

Merit Based Handicapping

Participants at the Industry Forums in Country and Provincial regions were critical of aspects of the Benchmark System, in particular that horses were rising too quickly in their ratings which reduced their progression and opportunities. Further it was claimed that ratings were lowered too slowly when horses were uncompetitive.

Racing NSW Action

Racing NSW is satisfied that the Benchmark Programming System overall is working effectively in providing flexibility for trainers in placing horses across NSW. However, we agreed with the concerns about the Handicapping Policy as it related to the review of Racing NSW horses ratings.

Accordingly, Racing NSW undertook a reassessment of its handicapping policies.

After a consultation process, the following recommendations have been adopted by Racing NSW:

- More discretion given to the handicapper to weight horses lower than their published benchmark, if this is warranted by the nominations for a particular race; [\(Please click here for full detail\)](#)
- Where horses perform well at a level above their grade, the benchmark allocated for the next start is dependent on the grade of a race;
- In assessing the performances of maiden winners, the weight allocated by handicappers is to be over a tighter spread than at present;
- The practice of spreading weights at acceptance time if weights need to be raised to the minimum top weight is to be discontinued for Class 1 races.
- Discretionary Handicapping may also include the re-assessment of a horse. For example, a horse resumes from an extended spell, has 3 or 4 runs and is clearly not performing. the horse may be re-handicapped lower, rather than just dropped a few points for its most recent run. The same approach may be applied to a multiple win horse that has left the Metropolitan area and been sold/transferred to the Country region. After a few country starts, the handicap figure may be re-assessed if the horse is not performing.

CLASS 2 COUNTRY PLATES

From 1 August 2012, Racing NSW introduced Class 2 Set-Weight races (for Class 2, Class 1 and Maiden horses) up to 1599m in the Country area on the following scale:

	4YO+ Class 2	3YO Class 2	4YO+ Class 1	3YO Class 1
Male	59.0kg	57.5kg	57.0kg	55.5kg
Female	57.0kg	55.5kg	55.0kg	54.0kg
Maidens to carry same weight as Class 1. 2yo's to carry 2.0kg less than 3yo's but not less than 54kg (LR25)				

We will review the Benchmarking System again in February 2013 to ensure that it is providing the industry the functional and equitable system it deserves.