

Elevation Of The South African Merit Rating Level

- At the Handicapping Steering Committee meeting of 5 April 2006 it was agreed that the rating level of South African horse population had declined over a period of time. The reason for this downward movement was hard to pinpoint but the meeting agreed that the deterioration needed to be corrected. It was proposed that the entire population of horses based in Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal and the Western Cape be raised by up to 10 points. It was further agreed that owing to the 'creep factor', horses based in the Eastern Cape would be raised by half of the level as applied to the major centres and that horses in the Kimberley region would not be raised.

EVIDENCE OF DECLINE

1. Below is a tabular indication of the decline over a period 7 years based on the average ratings of horses contesting a number of our major graded races. It is acknowledged that the rating level of our best horses does not necessarily represent the situation of the entire population but their decline is the most noticeable over a given period of time.

RACE AVERAGE OF ALL RATINGS

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
CAPE GUINEAS	101	99	97	94	0	93	92
DAILY NEWS	97	97	99	100	94	90	91
GOLD CHALLENGE	109	109	109	107	105	103	101
QUEEN'S PLATE	108	108	107	106	104	101	101
SUMMER CUP	107	103	104	104	99	100	98
J&B MET	106	107	108	105	103	100	99
JULY	107	107	108	103	103	101	99

The average decline for the fields in the above races goes from a high of 9 points to a low of 6.

Another indicator of the decline is the reduction of the number of horses rated at 100 or more in the above races.

HORSES RATED 100+ AS PERCENTAGE OF FIELD

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
CAPE GUINEAS	69	45	33	22	0	27	12
DAILY NEWS	35	27	54	33	20	8	14
GOLD CHALLENGE	100	100	91	100	75	55	70
QUEEN'S PLATE	92	86	100	100	71	71	64
SUMMER CUP	100	85	79	76	56	50	33
J&B MET	100	93	94	94	73	56	44
JULY	94	94	94	70	63	56	50

It is interesting to note that a 6-point increase to this year's July field would result in a percentage of 80 rated at 100 or more

2. Although tenuous and not exactly accurate the level of ratings achieved by South African horses overseas in places like Dubai, Singapore, Australia and the USA in recent years also seem to indicate that our levels are not in accord with the levels of the global herd.

Some notable recent examples are listed below

Horse	Left SA	Overseas
Ipi Tombe	108	118 (Dubai)
Crimson Palace	101	114 (Dubai and USA)
Emerald Beauty	94	100 (Dubai)
Greys Inn	111	117 (Dubai and HK)
Surveyor	106	114 (Dubai and S'pore)
Tyson	102	113 (Dubai)
Palace Line	98	112 (Singapore)
Hoeberg	103	110 (S'pore and Dubai)
Perfect Promise	97	113 (Australia)
Battle Maiden	99	107 (Australia)
Oracle West	94	110 (Dubai)
Tiger Shark	98	104 (Dubai)

3) When the Merit Rating system was introduced the Average rating for Colts was established at 74 and fillies 70. The current levels of the averages for horses aged 3 or more years are Colts at 65 and Fillies at 61

These figures seem to correlate with the examples given in (1) above. That is, the decline in ratings has been in the region of 9 points.

PROPOSAL

The evidence given above seems to suggest that we should raise our rating level by a factor of 9.

However, given that the levels were possibly a little high, in global terms, when merit rating was first introduced and that the system had not fully 'bedded down' the Handicapping Panel believes a figure of 6 would be more appropriate.

IMPLEMENTATION

For any nominations due on or after 1 August 2006:-
Horses stabled and trained in Gauteng, Kwazulu-Natal and the Western Cape will be have their Merit Rating raised by 6 points.

Horses trained in the Eastern Cape will be raised by 3 points.
Horses trained in Kimberley will have no adjustment.

All horses ratings will be adjusted on the National Racing Bureau database and trainers can attain a copy of their horses adjusted ratings from the NRB

Further, where necessary, appropriate adjustments will be made to existing programmes to accommodate the amended ratings.