

Friday, 23 December 2016

Amendment to weight spread and handicapping set to increase competition

After a detailed review of the Handicapping and Programming changes implemented in October 2015, and following extensive consultation with the NSW Trainer's Association, Racing NSW has today announced the following major changes to be implemented immediately:

- Introduction of an 8kg weight spread in NSW Metropolitan races with a minimum weight of 53kgs and a topweight of 61kgs.
- A reduction of weights in all NSW non-feature races if there is no horse on the minimum weight in a particular race. For example, if the lowest weighted horse has been allocated 55kgs in a Metropolitan race it would be taken down to 53kgs and if the topweight in that race was allocated 61kgs this would be taken down to 59kgs. All weights in such circumstances would be taken down at declaration of weights and again at acceptance time until there is a horse on the minimum weight (subject to the minimum topweight requirements of the Australian Rules of Racing).

"There is no doubt that the greater spread of weights has worked in improving field sizes and the increase to a possible 8kg spread will provide even greater opportunity for competitive racing in the Metropolitan area compared to the previously compressed weight scale" Racing NSW CEO Peter V'landys AM said.

An additional initiative aimed at increasing the competitiveness of country horses in the Metropolitan area is the introduction of an indicative secondary benchmark rating for country horses.

This secondary country rating provides an indication of their likely rating in the Metropolitan area. Similarly, a country rating will apply to Metropolitan horses nominating for country races, providing a truer and fairer indication of the relativity between sectors. This is to be implemented from 16 January 2017.

Further, the Benchmark System currently being used in NSW will remain in place as a means of providing the most level playing field for all horses. However, the Board of Racing NSW has resolved to implement changes to further improve the Benchmark System, including:

- Setting new criteria for reducing benchmark ratings for unplaced horses, so as to bring the rating down at a quicker rate;

- Setting new criteria for the increase of benchmark ratings, so as a horse's rating is not increased rapidly; and
- Introducing special conditions two year old races in the Metropolitan area.

A detailed update to the Benchmark Programming and Handicapping Handbook will be available shortly to provide further information and examples.

We thank the NSW Trainers' Association for their positive and constructive input into this review.