Report to: Murray Baker, Licensed Trainer of 'Turn Me Loose'.

Issue:

Murray Baker, on behalf of the owners of Turn Me Loose has requested a formal review of the horses domestic rating of 86.

Observations:

Turn Me Loose started his 3yo campaign off a rating of 64. After a first up 2nd he then won the G2 Hawke's Bay Guineas and was rerated 12 points to 77.

The horse then ran an unlucky 3rd in the James & Annie Sarten Memorial at Te Rapa after slipping at the start.

His next and last start as a 3yo was in November 2014 in the G1 New Zealand 2000 Guineas at Riccarton. In this race he put in a dominant performance and won easily. The then handicapper's notes from the race state: 'eased up on the line, still won going away, better win than Sacred Falls and Atlante'.

For this performance the horse was rerated 8 points to 86.

Subsequent to this the horse, I believe, sustained an injury and did not race again as a 3yo.

My assessment of Turn Me Loose is that he was a top class 3yo with a dominant G1 and G2 victory in his 4 starts as a 3yo.

Comparison with other 3yo's from 2014-15 season.

The top rated 3yo's are:

Mongolian Khan	105
Volkstock'n'barrell	104
Vespa	94
Bel Sorrisso	88
Platinum Witness	86
Savaria	86
Turn Me Loose	86
Shees Flawless	85

The above ratings, in theory, should reflect the relative abilities of the various horses and are also important in determining the ranking order of entries in WFA and Group races once 3yo's enter the ranks of older horses.

However, as with any domestic ratings based handicapping system, the rating must be based on an assessment of actual race performances assessed against the quality of the race.

It is more difficult to assess the quality of early season three year old races than as the season progresses and those horses have more disclosed form. Turn Me Loose has therefore been disadvantaged by not having race beyond November in his three year old season.

By way of illustration, Platinum Witness went into the 2000 Guineas with a rating of 67. She was increased to 70 for her fourth placed performance, 4 lengths from Turn Me Loose, and a week later won the 1000 Guineas and had her rating increased to 84.

Issues with the 3yo ratings.

I will use some examples to illustrate the inconsistencies in the above ratings.

Mongolian Khan.

After Mongolian Khan's NZ Derby win he was rerated from 83 to 94. However when he went to Australia the Australian handicappers rerated him to 105. Subsequent to this the horse won the Derby at Randwick and the Australian handicapper raised him 4 points to 109.

The higher ratings of three year olds in Australia are reflective of greater depth in the three year old population there however recent history suggests at the very top the NZ three year olds are usually competitive and often superior. When Mongolian Khan was re imported back to NZ the NZ handicapper rerated the horse to 105.

Winning in Australia certainly franked the form of Mongolian Khan and could be expected to attract a re-rating in the 6-8 point range. The rating of 105 reflects his high handicap rating in Australia but inflates the disparity between him and the next tier of NZ three year olds that have not competed in Australia.

Note the same applies to Volkstock'n'barrell.

Bel Sorrisso.

Bel Sorriso ran 6th in the Oaks but gained her high rating by winning 2 late season handicaps and placing in another. These handicap reratings were worth 17 points and took the filly from a rating of 71 to 88.
This makes her more highly rated than Platinum Witness who was the filly of the year, but is based on handicap ratings as opposed to 3yo set weight ratings.

Vespa.

Vespa was NZ's top 2 year old and started the 2014-15 season on a rating of 79. He gained 5 points by winning the G2 Wellington Guineas, but his other 10 point gain was through winning and placing in Open Handicaps.

Conclusion.

The rating list of the top 3 year olds is not consistent, nor does it accurately reflect the true abilities of the 3yo's relative to each other.

This is primarily because of these factors:

1. There is an element of Australian rerating in the 105 rating of Mongolian Khan and 104 rating of Volkstock'n'barrell.
2. Bel Sorrisso and to a lesser extent Vespa have got high in the ratings due to handicap ratings as opposed to ratings in 3yo Group and Listed races.
3. 3yo's who have competed solely against their own age group are therefore disadvantaged, i.e. Turn Me Loose.
4. 3yo's who are consistently placed against other 3yo's in Group and Listed races can be disadvantaged, i.e. Charmont.

Recommendations.

I am of the view that the domestic rating of Turn Me Loose is not representative of the horses ability in comparison with higher rated 3yo's of 2014-15.

The Free Handicaps have not been released yet but my initial thoughts are that in the up to 1600m category Turn Me Loose would be rated above Mongolian Khan and comparable, or maybe ahead of Volkstock'n'barrell.

It is also apparent that Turn Me Loose's relatively low rating is proving to be an impediment to the horse's chances of getting into the Hawke's Bay G1 races in the spring.

The issue is therefore where should Turn Me Loose be positioned in the relative ratings of 3yo's.

There is no question that Mongolian Khan and Volkstock'n'barrell deserve their positions at the top of the ratings.
Vespa is also a quality animal, although as discussed his rating is a mixture of handicap and set weight points.

It is my opinion that Turn Me Loose is at least the equal of Vespa and I therefore recommend that the domestic rating of Turn Me Loose be adjusted upward to 94.

Dennis Quirke
Senior Handicapper
5th August 2015