

STAKEHOLDER NOTICE

Code of Racing	Harness
Description	Changes to Harness Handicapping Procedure
Effective Date	August 1, 2026
Feedback/Queries	harnesshandicapping@racingqueensland.com.au

Overview

Racing Queensland (**RQ**) advises that amendments to the Harness Handicapping Procedure (the Procedure) have been approved and will take effect from August 1, 2026.

Background

The amendments have been developed to support changes to harness race programming practices, including the removal of the Pathway method of programming from August 1, 2026.

In response, the Procedure will give greater emphasis to splitting races by lifetime wins where appropriate, with the objective of improving race opportunities for younger horses and horses with limited lifetime wins.

Summary of Key Amendments

The key changes to the Procedure include:

- introducing lifetime wins as the first method RQ Handicappers will consider when splitting races, in an effort to maximise opportunities for horses with limited wins;
- including an express criterion requiring consideration of opportunities for younger horses and horses with limited lifetime wins when deciding how, or whether, to divide a race; and
- making minor drafting amendments to clarify and correct existing provisions.

A copy of the updated Procedure, which takes effect from August 1, 2026, has been published to the RQ website and is also attached in the pages that follow.

HARNESS HANDICAPPING PROCEDURE

1. Background

This Procedure is made under the Racing Queensland (**RQ**) Handicapping and Grading Policy (the **Policy**) with the purpose to provide details of the systems of handicapping used in the Queensland harness racing industry.

The Procedure is named the Harness Handicapping Procedure (the **Procedure**).

2. Relevant Rules & Scope

2.1 Australian Handicapping Rules / Ratings Based Handicapping System

The rules that apply in relation to the handicapping and field selection of races conducted in Queensland are comprised of:

- (a) the Australian Handicapping Rules as made, rescinded or altered by Harness Racing Australia (**HRA**) from time to time; and
- (b) the local handicapping rules outlined in this Procedure.

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

All information regarding the National Rating Handicapping System can be found in the Australian Handicapping Rules on the HRA website <https://www.harness.org.au/rules/AUSTHCPR.PDF>.

If there is any inconsistency between this Procedure and the Australian Handicapping Rules, the Procedure will prevail to the extent of the inconsistency.

3. Application

3.1 Field Selection

Race fields are selected by using one of four methods:

- Automatic Race Field Selection (Section 3.1.1);
- Manual Race Field Selection (Section 3.1.2);
- Divided Conditions (Section 3.1.3); and
- Discretionary Handicaps (Section 3.1.4).

3.1.1 Automatic Field Selection System

- (a) Except for Metropolitan meetings and other chosen feature events, the fields for Queensland race meetings are selected in accordance with the Automatic Field Selection System unless otherwise stipulated in the race conditions.
- (b) Horses will be awarded field selection points based on their finishing order in any race they contest. The number of points awarded depends on the meeting type and tiered prizemoney level structure (refer table below).

Place	Metro Meeting or Band Penalty race or races above \$12,000	Metro Meeting races valued up to \$11,999	\$7,000 or more	\$5,000 to \$6,999	\$2,001 to \$4,999	NON-TAB or Races up to the value of \$2,000
1 st	16	13	12	11	10	9
2 nd	14	11	10	9	8	7
3 rd	13	10	9	8	7	6
4 th	12	9	8	7	6	5
5 th	11	8	7	6	5	4
6 th	10	7	6	5	4	3
7 th	9	6	5	4	3	2
8 th	8	5	4	3	2	1
9 th	7	4	3	2	1	0
10 th	6	3	2	1	0	0
11 th	5	2	1	0	0	0
12 th	4	1	0	0	0	0
DNF	0	0	0	0	0	0
DISQ	0	0	0	0	0	0

- (c) The point scores for each horse are calculated on points they have earned over their last five engagements. Of the five point-scoring runs the worst point score is removed and the remaining four are accumulated to give the total point score (see example below).

Date	Track	Place	Points
06/09/2024	Albion Park	Ballot	7
31/08/2024	Albion Park	11 th	5 ← removed
14/08/2024	Redcliffe	5 th	6
07/08/2024	Redcliffe	1 st	11
30/07/2024	Albion Park	4 th	8
Total			32

- (d) All races under the Automatic Field Selection System will be selected in descending point score order unless otherwise stated in race conditions. Selected races only may be selected in LOWEST to highest point score order.
- (e) A horse will be awarded 7 field selection points if it is balloted from a race selected using the Automatic Field Selection System. These ballot points are treated as a points scoring performance and will replace such horse's LOWEST points scoring performance. This will not be applicable under the following scenarios:
- (i) When a horse has an unfulfilled engagement;
 - (ii) When a horse is a late nomination;
 - (iii) When a horse is deemed ineligible at acceptance time;
 - (iv) When a horse is balloted from a race having gained a start in another race on the same day;
 - (v) When a horse is balloted from a race having already been balloted from another race on the same day;
 - (vi) If the horse is declared an emergency but is scratched;
 - (vii) If the race is declared a 'no-race' or is abandoned;
 - (viii) When the race field selection is based from lowest to highest point score order; or
 - (ix) When the total number of field selection points will decrease if 7 points are awarded.



- (f) Ballot points are to be credited to a horse's field selection points total after the running of the race meeting from which the horse has been balloted. Incoming ballot points replace the lowest point score in a horse's last five engagements.
- (g) When a horse qualifies to race it will be initially allotted a points score of 28 points (four 'starts' of 7 gift points). The points score of a newly qualified horse will then be calculated in the same manner as for a horse with a racing history, i.e., by considering the horse's last five points scoring performances and discarding the lowest point scoring performance so that the total of the remaining four points scoring performances becomes the points score used in the Automatic Field Selection System.
- (h) In the event that a ballot is required from horses on the same point score as horses that have not yet had a race start (i.e., 28 points), the horse which has not yet started will be considered as having 7 gift points at its last engagement which may provide the opportunity to gain a start over a horse which has only had one start but earned less than 7 points at that start (refer example below).

First starter	Horse with one start
7 Gift points	3 points at only race start
7 Gift points	7 Gift points
7 Gift points	7 Gift points
7 Gift points	7 Gift points
0 points	7 Gift points
28 points total	28 points total

In the above example the first starter will gain the run over the horse which has had only one race start considering the points at the last engagement (7 vs 3).

- (i) For all races selected in accordance with the Queensland Automatic Field Selection System, in the event of two or more horses being equal with the same points score, a count back will determine which horse gains a start, with preference given to the horse which earned the highest points at its last point scoring engagement. If both/all horses earned the same points, this procedure will be repeated through each previous point scoring engagement. If both/all horses cannot be separated a random ballot will determine which horse/s gain a start.
- (j) A horse that already has an engagement as a starter in a race at Acceptance Time for a given meeting will be deemed as having an 'unfulfilled engagement'. Horses with an unfulfilled engagement will only be selected after horses without an engagement unless otherwise stipulated in the race conditions.
- (k) If a horse is nominated for two different meetings conducted on different days but acceptances close on the same day, the trainer may indicate that they are willing to start the horse on both days if circumstances permit. Should the horse gain a start in its preferred event it will be deemed as having an unfulfilled engagement when being considered for the other race meeting.
- (l) Pursuant to AHR Rule 133 (1) & (2) every effort will be made to meet the above conditions, however, the inclusion of any horse over another shall not be grounds for requesting a redraw, nor shall any liability of any nature be incurred by RQ because of any error. In all cases the decision of the RQ Handicapping Panel will be final.

3.1.2 Manual Race Field Selection Policy

- (a) Fields for Metropolitan race meetings are selected by the RQ Field Selection Panel in accordance with the Manual Race Field Selection Policy.



- (b) The Automatic Field Selection System and the unfulfilled engagement rule are not applicable at Metropolitan race meetings.
- (c) The best credentialed horses in every race will be selected with the RQ Handicapping Panel referring to the following horse performance information:
(All information assessed equally)
 - (i) Current Figure Form (last 6 race starts);
 - (ii) Margins Beaten;
 - (iii) Mile Rates;
 - (iv) Class of Opposition;
 - (v) Class of Races;
 - (vi) Positions in Running;
 - (vii) Barrier Draws;
 - (viii) Interference Received;
 - (ix) Standing starts – all previous standing start form will be assessed in addition to current figure form over the last 10 starts.
- (d) The horses, which in the opinion of the RQ Handicapping Panel have the best overall form based on the above criteria, will be declared as starters in the field.
- (e) Multiple stable runners can be drawn as the only selection criteria is form as per criteria in Point 3.1.2 (c) (unless otherwise stated in race conditions).
- (f) A horse that has not previously had a race start has no exposed form and as such horses that have had a race start will be included first under the Manual Field Selection Policy. Trial form will not be considered. If balloting is required with multiple unraced horses a random ballot will be conducted to determine which of the unraced horses gain a start.
- (g) Permission may be granted at the sole discretion of RQ for other clubs to apply for these conditions on selected events.
- (h) Pursuant to AHR Rule 133 (1) & (2) every effort will be made to meet the above conditions, however, the inclusion of any horse over another shall not be grounds for requesting a redraw, nor shall any liability of any nature be incurred by RQ or any club official because of any error. In all cases the decision of the RQ Handicapping Panel will be final.

3.1.3 Divided Conditioned Racing

- (a) If required divided conditioned racing may be used within a race program.
- (b) Horses may be nominated for an open race code with nominations to be split at the discretion of the RQ Handicapping Panel who will frame the race conditions and barrier draw to best suit those nominated. The aim of this method of selection is to achieve even and competitive racing.
- (c) Where possible the RQ Handicapping Panel will attempt to split nominations in similar age, lifetime win or national rating groups, however, this cannot always be guaranteed due to the variety of horses that may be nominated for this type of program.
- (d) Pursuant to AHR Rule 133 (1) & (2) every effort will be made to meet the above conditions, however, the inclusion of any horse over another shall not be grounds for requesting a redraw, nor shall any liability of any nature be incurred by RQ because of any error. In all cases the decision of the RQ Handicapping Panel will be final.

3.1.4 Discretionary Handicaps

- (a) All discretionary handicaps are selected at the discretion of the RQ Handicapping Panel based on the Manual Race Field Selection Policy, however, considering the last 10 starts and



previous standing start form in addition to the standard criteria. A horse may be re-handicapped by the RQ Handicapping Panel after a subsequent winning performance if deemed necessary.

3.2 Race Splits / Allocation

- (a) Where a race is being split to allow for the maximum number of races budgeted per meeting to be conducted, RQ Handicappers will use discretion to determine the best method of splitting such race. Effective August 1, 2026 RQ Handicappers will consider in the first instance splitting a race based on lifetime wins in an attempt to maximize opportunities for horses with limited wins. Methods RQ Handicappers will consider when splitting a race include:
 - (i) Divided by lifetime wins
 - (ii) Standard Race Split:
 - A. Owners;
 - B. Trainers;
 - C. Drivers;
 - (iii) Field Selection Points;
 - (iv) Divided by sex;
 - (v) Prizemoney won in last 3 to 6 starts;
 - (vi) Top division at advertised race stake and bottom division of lower race stake; and
 - (vii) Manual race split (Handicappers discretion).
- (b) Any decision on how or if to divide a race will be based on the following criteria:
 - (i) Opportunities for younger horses and those with limited lifetime wins;
 - (ii) Maximize wagering turnover;
 - (iii) Competitiveness of race;
 - (iv) Number of acceptors for the race;
 - (v) Quality of acceptors;
 - (vi) Available stake distribution;
 - (vii) Impacts on other races or subsequent meetings; and
 - (viii) Number of available races to be conducted at the race meeting.
- (c) The following criteria will be considered in determining whether a programmed race should go ahead or be deleted:
 - (i) Maximise wagering turnover;
 - (ii) Number of acceptors for the race;
 - (iii) Number of acceptors for other races;
 - (iv) Quality of acceptors;
 - (v) Number of acceptors that have a prior engagement;
 - (vi) Competitiveness of race;
 - (vii) Alternate racing opportunities;
 - (viii) Multiple stable runners;
 - (ix) Available stake distribution;
 - (x) Impacts on other races or subsequent meetings; and
 - (xi) Number of available races to be conducted at the race meeting.
- (d) RQ Handicappers may, at their discretion, combine any race in an effort to achieve a race field or maintain a maximum number of races at a race meeting. RQ Handicappers will only combine races if deemed viable to do so. In all cases the RQ Handicappers decision is final.

3.3 Band Handicapping

- (a) The Queensland Band system is a local method of handicapping races held at Metropolitan meetings and selected races at provincial meetings.
- (b) Originally introduced to replicate Metropolitan (M-class) racing, the Band system provides a level of handicapping for the Queensland Metropolitan races which fell under the \$15,000 national threshold of a Metropolitan Penalty race as defined under the Australian Handicapping Rules.
- (c) The inclusion of Band racing assists in identifying horses with 0 Metropolitan wins, 1 Metropolitan win etc., and therefore provides another level of racing options for each horse.
- (d) A Band Penalty will apply to winners of races worth \$12,000 or more (some exclusions may apply).
- (e) Band classes are as follows:
 - (i) No Band (Horses that have not won a Band Penalty race).
 - (ii) Band 5 (Winners of one Band Penalty race).
 - (iii) Band 4 (Winners of two Band Penalty races).
 - (iv) Band 3 (Winners of three Band Penalty races).
 - (v) Band 2 (Winners of four Band Penalty races).
 - (vi) Band 1 (Winners of five or more Band Penalty races).
- (f) A drop back in Band class applies for Band 1 horses only and will be applied at the Handicappers discretion.
- (g) Any horse will take a Band Penalty for a win of a Band Penalty race. Races excluded from a Band Penalty are:
 - (i) All races restricted to 2YOs only.
 - (ii) All races restricted to 3YOs only.
 - (iii) All races restricted to Maidens only.
 - (iv) Races restricted to horses with a National Rating no higher than 75 that are advertised as a Rating Penalty only race.
 - (v) Age races up to 4YO with a value no higher than \$50,000.
 - (vi) QBRED 4YO Feature race of any value.
- (h) Band assessment of interstate or overseas horses:
 - (i) A Band Penalty will apply for each interstate win of a race valued at \$15,000 or more.
 - (ii) Excludes winners of races as described above in point 3.3 (g) (i), (ii), (iii), (iv) and (v).
 - (iii) A Band Penalty will apply for each overseas win of a race valued at \$20,000 or more. Effective January 1, 2025.
 - (iv) Excludes overseas winners of races as described above in point 3.3 (g) (i), (ii) and (iii).
 - (v) Overseas winners of races limited by wins (up to 2 wins) also excluded.

3.4 Concessions

3.4.1 Driver

Available on races advertised 'DC' (Driver Concession):

- (a) Concession Driver with 0 to 100 lifetime wins = 5 Rating Point concession (retained until 101st win is achieved).
- (b) Concession Driver with 101 to 250 lifetime wins = 3 Rating Point concession (retained until 251st win is achieved).
- (c) Concession Term = 7 years from date of first attaining a B-Grade driver's license.



- (d) 251 lifetime wins = claim outdriven.
- (e) Metropolitan Concession claim available for 50 wins at a Metropolitan meeting or of a Metropolitan race.
- (f) Metropolitan Concession claim remains available for the 7 year term of a drivers concession, regardless of the number of lifetime wins, until 50 Metropolitan wins have been achieved.

3.4.2 Mare

Available on races advertised 'MC' (Mare Concession):

- (a) Mares Concession = 5 points.

3.4.3 Age

Age Concessions are no longer available, effective January 1, 2026.

3.4.4 Trotters

Available on all pacing races unless stated in race conditions:

- (a) Trotters in Pacers race = 20 points.

3.5 Field Sizes

3.5.1 Albion Park (Except when emergency is drawn)

- (a) All 2YO (MS & SS) = 10 starters.
- (b) 3YO+ 1660m (MS) = 10 starters.
- (c) 3YO+ 2138m or longer (MS) = 12 starters.
- (d) 3YO+ all distances (SS) = 12 starters.
- (e) 3YO+ Feature races all distances (SS) = 14 starters.

3.5.2 Redcliffe (Except when emergency is drawn)

- (a) All 2YO (MS & SS) = 9 starters.
- (b) 3YO+ 1780m (MS) = 9 starters.
- (c) 3YO+ 2040m or longer (MS) = 10 starters.
- (d) 3YO+ all distances (SS) = 12 starters.

3.5.3 Marburg (Except when emergency is drawn)

- (a) All 2YO (MS & SS) = 9 starters.
- (b) 3YO+ all distances (MS) = 9 starters.
- (c) 3YO+ all distances (SS) = 10 starters.

3.5.4 Grass Track or other thoroughbred venue

- (a) All 2YO (MS & SS) = 8 starters.
- (b) 3YO+ all distances (MS) = 9 starters.
- (c) 3YO+ all distances (SS) = 10 starters.

3.6 Seeded Preferential Barrier Draws

3.6.1 Mobile start races

In mobile start races at:

- (a) Albion Park, the allocation of barriers are seeded in the following sequence:
 - 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 6, 10, 7, 11, 12 and 13.
- (b) Redcliffe, the allocation of barriers are seeded in the following sequence:
 - 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 5, 6, 10 and 11.



- (c) Marburg the allocation of barriers are seeded in the following sequence:
- 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 9, 4 and 5.
- (d) Grass Track or other thoroughbred venue, the allocation of barriers are NOT seeded and are drawn in the following sequence:
- 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10.

3.6.2 Standing start races

In standing start races, seeded barrier draws do not apply.

3.7 Barrier Draw Types

- (a) The below barrier draw types are some examples of barrier draw selection methods used in Queensland which may be applied to assist in grading a race:

RBD	Random Barrier Draw
PBD/NR	Preferential Barrier Draw on National Rating
DBD	Discretionary Barrier Draw
PBD/CLAIM	Preferential Barrier Draw on Claiming Price
PBD/BAND	Preferential Barrier Draw on Band assessment.
PBD/\$L3	Preferential Barrier Draw on earnings at the last 3 starts
PBD/\$L4	Preferential Barrier Draw on earnings at the last 4 starts
PBD/\$L5	Preferential Barrier Draw on earnings at the last 5 starts
PBD/\$L6	Preferential Barrier Draw on earnings at the last 6 starts
PBD/\$TS	Preferential Barrier Draw on earnings This Season
PBD/TSW	Preferential Barrier Draw on This Season Wins
PBD/TSWOE	Preferential Barrier Draw on This Seasons Win Only Earnings
PBD/\$LS	Preferential Barrier Draw on earnings Last Season
PBD/\$LT	Preferential Barrier Draw on Lifetime earnings
PBD/LTW	Preferential Barrier Draw on Lifetime Wins
PBD/FSP	Preferential Barrier Draw on Field Selection Points
PBD/AGE	Preferential Barrier Draw on Age
PBD/SEX	Preferential Barrier Draw on Sex
PBD/WOE	Preferential Barrier Draw on Win Only Earnings

- (b) Some barrier draw types may be applied in unison, e.g.:
- (i) PBD/AGE/SEX = Preferential draw on age first and then sex; or
 - (ii) PBD/NR/\$L4 = Preferential barrier draw on National Rating first then earnings at the last 4 starts.

3.8 Field Sizes & Prizemoney

- (a) Races drawn with a field size of less than seven (7) starters may have prizemoney reduced by one tier. (2YO, 3YO only, open class races and most feature races excluded)
- a. \$4,000 race reduced to \$3,500;
 - b. \$4,600 race reduced to \$4,000 (excluding races with a QBRED Bonus eligible horse);
 - c. \$6,200 race reduced to \$4,600;
 - d. \$9,000 race reduced to \$7,880;
 - e. \$10,500 race reduced to \$9,000;
 - f. \$14,500 race reduced to \$10,500;
 - g. \$17,500 race reduced to \$14,500; and
 - h. \$20,770 race reduced to \$17,500.



4. Related Documents

Document
Rules of Racing (Harness)

5. Version History

Current Version:	4	Date Made:	27/07/2026	Effective Date:	01/08/2026
Document Owner:	EGM Racing			CEO Approved:	27/07/2026
Enquiries to:	Senior Racing Manager – Harness			Due for Review:	01/08/2029

Version	Effective	Document Owner	Changes Made
2021.11	03/11/2021	Legal	Procedure created/updated
2	01/01/2025	Chief Executive Officer	Reviewed and updated
3	01/01/2026	EGM Racing	Sections 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.7 updated; section 3.8 inserted.
4	01/08/2026	EGM Racing	Amendments to 'race splits/allocation' to reflect removal of Pathway method of programming.