

## Media release

### For immediate release

22 April 2024

## May 25th ATR race meeting transferred to Pukekohe Park following Ellerslie's abandonment on Saturday

**Following the partial abandonments of race meetings at Ellerslie on 10 and 20 April, New Zealand Thoroughbred Racing (NZTR), in conjunction with Auckland Thoroughbred Racing (ATR), advises that the planned winter renovation of the track will commence immediately with the race meeting scheduled to be held at Ellerslie on May 25<sup>th</sup> moving to Pukekohe Park.**

This decision comes as a proactive response to recent track issues and concerns raised by stakeholders with officials confident the planned renovation will greatly assist in removing the root mat which has compromised traction.

Saturday's abandonment follows a mid-week meeting abandonment on 10 April that required the Club to undergo immediate remedial works and conduct a trial meeting, per NZTR's Return To Racing protocols, following which after thorough assessment and constructive dialogue with stakeholders saw collective agreement that racing activities could proceed at Ellerslie on Saturday.

Despite these concerted efforts to ensure optimal track conditions, unfortunate circumstances arose during the course of Saturday's meeting after a horse slipped during race 6, resulting in the cancellation of the remaining two races for the safety and well-being of all participants.

In commenting on the events of Saturday, ATR Chief Executive Paul Wilcox says, "We find ourselves at a loss for words. Our team shares a sense of disappointment and frustration, not only for ourselves but also for the broader industry. With unwavering faith in our new direction, we regret any disappointment experienced by those affected in recent weeks.

"We have had every confidence in the new surface and, while we still strongly believe this is the right track for us, are sorry to those for whom have been let down over the past couple of weeks.

"Despite setbacks, we recognise the importance of embracing this experience as a lesson and, as we embark on our scheduled renovation, remain committed to positive progress.

"We express our sincere appreciation to our stakeholders and the racing community for their understanding and continued support during this time."

NZTR COO Darin Balcombe echoed ATR's sentiment and was supportive of Ellerslie's pre-emptive move to Pukekohe.

"After all efforts were made to improve the surface following the 10 April abandonment, NZTR was disappointed in the outcome of the partial abandonment Saturday at Ellerslie. We fully support ATR's

proactive approach to move the meeting on May 25th to Pukekohe and will work alongside Ellerslie over the winter as we work toward ensuring the surface is at its best for the 2024/25 season. "

"The NZTR Board will meet this Wednesday and, alongside management and ATR, will review the process to potentially seek independent advice that the winter renovation will alleviate all ongoing issues and provide the industry with the confidence it needs for the long-term. The first meeting of the season is set to take place in September and will undergo a robust and thorough return to racing protocol ahead of the first meeting."

In light of these developments and prioritising the safety of jockeys, horses, and all involved, NZTR and ATR have taken the proactive decision to relocate the scheduled May 25th race meeting to Pukekohe Park. This precautionary measure ensures that racing activities can proceed without compromising safety or integrity.

Existing ticketholders will be contacted directly by ATR with regards to their options and the Club regrets to advise that the planned Irish Party event will be cancelled. Further information about the relocated raceday can be found online at [aucklandracing.co.nz](http://aucklandracing.co.nz) .

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