



MEDIA RELEASE

Friday, 3rd August 2018

Handicapping & Programming Changes from 1 September 2018

Racing NSW has today announced a number of important changes to handicapping and programming policies in NSW that will take effect for race meetings from 1 September 2018 in conjunction with the prizemoney increases announced on 18 July 2018.

The changes, which follow extensive consultation with industry groups over a period of six months, are summarised below.

Metropolitan Saturday Racing

- i. Benchmark level of 60kg (down from 61kg) for metropolitan Saturday benchmark and open races;
- ii. Introduction of a true weight allowance of up to 2kg for metropolitan Saturday benchmark and open races.

The benchmark weight for metropolitan Saturday races will be lowered to 60kg, from the existing level of 61kg. This lessens the weight carried by horses in Saturday metropolitan races compared to midweek metropolitan races, providing greater incentive for trainers to start horses in Saturday metropolitan races.

In benchmark races, horses with a benchmark figure above the benchmark level of the race will continue to be allotted a weight above the 60kg benchmark level.

In a further important change, a *true weight allowance* of up to 2kg in Saturday benchmark and open handicap races is being introduced. Such an allowance may be claimed where the true weight of a horse taking account of its benchmark and sex, is less than the 53kg limit in a race.

For example, if the true weight of a horse is less than the 53kg limit in a race, the connections have the option of carrying the 53kg, or declaring a rider who is able to claim part or all of the true weight allowance down to the horse's true weight, with a maximum allowance of 2kg.

More examples of how the true weight allowance may be applied are shown in the attachment to this release.

"The introduction of a true weight allowance gives trainers and connections the option to race a horse at or near its true weight in Saturday metropolitan races," said Racing NSW CEO Mr Peter V'landys AM.

“The change has the potential to open up additional opportunities for light weight riders and encourage horses to tackle stronger races benefitting from a greater spread of weights. This also provides an interesting new dimension for punters.”

Apprentice jockeys will be able to claim both the true weight allowance and their apprentice claim in races, where they are able to ride at the lower weight. Declaration of a rider claiming the true weight allowance must be made at acceptance time for the race.

Discontinue Adjusting Weight at Acceptance Time

The practice of reducing the weights of races at acceptance time will be discontinued for meetings from 1 September 2018. The change will provide greater certainty for all jockeys, particularly those with a riding weight above the limit weight.

Separate Benchmark Number for Country Races

Racing NSW will allocate two benchmark figures for handicapping horses that race between sectors – one benchmark for metropolitan & provincial racing and now a separate benchmark for races in country NSW.

The creation of a separate country benchmark will see horses more appropriately handicapped when they move between metropolitan/provincial to country racing and vice versa.

“The two distinct benchmark figures will better enable country performed horses to be more competitive in metropolitan and provincial races” Mr V’landys said.

Streamlining of Benchmark Programmes

Programming of races across sectors will be streamlined to reduce the number of separate benchmark levels. This will provide clearer definition between the strength of races as horses progress.

For example, provincial benchmark races will be programmed at Benchmark 64 level, metropolitan midweek races then start at Benchmark 70 and Saturday metropolitan at Benchmark 78.

The streamlining of the structure of programmes will be accompanied by adjustments to the maiden win benchmarks from metropolitan and provincial races, with these generally to be assessed two points or 1kg lower than is presently the case.

With the introduction of a new separate country benchmark, race programmes will be adjusted to see the number of benchmark levels at country race meetings reduced in order to simplify and broaden race planning options for trainers. Starting at Country Benchmark 50, races progress to Country BM 58, 66, and 74.

“All these changes have been tailor-made for racing in NSW, allowing maximisation of field sizes and increased competitiveness across all sectors” Mr V’landys said.

“We thank the participants and industry representative groups for their feedback during the consultation process and look forward to the new programme commencing 1 September”.

For more information please contact Mr Peter V’landys AM, Racing NSW Chief Executive, by phone on (02) 9551 7555.

Attachment - Handicapping & Programming Changes

Examples of True Weight Allowance

1. A Benchmark 88 Saturday race has a 53kg limit equivalent to Benchmark 74.

A horse with a benchmark figure of 71, three points below the limit weight will be weighted on the limit of 53kg but have a true weight of 51.5kg in the race.

When accepting for the race, the connections have the choice of declaring a jockey to carry the limit weight of 53kg or declaring a rider to claim part or all of a *true weight allowance* down to the 51.5kg true weight of the horse.

2. In the same race a mare with a benchmark of 72 will have a true weight of 50.0kg (including a 2kg reduction in weight as a female horse).

When accepting for the race, the connections have the choice of declaring a jockey to carry the limit weight of 53kg or declaring a rider to claim part or all of a *true weight allowance*.

As the maximum true weight allowance able to be claimed is 2kg, the trainer in this example has the option to declare a rider to claim the maximum true weight allowance of 2kg down to 51kg.

3. **Apprentice Claim:** In the same race, a horse with a benchmark figure of 72, two points below the limit weight will be weighted on the limit of 53kg but have a true weight of 52.0kg in the race.

When accepting for the race, the trainer, may declare a jockey to carry the limit weight of 53kg.

However, the trainer can engage a lightweight apprentice with a 3kg apprentice claim. The trainer has the option of declaring a rider to claim a *true weight allowance* down to the 52.0 kg true weight of the horse.

The apprentice rider can also claim their 3kg allowance afforded to them as an apprentice jockey, enabling the horse to carry 49.0kg in the race.

Changes to Programming Structure – next page

Metropolitan and Provincial Programming Structure

The structure of metropolitan and provincial open and benchmark race programmes is summarised below.

Metropolitan Saturday	Metropolitan Midweek	Provincial
Open/BM94 (60.0kg)		
BM88 (60.0kg)		
BM78 (60.0kg)		
3YO BM76 (60.0kg)	BM76 (61kg)	
3YO BM70 (60.0kg)	BM70 (61kg)	
	3YO BM64 (61kg)	*BM70 Cond. (61kg)
		BM64 (61kg)
		Class 2
		Class 1
		Maiden

* A number of Conditional Benchmark 70 races will be programmed in the Provincial sector for horses contesting a minimum of four provincial and country races in the previous twelve months.

Country Programming Structure

The number of benchmark levels programmed on country TAB meetings has been reduced to broaden and simply options for trainers.

Country TAB Programmes
Open Handicap (61.0kg)
CBM74 (61.0kg)
CBM66 (61.0kg)
CBM58 (61.0kg)
CBM50 (61.0kg)
Class 3
Class 2
Class 1
Maiden

Picnic Race Changes

Picnic races will now be weighted without using the Country benchmark. Weights will be assigned by the handicapper based on either previous weight carried in a picnic race or most appropriate weight based on current form. Adjustments to Country benchmarks will be made after all performances.