

Change of Birthday Consultation Round 1 key points

The following key points relate to the presentations made to a group of Harness Racing participants during the week of June 22nd. These should be read in conjunction with viewing the videos of the sessions and interviews with those in attendance.

Please note that these are early thoughts and we are only 10 percent along the journey of finalising a new racing programme.

What is the purpose of these sessions?

To seek feedback from a varied group of participants in our sport regarding when our age group and open class racing should happen now that the horse's birthday is changing to January 1st.

Who was involved?

The group who has designed an initial strawman of what it could look like are:

- Catherine McDonald – GM Racing HRNZ
- Andrew Morris – Handicapper HRNZ
- Cameron Kirkwood - Registrations and Racing Assistant
- Martin Pierson – NZ Sires Stakes
- Bruce Barlass – NZ Sires Stakes
- Brad Reid – NZ Standardbred Breeders Association
- Cam Bray – NZ Bloodstock
- Michael House – Licensed Trainer
- Tony Abell – Trainer and original architect Sires Stakes series

Groups invited to presentations

- Clubs – ATC, NZMET, Waikato BOP and Southern Harness reps
- Trainers – who regularly race horses in Age Group races
- Breeders – a range of breeders
- Owners – a range of owners

What are the key principles?

Our goal is to create opportunity and increase horse start numbers by:

- Creating an extended two-year-old season to 12 months
- Providing three-year old's, the opportunity to race at the best times of the year in the best races
- Consolidating the top echelon, by grouping together and putting on a pathway for a minimum stake that will keep them racing in New Zealand
- Enhancing opportunities for the trotting gait
- Enhancing the bottom tier with goals an increasing the win to start ratio
- Creation of new aspirational races for the middle tier
- Clear pathways with series racing for Mares of both gaits across the country

What background information should we be aware of?

- Breeding numbers worse since 1965

- However, if every horse started on average one more start in NZ each season, we can continue with the current level of racing
- Our Sport is funded through wagering
 - Export – now paid directly to the code (in the Racing Act 2020)
 - No export gained by racing on a Saturday
 - Australian market – Harness least preferred racing code
 - Actual export means 50% less funds than if paid an overall percentage of export
 - Domestic – agreed percentage
 - Domestic turnover is strong
- Export / Sale or NZ Horses
 - Currently horses being exported because not enough racing for them here
 - Owners tell us they would prefer to watch their horse race in NZ
- For best wagering return you should have
 - 11 starters on an all-weather track
 - 14 starters on a grass track
 - Above information is based on returns from TAB

What is being proposed?

Autumn Carnival (North Island)

- February
 - Harness Million 3YO divisions (Trotters, Fillies and Colts & Geldings) eve of Yearling Sales
 - Lyell Creek Stakes
 - Taylor Mile Boys
 - Taylor Mile Girls
- March
 - National Trot
 - Messenger
- April
 - Northern Debry
 - Northern Oaks
 - Anzac Cup
 - Franklin Cup
- May
 - Auckland Cup
 - Rowe Cup
 - Young Guns Fillies/colts

Spring / Summer Carnival (South Island)

- August-October
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- November
 - NZ Cup Day
 - NZ Trotting Cup
 - Dominion Handicap
 - Sires Stakes 2YO C&G final
 - Nevele R Fillies Final
 - Show Day

- NZ Trotting FFA
 - NZ Pacing FFA
 - 2YO Trotting Sires Stakes final
- December
 - Sires Stakes 2YO Fillies final (early Dec)
 - Mid December
 - NZ Derby (Trot & Pace)
 - NZ Oaks (Trot & Pace)
 - Harness Million 2YO divisions (Trotters, Fillies and Colts & Geldings)
 - NZ Breeders Stakes

Open class horses

- Effectively R79 and above
- Currently only 17 in country – resource is scarce so need to keep them racing together in NZ
- Proposed:
 - A series of 31 races racing every two weeks
 - Current 4YO races and higher rating races money rejigged to provide for:
 - 22 races @ \$40k each
 - 9 races 100k to 500k (includes current group races)
 - August through December in Canterbury leading up to NZ Cup
 - January in Southland
 - February through May in Auckland/Cambridge leading up to Auckland Cup
- Preference 11 starters per race for \$40k
- 14 starters for any Group 1 race

What about having Mares only racing?

- A race programme is being developed for Fillies and Mares only racing
- To provide consistent opportunities for them to race against themselves

What about equality for our trotters?

- Breeding numbers of trotter has increased significantly – now 30% of numbers bred
- Proposed:
 - 2YO trotting Fillies series and Group 1 final
 - NZ Trotting Oaks to Group 1
 - Sires Stakes Classique to Group 2
 - 3&\$ YO Female Ruby 100k
 - 4 x 4YO&older Sires Stakes conditioned races
 - Dominion Handicap and Rowe Cup stakes to 300k each
 - Trotting Mares series and Group 1 final
 - All up additional cost of \$770k

What about the other classes of horse?

- We are also working on developing a middle and lower tier racing structure to provide consistent opportunities for all horses
- Data confirms the lower-level horse provides the 'product' for racing to survive

- Investigating incentive-based concepts to support a better return to owners
- This was not presented last week however will be a bit further down the track

What about the IRT Harness Jewels?

- Great concept with lots of people on course
- Record turnover and strong feedback to continue
- A decision does not need to be made at this time
- We need to get the overall programme sorted and then see how it might fit
- We also need to ask:
 - Is it affordable?
 - What could it look like?
 - Where would it be?

What else is happening?

Programming, handicapping and rules are also being reviewed as we progress to ensure we can put changes in place

Next steps:

- 2/7/21 - Information to all session participants
- 16/7/21 – feedback on what has been presented due back to HRNZ
- 20/7/21 – HRNZ Board updated on feedback
- 30/7/21 – team has reviewed feedback and has a revamped programme to present again
- 2/8 to 5/8 21 – another round of consultation with the groups
- 6/8/21 - Information to all session participants
- 20/8/21 – feedback on what has been presented due back to HRNZ
- 2/9/21 – team has reviewed feedback and has a revamped programme to present again
- 2/9/21 – presentation to HRNZ Board on feedback and changes to date
- 6/9 to 9/9 21 – another round of consultation with the groups
- 9/9/21 information to all session participants
- 24/9/21 – feedback on what has been presented due back to HRNZ
- 8/10/21 – revamp and draft final racing programme
- 15/10/21 – present to all clubs at HRNZ Annual Conference

This first draft is to promote discussion and garner feedback from those involved – it is not a final document by any means.

If anyone has feedback, they would like send to HRNZ then please send directly to Catherine McDonald, GM Racing, email: catherine@hrnz.co.nz or phone 0272410021