

HRNZ – USI REGIONAL FORUM

Summary report – Teams meeting held at 7pm Tuesday 21st April 2026

There were 23 members in attendance along with Grant Jarrold and Matt Peden (HRNZ)

The Chairman opened the meeting with remembrance to the family and friends of Colin Berry and Colin Hair, acknowledging their contribution to harness racing over many years.

1. Grant Jarrold - Latest Board Update.

Covered off several areas relevant to at the recent HRNZ Board meeting:

- Future Income beyond the 5-year guaranteed Entain term and the uncertainty at this point, noting potential a “slight reduction”
- The 2026/27 calendar due for release end May.
- Stakes for 2026/27 season currently under review – noted the need to protect HRNZ Reserves which will require a “tightening of the belt.” Breeding schemes would be protected where financially possible.
- There was a Board vacancy post Sean Brooks leaving, this would be addressed at the October’s annual conference when two other Board positions would come up for renewal.
- Slot races and other top races will not be immune to funding cuts; they will be judged on performance and iconic status.
- Project Stamina & Ministerial review. The NBR article was speculation only and has not been agreed to by either NZTR or HRNZ. The Board would be discussing the draft RCP report at their upcoming May meeting.
- Greyhounds now under a 3-person transition Board led by Heather Simpson – currently they are indicating \$26m x 2 years to manage the exit of greyhounds and re-homing.

2. Matt Peden

- Handicapping review discussed. Based on actual data - changes would be made “during the quieter winter months.”
- Look North review – still work in progress noting this must be as part of a national focus.
- Breeding incentives review. NZSBA had done a multitude of work. The podium to paddock scheme has accrued approximately \$350,000 year to date.
- Export Fee – has been implemented, functioning smoothly.
- Horse utilisation – this is continually under review with information supporting the decision-making process across the code.

Q&A's from the meeting attendees – Matt Peden:

- Turnover on a meeting-by-meeting basis with year-on-year comparison will be circulated to all on a weekly basis from mid-May.
 - Stipe's/camera towers. It was noted that Rangiora hire costs were \$1,000/meeting. Winton had completed required upgrades via voluntary labour. Questioned on the timeframe for getting this to be resolved and what is sign off process - MP to follow up and circulate the information once this has been determined, he apologised for the delays being experienced, noting that the costs currently sit with the clubs.
 - Saddlecloths – hadn't been used at recent Timaru meetings. MP to come back with an update asap.
 - Preferential Vs sequential draws discussed, noting the unfairness on horses drawing 7, 8 and 9. - noting the problem relates to ballots so unable to change at this point.
 - Horse utilisation concern about consistency meeting to meeting in particular 3yo and up and others being 4yo and older. MP keen to encourage conversation around this and look at options. Also, conditions in and around non win horses can be limiting in relation to utilisation. MP said recent stats showed that horse utilisation is improving.
 - Timaru thanked HRNZ (TAB) for implementing the fuel subsidy and noted the importance of this initiative.
 - 8,000 races Vs \$10,000 races and other stake levels on Wednesday is inconsistent – clubs are allocated funds over a season and it's up to them to allocate race by race. Club top ups are evident in some instances but at their cost.
3. Centralised Tote Staff – Kaikoura
- This relates to having consistency across the country and no double dipping for Public Holiday's, mileage and travel allowances – Public holiday cost to Kaikoura approx. \$4k
 - First point of contact is Catherine McCleavy NZMTC, who will collate club's views.
4. WIFI
- Banks Peninsula (the MOT) is still mixed. Reefton no concerns. Methven being rolled out for next year.
5. Centralised model – race day staff.
- Preference is for Harness Racing New Zealand (or equivalent) to employ and rosters key race-day staff, e.g. Clerks of the Course, Starter & Starter Assistants/Crash Crew.
 - NZ Horsemen are keen see this progressed. Noting that it will bring professionalism and more importantly consistency into starts etc.
 - Scope covers starters, starter's assistants, crash crews, and Clerk of the Course.
 - Subject had been raised previously with HRNZ however it was no progressed, consistency is missing.
 - Methven commented that their preference is to not see one group having the overall control, but rather the establishment of consistent standards across the country.



- The secretary would get John Denton to coordinate the completion of a discussion document that would lead to a recommendation by this forum to HRNZ. Discussion document to circulate to seek initial feedback - timeline of 2 weeks.
- On Course presenters – who determines? MP to follow up with the TAB as harness is not always represented on race day, particularly Sunday's.
- Win a share of a horse promotion was discussed. Focus is on new owners, noting it was run at The Met last week and 140+ entries received will be repeated this week. Auckland planned for early May. A number of Clubs will be approached to adopt this model in the upcoming months to trial this programme/opportunity.

Members thanked for their attendance and contribution.

Meeting closed at approx. 8.25pm.