

PATTERN OF RACING ANNUAL REVIEW

**Report to
New Zealand Thoroughbred Racing**

August 2009

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Summary of Findings & Recommendations

The Pattern Review Committee has concluded the current pattern of racing is largely working well, with no major issues requiring substantive changes to be made to this pattern.

The following is a summary of the findings of the Pattern Review Committee and its recommendations:

1. The Committee has significant concerns regarding the two-year-old category. In particular, the continuing reduction of the two-year-old population has resulted in a relatively small segment of the racing population (7.2% of starters) competing for 13.1% of the available black type races. The Committee acknowledges the number of black type races for two-year-olds is an issue for the Graded Stakes Committee to address.
2. The Committee recommends the Industry and/or the Auckland Racing Club increase the stake of the 1600 metre Listed Champagne Stakes to increase its appeal as a target race. Additional two-year-old 1400 metre races should also be programmed on industry days in the month preceding this race.
3. The Committee supports the swap of the 1000 and 2000 Guineas dates from a pattern perspective.
4. The Committee recognizes the timing of the Levin Classic is less than ideal. While this race may benefit from the swap of the 1000 and 2000 Guineas dates, it may in fact be better situated later in the season, such as in late January.
5. The Committee notes that given the date change of the 1000 Guineas, there may be an opportunity for the Soliloquy Stakes to be run at Ellerslie on Melbourne Cup day. This would avoid the current clash with the Bonecrusher Stakes.
6. The Committee believes the Lowland Stakes should be run in the Central Region further south than Hawke's Bay - so as to reduce the potential clash with the Sunline Vase.
7. The Committee acknowledges the decision of the Graded Stakes Committee to make the three-year-old 1200 metre race run by the Auckland Racing Club during their March carnival a listed race. The Auckland Racing Club race will now provide an ideal lead up. Additionally, the Committee would like to see at least two other lead up races to the Windsor Park Breeders Stakes.
8. The Committee would like to see more autumn staying races for three-year-olds who are not necessary New Zealand Derby contenders.
9. The Committee acknowledges the recommendations from the recent review of age and sex allowances in the Rating 70 band.
10. The Committee recommends the Manawatu Breeders Stakes be run a week later to avoid the current clash with the New Zealand Thoroughbred Breeders Stakes at Te Aroha.
11. From a pattern perspective, the Committee supports the distance reduction of the Foxbridge Plate to 1200 metres.
12. The Committee believes given the principle behind Recommendation 1 of the 2004 Review – the industry should take whatever pro-active steps possible within current budget constraints to continue to re-emphasise its strength in middle distance and staying races.

Background

The NZTR Board has established the Pattern Review Committee (“the Committee”) to monitor the New Zealand Pattern of Black Type races, giving particular reference to the outcomes of the 2004 and 2007 reviews of the pattern of racing.

The Committee has limited its focus to the pattern of racing and has not reviewed broader issues such as track preparation and early entry fees as previous Committee’s have done.

Black Type Racing in New Zealand

Black-type racing provides the international benchmark for the quality of racing, and hence the quality of the New Zealand thoroughbred. That quality is reflected in the performance of our black-type performers in New Zealand and in other countries, and is critical to New Zealand’s status in the international racing and breeding arenas. Around 5% of New Zealand’s flat races are designated as black-type events, with 22 Group 1, 23 Group 2, 33 Group 3, and 68 Listed races scheduled for the current 2009/10 season. There are also 12 Prestige Jumping Races.

2004 Strategic Review of the Pattern of Racing

The Board of NZTR commissioned the Strategic Review of the Pattern of Racing in November 2003 for the purpose of determining a more appropriate format of Black Type races. A Committee was appointed for that purpose in early 2004. The Committee’s report was adopted by the NZTR Board in December 2004 and subsequently received widespread endorsement within the Industry.

Recommendation 7 of the Strategic Review of the Pattern of Racing stated:

That NZTR establishes an independent group whose obligation it will be to keep under review the pattern of racing in New Zealand. The group would be expected to work with the Graded Stakes Committee.

Establishment of the Annual Review Committee

The NZTR Board appointed the Pattern of Racing Annual Review Committee for this purpose. The Committee initially met and submitted its report in July 2007. The Committee comprised:

- Mr. Peter Fennessy (Chairman)
- Mr. Steve Till
- Mr. Colin Jenkins
- Mr. Greg McCarthy

The Committee subsequently invited Mr. Michael Martin to contribute to its discussions as an observer.

NZTR Projects Manager, Chris Weder, who was acting as the Secretary of the Graded Stakes Committee, was appointed as Secretary of the Annual Review Committee.

It is important to note that the Committee was appointed as an independent Committee, and was not representative.

2009 Pattern Review Committee

The Pattern Review Committee was reconstituted in November 2008. The Committee now comprises:

- Mr. John Rattray (Chairman)
- Mr. Peter Francis
- Mr. Greg McCarthy

NZTR Racing and Integrity Co-ordinator, Craig Baker who sits on the Graded Stakes Committee was appointed Secretary of the Pattern Review Committee.

The Committee continues to be appointed as an independent Committee and is not representative.

Process

The Committee held its meeting on Monday 18 May 2009 in Wellington.

The Committee has agreed the following schedule for subsequent Annual Reviews:

- Meeting to be held in early/mid-April (following the Sires' Produce meeting) to conduct the Annual Review and formalise their Report.
- Annual Review to be considered by the NZTR Board by late-April to enable any changes to the Pattern to be adopted for the following racing season.

Terms of Reference

The Committee has adopted the following Terms of Reference for the 2009 Annual Review:

1. Review the sequence of all black-type races, including age-group races and handicap races.
2. Review the schedules (distribution) of each of the categories of races: 2-year-olds only, 3-year-olds only, fillies and mares and the like.
3. Determine the extent to which the New Zealand pattern of racing overlays that of Australia and changes that may be needed to maximise opportunities, especially for New Zealand horses to compete in Australia.
4. Identify times of the year when there may be insufficient races offered for specific types of horses, particularly three-year-olds.
5. Identify any class of horse or type of race that is missing or offered infrequently in New Zealand that should be provided – 2200m, 2400m races, particularly for restricted and possibly open class horses.

Pattern / Category Issues

The Committee has considered the impacts of the changes to the Pattern for each of the categories and has identified the following issues for further consideration.

Two-year-olds

The Committee has identified the following issues in the two-year-old category.

1. Taranaki Two-Year-Old Classic (Taranaki Racing Club)

The Committee believes that the pattern leading up to the Diamond Stakes (Group One) at Ellerslie in March is sound. While the Committee acknowledges the Taranaki Racing Club's Two-Year-Old Classic is potentially impacted by the Matamata Racing Club's C&G Slipper run two weeks prior to the Diamond Stakes, it believes the Matamata race also fits the pattern well (particularly for northern horses) and should not be moved.

The Committee acknowledges the correspondence and concerns of the Taranaki Racing Club and welcomes any suggestions in relation to moving the race.

2. Wakefield Challenge Stakes (Wellington Racing Club)

The Committee notes the 2008 running of the Wakefield Challenge Stakes was strong (first year the Karaka Million was staged), but the 2009 running was not as strong. The Committee believe the Karaka Million is likely to continue to have an adverse impact on the Wakefield Challenge Stakes.

The Committee also notes that due to the restriction on the Karaka Million (only horses sold at NZB yearling sales are eligible) the race might not always attract the best two-year-olds and therefore the Wakefield Challenge Stakes will continue to be a target for many horses, albeit the depth of the field attracted may be compromised.

The Committee believe that in terms of black type status, the Wakefield Challenge Stakes should find its rightful position.

3. Champagne Stakes (Auckland Racing Club)

The Committee strongly believe there should be a late season two-year-old 1600 metre black type race.

The Committee acknowledges that the race has performed poorly numerically but notes it has been an important race for staying orientated two-years-olds.

The Committee supports the Industry and the Club increasing the stake of this race to make it more of a target.

The Committee also supports additional two-year-old 1400 metre races being programmed on Industry days leading up to the Champagne Stakes.

4. Reduction in Two-Year-Old population

Current data confirms a continuing and concerning trend. Illustrative of this, the Committee notes:

- Two-year-olds currently make up 7.2% of the total horses racing but compete for approximately 13.1% of the available black type races;
- 61% of the 18 two-year-old black type races are currently under a GSC Warning;
- 83% of the 18 two-year-old black type races are conducted over 1200m or less.

The Committee acknowledges the number of black type races for two-year-olds compared to the number of individual two-year-old starters is an issue for the Graded Stakes Committee to address.

Three-year-olds

The Committee has highlighted the following issues for the three-year-old Pattern:

1. James and Annie Sarten Memorial Stakes (Waikato Racing Club)

The Committee acknowledges the importance of the Sarten Memorial for Northern Region based colts, geldings and fillies leading into the 1000 and 2000 Guineas at Riccarton. This is further reinforced given the importance the 2000 Guineas with its stake of \$1,000,000.

2. Wellington Guineas (Wellington Racing Club)

While the Committee recognises the importance of the Sarten Memorial as a lead up race to the feature three-year-old races at Riccarton, it also notes the Sarten Memorial has and will continue to adversely impact the Wellington Guineas.

3. 1000 & 2000 Guineas date swap (Canterbury Jockey Club)

The Committee acknowledges the correspondence from the Canterbury Jockey Club (CJC) relating to the swap of the 1000 and 2000 Guineas dates.

The Committee believe that from a pattern perspective, the change will be positive for male horses wishing to compete in the 2000 Guineas. The date will mean that there will be a two-week break between the Sarten Memorial and Wellington Guineas leading into the 2000 Guineas.

Additionally, the Committee believe that the 2000 Guineas being run on the first day of the New Zealand Cup Carnival could assist the Levin Classic attract colts & geldings that had run in the 2000 Guineas, as it would put a three week break between both races.

The date change will also provide a possible lead up opportunity for fillies wishing to compete in the 1000 Guineas (would be three weeks after the Sarten Memorial and the Wellington Guineas). The Committee acknowledges the date change will reduce the interval between the 1000 Guineas and the Levin Classic however notes the impact of this on the Levin Classic might be mitigated by the fact that regardless of its stake, the Levin Classic represents a valuable Group One opportunity for the fillies.

Overall the Committee supports the date change from a pattern perspective.

4. Levin Classic (Levin Racing Club)

The Committee acknowledges that the \$1,000,000 stake of the 2000 Guineas and the distance change of the Avondale Guineas have led to a decline in the Levin Classic. The Committee notes there is uncertainty as to how long the stake for the 2000 Guineas will stay at this level and if it were to reduce, the impact on the Levin Classic could change.

The Committee notes that having three Group One races in four weeks is less than ideal.

The Committee believes the Levin Classic may be better situated in late January. The Committee notes that the date change of the 2000 Guineas should assist the Levin Classic (as above).

5. Soliloquy/Bonecrusher Stakes (Auckland Racing Club)

The Committee believes that having the Soliloquy and Bonecrusher Stakes run on the same day is not ideal. With the proposed date change relating to the 1000 Guineas, there may be an opportunity for the Soliloquy Stakes (three-year-old fillies) to be run on Melbourne Cup Day at Ellerslie.

6. Lowland Stakes (Masterton Racing Club)

The Committee acknowledges that the recent upgrading of the Sunline Vase (Auckland Racing Club) would potentially impact the Lowland Stakes. However, the Committee believe it is important for the Central Region to have a black type opportunity as a lead up to the New Zealand Oaks and note the race has previously been identified as a National strategic lead up race for this reason.

The Committee acknowledges the correspondence from East Coast Racing re a proposal to retain the date of the Lowland Stakes but change the venue to Hawke's Bay. The Committee believes running the race as far North as Hawke's Bay may impact the Sunline Vase. The Committee's preference is for the Lowland Stakes to be run in the Central Region further south than Hawke's Bay.

7. Sprinting Three-Year-Olds

The Committee would like to see suitable lead-up races to the Windsor Park Stud Breeders Stakes (Group Three three-year-old 1200 metre race at Te Rapa) race in late April.

The Committee acknowledges the decision of the Graded Stakes Committee to make the three-year-old 1200 metre race run by the Auckland Racing Club during their March carnival a listed race. The Auckland Racing Club race will now provide an ideal lead up. Additionally, the Committee would like to see at least two other lead up races to the Windsor Park Breeders Stakes.

Fillies and Mares

1. Manawatu Breeders Stakes (Manawatu Racing Club)

The Committee acknowledges the correspondence from the Central Region Programming Committee (CRPC) re the placement of the Manawatu Breeders Stakes. The Committee agrees that the current placement of the race in relation to the New Zealand Thoroughbred Breeders Stakes at Te Aroha (run the day after the race at Awapuni) is not ideal.

The Committee recommends that the Manawatu Breeders Stakes is run the week following. This would provide a week's gap between the New Zealand Thoroughbred Breeders Stakes at Te Aroha and the Manawatu Breeders Stakes.

Weight-For-Age

1. Foxbridge Plate (Waikato Racing Club)

The Committee acknowledges that the Foxbridge Plate run over a reduced distance of 1200 metres would be a more logical lead up race to the Mudgway Stakes (two weeks later) than 1400 metres. The Committee supports the Waikato Racing Club reducing the distance to 1200 metres.

2. Captain Cook Stakes (Wellington Racing Club)

The Committee notes the poor running of the 2008 Captain Cook Stakes and considers its position in the pattern as far from ideal. The Committee supports the Wellington Racing Club moving the Captain Cook Stakes from their October date to their December date.

Handicaps

1. Thorndon Mile (Wellington Racing Club)

The Committee notes the weak running of the 2009 Thorndon Mile and recognises the \$1,000,000 stake of the Telegraph Handicap run the week before may have impacted the race.

2. Wellington Cup (Wellington Racing Club)

The Committee acknowledges the stronger running of the Wellington Cup but notes that the number of horses running in both the Auckland and Wellington Cups did not increase to any extent with the race being reduced to 2400 metres.

Jumping

The Pattern of Jumping races should continue to be considered by NZTR as a separate issue as the Committee does not possess the relevant expertise.

Other Issues

Stayers

The Committee notes the recent reduction in funding allocated to the development of staying races.

The Committee believes given the principle behind Recommendation 1 of the 2004 Review – the industry should take whatever pro-active steps possible within current budget constraints to continue to re-emphasise its strength in middle distance and staying races.