

1 April 2020

STATEMENT FROM HRNZ CHAIR AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE

What does a Return to Racing look like?

Harness Racing New Zealand is working in collaboration with RITA and the other codes to enable a return to racing as soon as is practically possible. The first stage of this process is to design a racing ecosystem that reflects the likelihood that it will be some time before the Government brings New Zealand back to Alert Level One. In practice this means:

- Animal welfare, along with the safety of industry people and the wider public, must continue to be paramount.
- Racing on a public-excluded basis, as we were before going into the lockdown.
- Racing will be conducted on a regional basis; this will see licensees unable to move between regions.
- Harness racing will be limited to five to six venues for a minimum of three months to allow the strict enforcement of the necessary protocols under Alert Levels Two and Three.
- HRNZ is consulting with clubs/regions on regional racing/venues and will advise the industry on the shape of this once those decisions are finalised.
- At this early stage, HRNZ has a target of returning to racing at the end of May or early in June, but we stress there are a number variables that will affect this, the most obvious issues being when New Zealand moves out of Alert Level Four and what is deemed allowable by the Government under Alert Level Three.
- Racing cannot resume until there is a sufficient pool of fit horses to enable this.

Once we return to racing, the initial focus will be to provide weekly racing opportunities for the majority of the horse population. The draft plan is focussed on the period from June to September with further planning required to redesign the 2020/21 season.

The HRNZ board has confirmed that any feature/group races that were due to be held from March 24th through to the end of the 2019/20 season will now not be run and nor will they be rescheduled. As previously advised, this includes the IRT Harness Jewels. The exception to this is those races administered by the New Zealand Sires Stakes Board; we continue to work with the NZSSB on options for the rescheduling to the next season the races/series that they administer. This was a very difficult decision to make, however it is important that we give trainers and owners some certainty as they make plans for their horses.

There will be a need to reshape racing across all codes as we develop a clearer picture of what the full impact of COVID-19 will have on the TAB and subsequently funding to the codes. In light of this, HRNZ is vigorously reviewing all costs within the business, including employee/contractor payments.

If you have not already done so, please ensure you are applying for the Government wage support for yourself and your staff – information available at the WINZ website or ctrl click on this link - [Work and Income](#). A reminder that you and your staff can continue to access support from the Salvation Army Racing Chaplains (by phone). There is also support available by calling or texting 1737 free anytime, 24/7 where you can speak to a trained counsellor.

We would like to take the opportunity to thank all of those involved in harness racing who have been so understanding and supportive of each other through these unprecedented times. Things are moving quickly and we recognise that it is imperative that we communicate as clearly as we can as the situation evolves.

The HRNZ team continues to be available to anyone who has questions or suggestions.



Ken Spicer, Chair, HRNZ



Peter Jensen, CEO, HRNZ