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ONTARIO RACING PROGRAM Implementation 3–2011

Ontario Racing Program Elements

1. Canadian preference
2. Purse to claiming price ratio
3. Minimum claiming amounts
4. Qualifying Standards
5. Time Allowances
6. Allowances for Ontario-sired
7. Allowances for purse earnings
8. Conditions based on starts
9. Also Eligible conditions
10. Two-year-old preference

Background

At its meeting of September 2010, the Board of the Ontario Racing Commission (ORC) approved a Race Date Framework for Ontario introducing a new model for racing in the province. Developed over a year in consultation with the industry, the Framework lays out the principles to guide how horse racing is conducted. The initial phase of the Program called for the development of the 2011 race date schedule. This initial phase of the Program was completed and communicated in early December.

Phase II is currently ongoing and involves making changes to the technical elements of Standardbred racing, which includes, for example, changes that will affect how racing conditions are written. Over the past few months, the ORC Implementation and Monitoring Group has been working with industry participants, including a series of meetings with Race Secretaries, to review and fine tune changes to the Ontario Racing Program.

Implementation of the Standardbred portion of the Ontario Racing Program will be monitored closely over the next months and year to make sure these adjustments achieve the goals of the Framework. As with all aspects of the Ontario Racing Program,

any new initiative will be reworked or modified if it is not positively affecting or supporting the Ontario Racing Program in the long term. The racing community is encouraged to contact the ORC Implementation and Monitoring Group with opinions or details of their experiences with the new changes, both positive and negative.

ORC Implementation and Monitoring Group

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Under direction by the Board of the ORC to implement the Ontario Race Date Framework, the following standards, **effective immediately** unless otherwise noted, will apply to the conduct of racing in Ontario, and all licensees are directed to comply with them accordingly:

1. Canadian preference

First preference will be given to horses stabled in Canada on the day of the draw, as follows:

Starters and 'also eligibles' for overnight events shall be drawn by lot from horses properly declared to start, except as follows:

- i) **first preference shall be given to a horse that is stabled in Canada the day of the draw and remains in Canada until the race is contested;**
- ii) **second** preference shall be given according to a horse's last scheduled start in a purse race, other than races designated as schooling races, at the gait for which it is declared.

Exemption to this requirement will be provided for 2 and 3 year olds that have been sustained to the Ontario Sires Stake program for the period from May 1st to November 1st.

The purpose of creating a Canadian preference is to enhance the economy of the Ontario horse racing industry by directly impacting local job opportunities and return on investment.

2. Purse to claiming price ratio

Purses offered on claiming races, including optional claiming races, shall be set as follows:

- Up to a maximum of 70% of the claiming price for Grassroots cards
- Up to a maximum of 80% of the claiming price for Signature cards

In claiming handicap races, the purse percentage shall apply to the highest priced claimer.

This change will be in effect March 1, 2011 for any scheduled races.

Currently different tracks use varying purse percentages which results in horse people being attracted out of their local racing region to pursue more lucrative purse opportunities. This causes some tracks to be inundated with entries while others end up with short fields. The aim of applying purse percentages on claiming races is to create consistency in purse offerings for similar races across the Province.

3. Minimum claiming amounts

The minimum claiming levels shall be as follows, dependent upon the classification of race program:

Race Program	Minimum Claiming Races
Grassroots	\$ 4,000
Signature	\$ 6,000
Premier	\$10,000

Currently there is a wide range of claiming levels offered across racetracks of similar levels. This causes horse people to move their horses out of their local racing region. Consistency of claiming amounts across similar levels of race cards will allow for grouping of similar quality horses which will help to improve the competitiveness of the races.

4. Qualifying Standards

Qualifying times are established as below, effective March 1, 2011.

When entering into overnight races, a horse's individual time in its last clean charted line in a purse, qualifying or schooling race must meet the following time standard for the track at which it is entering to race after the Judges have given appropriate allowances for track conditions on that day.

Track size where entering to race		Track size of last clean charted line		
		1/2 mile	5/8 mile	7/8 mile
1/2 mile	Pacers	2:03	2:02	2:01
	Trotters	2:06	2:05	2:04
5/8 mile	Pacers	2:02	2:01	2:00
	Trotters	2:05	2:04	2:03
7/8 mile	Pacers	2:01	2:00	1:59
	Trotters	2:04	2:03	2:02

These standards reflect the realities of a horse population that competes across many different tracks. Where a horse is moving between track sizes, allowances have been built into the standards. Moving up or down one track size gives an adjustment of 1 second, and moving up or down two track sizes gives an adjustment of 2 seconds.

For example, a horse that is entering to race at Mohawk when its last start was at Clinton, will need a time of 2:01 to be eligible (1:59 plus 2 seconds allowance given for moving up two track sizes). Conversely, a horse entering a race at Clinton when its last start was at Mohawk will need a time of 2:01 to be eligible (2:03 minus a 2 second allowance applied for moving down two track sizes).

These changes will be in effect March 1, 2011 for any scheduled races.

Standardized qualifying times will help to create consistency across Ontario racetracks, making it easier for horse people and customers to understand.

5. Time Allowances

Time allowances will be standardized as follows:

Reason	Allowance
Seasonal – for starts from November 1 to April 30, inclusive.	1 second
2 year-olds	2 seconds
3 year-olds	1 second

Times allowances are for Overnights only and do not apply to added money events.

These changes will be in effect March 1, 2011 for any scheduled races.

Establishing standards across all racetracks for qualifying time allowances is intended to create more consistency in racing in the province and increase uniformity for horse people.

6. Allowances for Ontario Sired

Allowances for Ontario-sired horses will only be permitted for 2, 3 and 4 year-olds and will only be applied to the money conditions of the class, not on purse earnings of the horse. Allowances apply to all money conditions, as follows:

Race Program	Earnings Allowance
Grassroots	50%
Signature	50%
Premier	none

These changes will be in effect March 1, 2011 for any scheduled races.

Currently, racetracks are not applying the same allowance for Ontario Sired horses. This makes it difficult for horse people to classify their horses and confuses customers regarding how certain horses fit into the conditions of the race.

7. Allowances for purse earnings

Allowances will only be applied to the money conditions of the class, as follows:

Race Program	Gender Allowance for Fillies/Mares vs Colts/Geldings	Age Allowance for 2 Year Olds only
Grassroots	25%	None
Signature	25%	None
Premier	25%	50%

These changes will be in effect March 1, 2011 for any scheduled races.

Inconsistency regarding how allowances on purse earnings are applied has led to inconsistency in racing. These standardized allowances are intended to increase consistency across Ontario regarding how allowances are applied and enhance overall competitiveness (e.g. create a level playing field among genders).

8. Conditions based on starts

Conditions will be written using the last 3 starts of a horse. When opening up a class, Race Secretaries are permitted to open to last 4, last 5 or to last 6 starts on 'also eligible' conditions only.

These changes will be in effect March 1, 2011 for any scheduled races.

The conditions based on starts vary considerably among racetracks regarding the number of starts applied. Currently the number of starts applied can range from 2 to 10. The concern from horse people is that their horse is restricted to a class in which they are not competitive for an extended period of time. Basing condition races on a horse's last three starts provides a better indicator of how the horse is currently performing.

9. 'Also Eligible' Conditions

ORC Rule 14:06(b) reads:

Conditions:

<rule continued>

(b) Shall not be written in such a way that any horse is deprived of an opportunity to race in a normal preference cycle. Where the word preference is used in a condition, it shall only supersede date preference as provided in the rules. **Not more than three also eligible conditions shall be used in writing the conditions for overnight events.**

<rule continued>

A review of interpretation of the rule regarding 'also eligible' conditions has identified that there are inconsistencies among the Race Secretaries on how they write the conditions of the race.

In order to tighten up the competitiveness of the field and make it easier for horse people to know what class to enter, the consistency regarding the application of this rule is emphasized with the Race Secretaries of all racetracks. In application, there will only be 4 ways for a horse to meet the condition of the race, the original condition plus 3 also eligible conditions.

10. Two year old preference

ORC Rule 17.10 reads in part:

<rule continued>

Preference shall be governed by the following:

- (f) If conditions so specify, preference can be given two-year-olds, regardless of preference date.

Race Secretaries are advised that this rule can no longer be used to give 2 year olds preference to draw the inside position over older horses.

John L. Blakney
Executive Director