

MEDIA RELEASE

NEW ZEALAND PATTERN REVIEW

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2016 NEW ZEALAND PATTERN COMMITTEE REVIEW

Two races have been upgraded and two downgraded following the New Zealand Pattern Committee's (NZPC) annual review of the Group and Listed races run in New Zealand in the 2015-16 season.

The Group I Easter Stakes at Ellerslie and the Group II Wellington Cup at Trentham have been downgraded while the Rotorua Stakes has been upgraded to group status and an Ellerslie three-year-old race promoted to listed level.

The NZPC, which follows the Asian Pattern Committee (APC) Ground Rules, uses the World Thoroughbred Racehorse Rankings (WTRR) as its primary assessment tool, taking into account the race rating in the season under review and also the pattern race rating (an average of the three most recent annual ratings).

The race rating is determined by the average peak ranking of the first four placegetters. The recommended benchmark rating for a Group I race is 115, with the tolerance threshold 110.

The Easter had a rating of 109.2 for the 2015-16 season, with a pattern race rating of 107.9 and had failed to meet the Group I threshold in each of the four years under review. The NZPC did consider that the top four starters in the race have consistently rated above 110 in recent seasons, and that this was a potential offsetting factor, but the final decision on Group I races is taken by the APC, which voted to downgrade the race to Group II.

The Wellington Cup (3200m) has been downgraded from Group II to Group III, after failing to meet the Group II tolerance threshold in each of the last three seasons. Throughout the APC region, all races of Group II and below which failed to meet their thresholds were downgraded. The NZPC considers that the widespread public popularity and historical significance of the Wellington Cup will be protected by NZTR's commitment to unchanged prize-money funding levels.

The Rotorua Stakes, a weight-for-age fillies and mares race, has been promoted from Listed to Group III status and a 1300m three-year-old race run at Ellerslie in early December has been given Listed status. Volkstok'n'barrell and Sofia Rosa have been the most recent winners of the Ellerslie race, which has actually met the threshold rating for a Group III in the last two seasons.

The Group I Auckland Cup has also failed to meet the tolerance threshold in each of the last four years and the 2016 renewal was particularly weak, with a rating of 103.5. However, the NZPC has endorsed the decision of the APC that the race should retain its Group I rating for another year, pending a review of staying races throughout the region, whose ratings have all been under significant pressure.

The NZPC considered it would be deeply undesirable to have no Group I race at 2400m or longer for older horses in New Zealand but noted that regardless of the review outcomes, a significant lift in the race rating will be required in the season ahead.

The NZPC discussed the WTRR ratings assigned to NZ horses at some length and is concerned on a number of different grounds with the ratings of some NZ three-year-old races in particular. Accordingly, the NZPC has requested that NZTR establish an expert review of the WTRR ratings assigned to NZ horses and races at three years and below. The NZPC understands that the APC has agreed to consider the outcomes of this review.

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