, should that horse fall outside the programmed conditions of that race, the horse will be scratched from the relevant engagement; and*

- (c) *in the case of a horse holding a place in a published standing start race, the horse remains eligible for that race by taking the appropriate distance penalty in line with the published conditions.*

These changes will be deemed to have commencement with effect from Monday 28 July 2025.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Brad Steele', with a stylized, cursive script.

Brad Steele
Chief Executive