



# AUSTRALIAN HANDICAPPING RULES



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**INTRODUCTION**

Harness Racing Australia has adopted a 'Ratings Based Handicapping System' as the basis for handicapping in Australia with effect from 1 July 2019.

The Rating Based Handicapping System (RBHS) supersedes the redundant multi-tiered 'Class System'.

The inherent principles of the RBHS are that it is fair, consistent, transparent and provides for the highest level of integrity at all times. It is also user-friendly and offers enhanced prizemoney opportunities for all horses irrespective of ability whilst simultaneously yielding an appealing racing product.

Under the RBHS, a horse will receive an automatic numeric rating based on its finishing position after every racing performance. Therefore, an owner, trainer or any other interested person will be able to readily update a horse's rating using a simple matrix that details the ratings points applicable to each finishing position within a range of stakemoney thresholds.

The rating of all horses will be published on the internet site 'HarnessWeb' and where possible in print and electronic media displaying racefields and form guides.

**1. DATE OF EFFECT**

- 1.1 All horses competing at Harness Racing meetings on or after 1 July 2019 shall be handicapped in accordance with these Rules.
- 1.2 All horses competing at Harness Racing meetings on or after 1 July 2019 shall be allotted an aggregate numeric rating ('Rating') as provided by these Rules.
- 1.3 A horse that has raced prior to 1 July 2019 shall commence to race thereafter with its Rating calculated:
  - (a) as at midnight on 30 June 2019 in accordance with the Australian Handicapping Rules 2019 and as thereafter amended, and
  - (b) inclusive of any applicable reductions as provided in Rules 11 and 12 hereof.

**Note:** Throughout these Rules 'dollars' mean Australian dollars or New Zealand dollars interchangeably and each shall be deemed to be of equal value to the other.

**2. DEFINITIONS****2.1 Accrue Rating Points**

The gain or loss of rating points.

**2.2 Age Based Concessions**

A National Ratings reduction based exclusively on the age of a horse.

**2.3 Age Race**

A race that is confined to horses of a specified age group.

**2.4 Automatic Handicap Race**

A standing start race in which 5 rating points incrementally equates to 10 metres, e.g., if horses rated 50 start from the Front, 55 from 10 metres, etc.

**2.5 Back**

The programmed maximum Age or Rating for which a race shall be handicapped.

**2.6 Classic**

A race for either 2YO, 3YO or 4YO horses of the same age or sex, which is designated as such by a Controlling Body and in which all horses shall start from the front.

**2.7 Claiming Race**

A race in which the starters are for sale for a stipulated purchase price (including GST).

**2.8 Concession Driver**

A licensed driver who has held a licence for a period of less than five years from the date a Grade B licence was first granted unless otherwise approved by a Controlling Body.

**2.9 Controlling Body**

The body of persons in control of Harness Racing in the relevant State or Country.

**2.10 Dropback Provision**

A reduction in Ratings Points brought about by a horse's finishing position in a race.

**2.11 Discretionary Handicap**

A race in which handicap marks are allotted by and at the discretion of the handicapper at intervals of ten metres and/or five metres after the ten metre handicap mark.

**2.12 Front**

The programmed minimum Age or Rating for which a race shall be handicapped.

**2.13 Heat**

A race held for the purpose of determining which horses from that race shall qualify for a Repechage, Semi-Final, Final or Consolation.

**2.14 Invitation Race**

A race approved by the Controlling Body for which the nominations may be by invitation of the Conducting Club or Controlling Body.

**2.15 Juvenile Race**

A race for 2YO and/or 3YO horses only.

**2.16 Maiden Race**

A race for horses that have not previously won a race.

**2.17 Monte Race**

A race for trotters to be ridden in saddle.

**2.18 Open Age Race**

A race that is not restricted by Age.

**2.19 Preferential Barrier Draw (PBD)**

A predetermined method applied to the barrier draw in races other than Random Barrier Draw (RBD).

**2.20 Race**

Any contest between two (2) or more horses.

**2.21 Ratings Exempt Race**

A race in which starters do not accrue Rating Points.

**2.22 Rating Points**

The numerical value used to update the Rating of a horse.

**2.23 Stakemoney**

The total prizemoney specified in the published conditions of a race excluding GST when applicable which:

(a) includes float rebates, time incentives and unconditional bonuses

(including cash and the retail value of vouchers, credit, goods and or services); and,

- (b) excludes trophies and conditional bonuses (including breeding scheme and Industry Association or Club Membership bonuses where a fee is applicable to be eligible for that bonus).

**2.24 Transfer Rating**

The Rating of a horse on transfer from the Class System to the RBHS.

**2.25 Young Driver**

A licensed driver who has not attained the age of 25 years or as otherwise specified by a Controlling Body.

**3. ACCRUAL OF RATING POINTS**

3.1 A horse completing a race shall accrue Rating Points in accordance with the Rating Points Matrix (Rule 3.2).

**3.2 Rating Points Matrix**

\$	\$	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th +
0	5000	3	0	0	0	0	Refer to Rule 3.3
5001	8000	4	0	0	0	0	Refer to Rule 3.3
8001	11000	5	1	0	0	0	Refer to Rule 3.3
11001	16000	6	1	0	0	0	Refer to Rule 3.3
16001	26000	7	2	1	0	0	Refer to Rule 3.3
26001	50000	8	2	1	0	0	Refer to Rule 3.3
50001	~	9	3	2	0	0	0

**3.3 Dropback Provision**

- a) A reduction in Ratings Points will only apply to the final four (4) placegetters in races with fields of nine (9) or more.
- b) Where field sizes are less than nine (9) a reduction in Ratings Points will only apply as follows:
  - I. Field size 6: the 6th placegetter
  - II. Field size 7: the 6th and 7th placegetters
  - III. Field size 8: the 6th, 7th and 8th placegetter
- c) and will apply as follows:
  - I. A horse that finishes as specified in rule 3.3 a) and b) in a race with stakemoney in the range of;
    - i. \$0 - \$16,000 shall have its Rating adjusted as follows:

1. NR 30-69 adjusted by -1 rating points,
  2. NR 70-120 reduced by -2 rating points.
  - ii. \$16,001 - \$50,000 shall have its Rating adjusted as follows:
    1. NR 30-55 adjusted by 0 rating points,
    2. NR 56-69 reduced by -1 rating point,
    3. NR 70-120 reduced by -2 rating points.
- 3.4 A horse will not be eligible for Rating Points as provided in these Rules if it:
- (a) does not finish the race
  - (b) is declared a non-starter
  - (c) is disqualified from a race after all clear is signalled
  - (d) contests a Ratings Exempt Race
  - (e) contests a Time Trial that is not a Race
  - (f) contests a Claiming Race.
- 3.5 In the event of a dead-heat the Rating Points accrued by each of the horses dead-heating shall be:
- (a) totalled and apportioned equally as a fraction of the total
  - (b) rounded down to a whole number.
- 3.6 A minimum aggregate Rating of 30 is applicable to all horses irrespective of the Rating Points provided for in these Rules.
- 3.7 A maximum aggregate Rating of 120 is applicable to all horses irrespective of the Rating Points provided for in these Rules.
- 3.8 The numeric value of Rating Points is subject to annual review by HRA prior to 1 January. *(date updated as at 28/11/2024)*
- 3.9 The dollar threshold of Race Stake money is subject to annual review by HRA prior to 1 January. *(date updated as at 28/11/2024)*

**4. 2YO & 3YO PACERS & TROTTERS**

- 4.1 A 2YO shall commence racing with a Rating of 45.
- 4.2 A 2YO or 3YO that races in a Juvenile race shall only accrue half points (rounded down). For clarity, the dropback provisions will still apply.
- 4.3 A 2YO or 3YO that is nominated for a Juvenile race, and does not gain a start in that race, but competes in any other race programmed at that meeting will only accrue half points (rounded down). For clarity, the dropback provisions will still apply.

**Example 1**

A 2YO that wins a race worth \$10,000 will only accrue 2 rating points.

**Example 2**

A 3YO that is NR 45 that runs 10<sup>th</sup> in a 10 horse race worth \$10,000 will still receive negative one rating point, making the horse an NR44.

**5. 3YO AND OLDER PACERS & TROTTERS**

5.1 A horse aged 3YO or older that has not raced as a 2YO shall commence racing with a Rating of 50.

5.2 A horse aged 3YO or older that has raced as a 2YO shall thereafter commence to race with the National Rating it finished its 2YO season with.

**Examples:**

- A 2YO rated NR54 at 31 December would thereafter commence racing with a NR54.
- A 2YO rated NR39 at 31 December would retain that rating when it thereafter commenced racing.

5.3 A horse aged 3YO or older shall have its Rating calculated at midnight on 30 June 2019 as provided by these Rules and thereafter its Rating shall be updated for subsequent racing performances.

**6. MINIMUM NATIONAL RATING AFTER A WIN**

6.1 The Rating of a horse shall be calculated in accordance with these Rules excepting that the resultant Rating for a win shall be not less than 40.

**Example 1:**

A horse with a NR33 will automatically become NR40 for winning any race.

**Example 2:**

A horse with a NR39 that wins a \$5,000 race will accrue three rating points and become NR42.

**7. MAIDEN RACES**

7.1 A horse shall not accrue points when it runs Second or Third in a race programmed as a Maiden race.

**8. STANDING START RACES**

8.1 In a standing start race, horses shall be handicapped as specified by the respective Controlling Body.

**9. TROTTERS COMPETING IN PACERS RACES**

- 9.1 A trotter may compete in a race programmed for pacers and shall be handicapped as specified by the respective Controlling Body.

**10. HANDICAPPING - GENERAL****10.1 Aged Based Concessions**

State Controlling Bodies shall not program aged based concessions in the conditions of any race.

**10.2 Ratings Exempt Races**

A starter in a race in any of the following shall not accrue Rating Points as provided by these Rules:

- (a) World Drivers Championship held in Australia.
- (b) Australasian Young Drivers Championship held in Australia.
- (c) A drivers' series of not more than 6 races in each State as approved by the Controlling Body but limited to not more than two series in a racing year.
- (d) One or more drivers' series restricted to Concession Drivers but limited in total to not more than 24 races in a racing year.
- (e) Any other driver's championship race or series approved by Harness Racing Australia.
- (f) A Time Trial that is not a Race.
- (g) A race of \$3,500 or less designated by a State Controlling Body.
- (h) A race nominated by written application from a State Controlling Body and approved by Harness Racing Australia.

**10.3 Racing In Advance of Rating**

- (a) A horse shall be eligible to start in in a race for which the front is greater than the horse's Rating.
- (b) A starter in a race for which the front is greater than its Rating shall accrue the Rating Points provided in the Rating Points Matrix (Rule 3.2) irrespective of the front of the race except as provided in Rule 8.2 (c).

**Example:** A horse Rated 43 that places second (2<sup>nd</sup>) in a \$10,000 race which is programmed for horses Rated 50 to 55 would accrue one (1) Rating Point to then be Rated 44.

- (c) A starter in a race for which the front is greater than its Rating shall not accrue a reduction in Rating Points irrespective of the front of the race.

**Example:** A horse Rated 43 that places 10<sup>th</sup> (Last) in a \$4,000 race which is programmed for horses Rated 50 to 55 would not have its Rating reduced by one (-1) Rating Point to 42 but would continue to be Rated 43.

**10.4 Events conducted as a Series of Races**

An event may be conducted as a combination of related races ('the Series') that may include a Prelude/s, Heat/s, Repechage/s, Semi-Finals, Final and Consolation/s in conjunction therewith provided that:

- (a) The starters in a race of the Series shall accrue the Rating points as provided by these Rules.
- (b) The Rating points accrued in a race of the Series shall not apply in other races of the Series.
- (c) The Rating points provided by these Rules that are accrued in a race that is not part of the Series shall apply in races of the Series unless otherwise specified in the published conditions of the Series.

10.5 The Rating points provided by these Rules for a race of the Series shall apply in a race that is not part of the Series.

**10.6 Time Trials**

A horse that contests a race conducted as a Time Trial shall accrue the Rating points as provided by these Rules.

**10.7 Conversion of Gait**

A horse which has had its gait converted shall have its Rating adjusted as though it had contested the races at the gait to which it has been converted.

**11. RATING OF HORSES FOR PERFORMANCES OUTSIDE AUSTRALIA**

11.1 A horse cleared into Australia after midnight on 30 June 2019 by a Controlling Body in another country shall be assigned a National Rating in accordance with AHR 14 herein – Transition to Ratings Based Handicapping, except that the National Rating assigned to such horse on or after 1 January 2021:

- (a) shall not be less than 45 for a 2YO, or
- (b) shall not be less than 50 for a 3YO or older

11.2 The National Rating of a horse cleared by a Controlling Body in another country and registered to race in Australia shall be calculated from its lifetime performances recorded on the Clearance or Export Certificate provided by such Controlling Body.

11.3 All horses cleared into Australia after midnight 1 January 2026, will be subject to the ratings matrix applicable at the time of the race. For clarity, all performances in juvenile races prior to 1 January 2026, rule 4.4 will not apply.

Note: With effect from 1 March 2020, races that are declared exempt from penalties in another country shall not be recognised as Ratings Exempt when calculating a National Rating in Australia regardless of the date of the race.

Note: Horses that nominated for a 'Juvenile' race in another country but were

'balloted' or 'race deleted' and they raced in an open age race at the same meeting, rule 4.4 will not apply.

- 11.4 Stakemoney as shown on the Clearance or Export Certificate won by a horse in New Zealand, United States of America, Canada or other dollar denominated country shall be deemed to be the equivalent dollar amount in Australian Dollars.
- 11.5 Stakemoney as shown on the Clearance or Export Certificate won by a horse in any other country outside Australia other than New Zealand, United States of America, Canada or other dollar denominated country shall be converted to its equivalent in Australian dollars calculated at the date of its most recent clearance from a country outside Australia.

#### **11A RATING OF HORSES FOR NON-AHR PERFORMANCES IN AUSTRALIA**

- 11A.1 The National Rating of a horse rated NR50 or less that races under these Rules on or after 17 June 2021 shall not decrease for performances within an Australian jurisdiction that is **not** regulated by these Rules:

#### **12. DISQUALIFIED AND PROMOTED HORSES**

- 12.1 If a horse contests a race ('the subject race') and is subsequently disqualified from the subject race, other than as a result of a protest on the day of the race, then:
- (a) The horses that were next placed in the subject race shall be promoted in the placings.
  - (b) The owners of the promoted horses shall receive the specified stakemoney for the amended placings in the race.
  - (c) The Rating Points accrued by the promoted horses in respect of the subject race shall not be adjusted.
  - (d) The disqualified horse shall not accrue any Rating Points in respect of the subject race.
  - (e) If the disqualified horse has contested a race or races following the subject race and prior to its disqualification it shall accrue the Rating Points provided by these Rules applicable to the other race or races which it has contested; and for the obviation of doubt, the horse shall be deemed eligible for such other race or races.

**13. FILLIES & MARES CONCESSION**

13.1. An automatic Concession of five (5) Rating points will be deducted from the aggregate Rating of a filly or mare in a race unless otherwise specified by a Controlling Body.

**14. CONCESSION DRIVERS**

14.1 A Concession Driver may, with the approval of the Controlling Body, claim a concession in a race unless otherwise specified by a Controlling Body.

14.2 The Controlling Body may at any time withdraw its approval for a Concession Driver to claim a concession.

14.3 A horse driven by a Concession Driver claiming a concession shall have its Rating reduced by either five (5) Rating points or three (3) Rating points as determined by the concurrent total of the Driver's race wins being:

(a) Five (5) Rating points concession for 0 – 100 wins

(b) Three (3) Rating points concession for 101 – 250 wins, unless otherwise specified by a Controlling Body.

14.4 The number of wins shall be inclusive of all wins irrespective of whether or not a concession was claimed.

14.5 A dead-heat for the first placing shall not count as a win.

14.6 When a Concession Driver wins the final permissible concession claim race at a meeting where the driver has further driving engagements, the driver will be permitted to claim the relevant concession for the remainder of such meeting and any other meeting on the same day.

14.7 When a Concession Driver claiming a concession is unable to fulfil a race engagement the Concession Driver shall be replaced by another Concession Driver who is eligible to claim a concession of equal or greater Rating points unless otherwise specified by the respective Controlling Body.

***Example:** A Concession Driver claiming a concession of five (5) Rating points may be replaced by another Concession Driver who is eligible to claim five (5) Rating points but not by a Concession Driver only eligible to claim three (3) Rating points or by a driver not eligible to claim a concession.*

**15. LOCAL HANDICAPPING RULES**

15.1 A local handicapping rule of a Controlling Body shall not affect the Rating of any horse under these Rules and shall be applicable only in respect of a race programmed by such Controlling Body.

15.2 The Rating of a horse under a local handicapping rule of a Controlling Body shall be kept separate from the horse’s Rating under these Rules which shall be maintained and kept current by such Controlling Body.

**16. TRANSITION TO RATINGS BASED HANDICAPPING**

16.1 The transition from the Class System to Ratings Based Handicapping will commence at midnight on 30 April 2019 when a Transfer Rating for all horses aged 2YO or older will be calculated based on the Conversion Table and inclusive of Rules 14.4 and 14.5 herein.

16.2 Conversion Table

<b>Pacers Age/Class</b>	<b>Basic Points Equivalent</b>	<b>Trotters Age/Class</b>
2YO	40	2YO
3C0/3C1	50	3TO/3T2
3C2/ C0	50	3T3/T0
C1 No better than M1	55	T1 No better than TM1
C2 No better than M1	60	T2 No better than TM1
C3 No better than M1	65	T3 No better than TM1
C4 No better than M1	70	T4 No better than TM1
C5 No better than M1	75	T5 No better than TM1
C6 No better than M1	80	T6 No better than TM1
C7 No better than M1	85	T7 No better than TM1
C8+ No better than M1	90	T8+ No better than TM1
M2	95	TM2
M3	100	TM3
M4	105	TM4
M5	110	TM5
M6	115	TM6
M7+	120	TM7+

16.3 A horse’s conversion from the Class System to the Ratings Based Handicapping System will first take effect by calculating its Transfer Rating at midnight on 30 April 2019. The horse will then progressively accrue Rating Points as provided in the Rating Points Matrix (Rule 3.2) for race performances in May and June

2019 in readiness for the formal cut-over to RBHS programmed races on 1 July 2019.

- 16.4 A horse aged 2YO shall be allotted a Transfer Rating which is the sum of:
  - (a) forty (40) basic Rating Points, plus
  - (b) the application of Rating Points as provided in the Rating Points Matrix (Rule 3.2) for each of the horse’s starts in races approved to accrue Rating Points.
  
- 16.5 A horse aged 3YO or older shall be allotted a Transfer Rating at midnight on 30 April 2019 which is the lesser of the sum of:
  - (a) the equivalent Basic Points in the Conversion Table, or
  - (b) the equivalent Basic Points in the Conversion Table plus the application of Rating Points as provided in the Rating Points Matrix (Rule 3.2) for the horse’s previous five (5) starts in races approved to accrue Rating Points.
  
- 16.6 A horse’s Transfer Rating will be progressively updated from 1 May 2019 and published on HarnessWeb in parallel with the horse’s classifications under the Class System until midnight on 30 June 2019 when the RBHS shall take effect.
  
- 16.7 All races scheduled to be run on or after 1 July 2019 will be programmed for eligibility to be determined by a horse’s Age, Rating and/or Gender unless otherwise specified by a Controlling Body.

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