



MEDIA RELEASE

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Metropolitan Field Sizes and Country Participation

Racing NSW, in the past six months, has undertaken a detailed review and analysis on metropolitan field sizes.

After determining changes which were required to stem the problem, an extensive consultation period was then undertaken.

After taking into account input from the consultation process the Board of Racing NSW has resolved to implement the following changes from 1 October 2015, which are detailed below along with the reasoning behind the changes.

Spread of Weights - Benchmark and Open Handicap Weight Scale

- **For benchmark races in NSW, increase the benchmark weight and minimum top weight from 59kg to 61kg.**
- **For all other non-Group races, except two year old, maiden and class 1-3 races, increase the minimum topweight to 61kg at the time of weights release, 61kg for benchmark races and increase the minimum topweight to 60kg at acceptance time.**

The compression of weights in benchmark and open races has created a disincentive for horses at or near the bottom of weights to contest these races. This is especially the case where a horse may be nominating in stronger or higher benchmarked races.

Increasing the benchmark level and minimum topweight level of open handicap races from 59kg to 61kg, achieves a 2kg increase in the spread of weights. This opens up these races to a greater number of horses.

"The increase in the benchmark weight and overall spread of weights will make for more competitive races and improve winning opportunities for more horses at the bottom of weights," said Racing NSW's Chief Executive, Mr Peter V'landys AM.

This new spread of weights sees a minimum 14 point range (increased from 10 points) between the topweight or benchmark level weight in races and horses on the limit of 54kg. As such more horses can carry a weight equating to their benchmark, without being disadvantaged by the weight scale.

Country Participation in Metropolitan Racing

- **The handicapping panel have the discretion to weight country-trained and performed horses up to 6kg below the equivalent of their benchmark level weight.**

There are many country-trained horses that have the ability to compete effectively in metropolitan races if carrying the appropriate weight. It is desirable that these horses be encouraged to tackle metropolitan races and also be able to share in the prizemoney offered on these races.

The Racing NSW Handicapping Panel presently has the discretion to weight country-trained and performed horses up to 3kg or 6 points lower than their benchmark level.

Further review indicates that the amount of the weight allowance needs to be higher in some instances to enable these horses to be competitive in benchmark races. As such, the Racing NSW Handicapping Panel will have the discretion to weight country-trained and performed horses up to 6kg or 12 points lower than their benchmark level.

“Well performed country trained horses must be provided the opportunity to race for higher prizemoney in the metropolitan area carrying a weight that suitably reflects their form compared to metropolitan performed horses,” said Mr V’landys.

Handicapping and Changes to Benchmarks

- **The handicapping panel to be allowed discretion of 1kg in weight against a horse’s benchmark level where a horse has nominated at a distance the handicapper believes the horse has previously shown itself to be less effective.**

There are instances at present where horses may be uncompetitive despite being handicapped at their benchmark level. An example of this is where horses are contesting races at unsuitable distances.

Racing NSW handicappers now have discretion to vary the weight allotted to horses by 1kg compared to its benchmark based on the distance of the race.

- **The handicapping panel to take more account of whether they believe that a horse has demonstrated improvement in their performance, when determining whether to increase its benchmark.**
- **The handicapping panel to take more account of whether they believe that a horse’s performances indicates that it is having difficulty in running to its benchmark level, and be more aggressive in determining whether to decrease its benchmark.**

A key premise of the use of benchmarks in handicapping is that a horse’s benchmark figure is a reasonable reflection of its ability and standing against the broader racing population. The movement of a horse’s benchmark level should be reflective of a horse’s performances.

While handicappers seek to create weight turnaround following races, the Racing NSW Handicapping Panel will also take greater account of whether they believe a horse’s form indicates that it is making improvement or descending when assessing post-race benchmarks.

“Important to the benchmark system is the relativity between horses and this policy change will see the handicappers being increasingly conscious of where a horse’s form indicates that it lies compared to other horses,” said Mr V’landys.

- **That provincial Class 1 and Class 2 races be weighted such that the 59kg weight is the equivalent of a Benchmark 62 (currently 65) and a Benchmark 66 (from 69) respectively.**

Encouraging horses to race in benchmark races has the potential to improve metropolitan field sizes, especially for midweek races.

A small change in the handicapping scales used for provincial class races will create a further differential in weight carried between these restricted races and lower level benchmark races. In turn, this will create incentive for horses to contest the lower benchmarked metropolitan races.

- **That handicapper’s increase the weight of Metropolitan-trained and/or performed horses against their benchmark level when contesting country races.**

Racing NSW handicapping panel will also have the ability to increase the weight of Metropolitan-trained and performed horses against their benchmark level when contesting country races.

“Enabling the handicapper’s greater discretion to reduce weights will see country performed horses more competitively weighted in open and benchmark races in the metropolitan area. Similarly, horses with strong metropolitan form will be asked to carry more weight in country handicap races,” Mr V’landys added.

Metropolitan and Provincial Programming Changes

- **Amend the levels of metropolitan benchmark races to the following: BM93, BM85, BM78, BM72, BM67, in addition to open handicaps.**

A consolidation of the number of benchmark levels used in the programming of metropolitan benchmark races will complement the increase in the benchmark level and minimum top weight in open handicaps, with the weight spread in these races being increased to 14 points from 10 points.

- **Discontinue programming races restricted by the number of metropolitan wins.**

Racing NSW has discontinued programming races restricted by the number of metropolitan wins, enabling the existing benchmark races to be accessed by all horses.

The increase in the weight spread for benchmark races makes lower benchmarked horses more competitive in these races.

Additionally, the potential weight allowance for country-trained and performed horses will increase the competitiveness of these horses in metropolitan benchmark races.

- **Work with Racing Australia to simplify the Stable Return process to a single screen ‘list’ system.**

Improved real time information regarding the present and emerging horse population in coming weeks and months has the potential to be very useful in race programming.

A greater level of simplicity in entering stable return information will reduce administrative burden on stables and encourage the provision of information to assist in programming.

- **For a trial period, program slightly more Benchmark 65+ races in the provincial area.**

Racing NSW will trial programming a slightly higher number of mid-level benchmark races at provincial tracks.

Apprentice and Rider Weight Allowances

- **Amend the scale of apprentice weight allowances and introduce a system of allowances for jockeys in the first year following the end of their apprenticeship.**

A more generous scale of wins and an extension of claims for riders in the first year of out of their apprenticeship will provide trainers with more opportunities to reduce the actual weight carried by horses higher in handicap races and also provide greater encouragement to riders in making the transition from their apprenticeships.

Possible scales are summarised below.

Metropolitan (applies to metropolitan winners only)

Kg Allow.	No. Winners	
	Current	Proposed
4.0	n/a	n/a*
3.0	20	20
2.5	n/a	30
2.0	50	55
1.5	80	75
1.0	n/a	90

Provincial (applies to metropolitan and provincial winners)

Kg Allow.	No. Winners	
	Current	Proposed
4.0	n/a	n/a*
3.0	20	20
2.5	n/a	30
2.0	55	55
1.5	80	75
1.0	n/a	90

Country (applies to metropolitan, provincial and country winners)

Kg Allow.	No. Winners	
	Current	Proposed
4.0	5	10
3.0	20	20
2.5	n/a	30
2.0	50	55
1.5	80	80
1.0	n/a	100

Post-apprenticeship weight claims

Kg Allow.	No. of Career Winners			
	Current	Proposed Metropolitan	Proposed Provincial	Proposed Country
2.0	n/a	55	55	55
1.5	n/a	75	75	80
1.0	n/a	90	90	100

Further Review

The handicapping and programming changes will be subject to review following a six month period.

For more information please contact Mr Peter V'landys AM, Racing NSW Chief Executive, by phone on (02) 9551 7556.