

Handicapping Penalties

A winning performance attracts a penalty. That is a horse which wins a race will generally have its rating within that particular class increased in terms of those horses which it has beaten. The severity of the increase is at the handicappers' discretion and will depend on a number of factors including strength of opposition, authority and merit of win, margins etc.

The average winning penalty within the same level of racing is between 1½ and 2 ½ kilograms. Wins by greater than average margins could attract a larger penalty.

Horses, which are placed, commonly attract a penalty depending on the merit of their performance and their proximity to the horse immediately ahead of it in the finishing order.

Horses that race above their grade and prove competitive can also have their rating increased relevant to that performance.

Unplaced horses will generally have their rating decreased according to their finishing position within the race and proximity from the placegetters. This adjustment can vary but the average adjustment is between ½ to 1 kilogram.

Apprentice Claims

Apprentice jockeys may claim an allowance in accordance with the Australian Rules of Racing (AR 92(1)). The allowance reduces the actual weight the horse must carry in the race. It compensates for the apprentice jockey's relative inexperience compared to the apprentice's more senior counterparts. The handicapper does not factor in an apprentice's claim when setting weights.

Discretionary Allowances

After extensive consultation and a review of all submissions received, some notable enhancements to Benchmark Programming and Merit Based Handicapping were implemented by Racing NSW from 1 November 2010.

At the completion of the review statistical analysis revealed that Country performed horses were winning in the Metropolitan area at a better strike rate than before benchmarking commenced, however there was still a shortfall against their expected win rate.

One of the enhancements was the introduction of Discretionary allowances for Country performed horses in the Metropolitan area.

It was decided that a discretionary allowance of between 0kg and 3kg may be applied by the Racing NSW Handicapping Panel on a race to race basis, effective 1 November, 2010, for a six month trial period.

All results were measured at the end of the trial period (30 April 2011), and the policy reviewed.

After a consultation process, the following recommendations have been adopted by Racing NSW:

More discretion given to the handicapper to weight horses lower than their published benchmark, if this is warranted by the nominations for a particular race;

Where horses perform well at a level above their grade, the benchmark allocated for the next start is dependent on the grade of a race;

In assessing the performances of maiden winners, the weight allocated by handicappers is to be over a tighter spread than at present;

Discretionary Handicapping may also include the re-assessment of a horse.

For example, a horse resumes from an extended spell, has 3 or 4 runs and is clearly not performing – the horse may be 're-handicapped' lower, rather than just dropped a few points for its most recent run.

The same approach may be applied to a multiple win horse that has left the Metropolitan area and been sold/transferred to the Country region.

After a few country starts, the handicap figure may be re-assessed if the horse is not performing.