

Understanding Benchmark Handicap Rating Penalties

When might a horse not drop in Benchmark rating points?

Unplaced horses do not automatically have their benchmark rating reduced in circumstances that include:

- Where a horse resumes from an extended break from racing and/or over an unsuitable distance.
- Where a horse is unsuited by the prevailing track conditions, is slow to begin, suffers interference in running or is obliged to race wide throughout.
- Where a rider loses their irons or experiences a difficulty that effects the finishing position of the horse, i.e. slipped saddle.
- If a horse falls, is brought down, runs off, fails to finish or loses its rider during the running of a race.
- If a horse on veterinary examination post-race is found to be lame, have a poor recovery rate or respiratory distress, suffers a bleeding attack or is injured during the running of a race.
- When a horse or rider is mentioned in the Stipendiary Stewards Race Report to the extent that an incident or series of incidents effects the finishing position of the horse.
- Where a horse contests a notably higher standard race, e.g. given a true weight that is below the limit weight in a race and therefore considered to be 'out of the handicap'.
- Where a horse is better suited in staying events when contesting sprint events or vice versa.

When might a horse rise quickly in Benchmark rating points?

Reasons for a sharp rise in Benchmark ratings can be:

- When a horse races above their grade and proves to be competitive.
- An exceptional performance/win.

*It should be noted that if a horse that may have gone up quickly in benchmark rating points by way of an exceptional performance/win and at its subsequent starts proves that its form is not consistent with that singular high benchmark performance figure it is reasonable to expect that the horses' benchmark rating will return to a figure in line with its form previous to that stand out performance/win.

When might a horse drop quickly in Benchmark rating points?

When horses do have their benchmark rating reduced, it is usually by 1 point (.5kg.) or 2 points (1kg.), however, horses may have their benchmark rating reduced more quickly in circumstances that include:

- Where a horse is clearly beaten in a suitable race over a suitable distance under favourable race conditions.
- Where it is evident a horse is revealing a marked tapering off of form or showing no signs of recapturing career best form consistent with previous benchmark performance ratings.

*It should also be noted that if a horse that may have dropped back in the benchmark rating points returns to a previous high benchmark performance rating it is reasonable to expect that the horses' benchmark rating will be increased relevant to that performance.