



## AMENDMENTS TO AUSTRALIAN RULES OF RACING

### **Amendment - AR 88B and Code of Practice (COP) - Horses that have not started for 12+ months**

#### **Background**

Where a horse has not raced for 12 months or longer, a satisfactory veterinary clearance must be obtained and the horse must trial satisfactorily before being granted permission to nominate for a race.

There have been several reviews of racehorse musculoskeletal injury (MSI) that identified older age at first start is associated with MSI. Conversely multiple studies have shown that racehorses competing in their first race start in their two-year-old year have a longer racing career and a reduced risk of fatal injury later in life.

Racehorse bones must adapt to racing speeds and distances. Young bones, whilst less resistant to injury, importantly have the greatest capacity for adaptation. This is why there is concern that older horses just beginning their racing careers, particularly at five-years-old and above, may not have a musculoskeletal system that is sufficiently adapted to tolerate the extreme loads sustained at top racing speeds. Upper limb fractures such as humeral stress and catastrophic fractures are more common in this older group of horses.

#### **VAAG Recommendation**

It is proposed to amend the current COP for horses that have not started for 12+ months to include unraced 5YO and older horses.

#### **COSC consideration – COP – Horses that have not started for 12+ months – addition of unraced 5YO and older horses**

COSC considered the VAAG recommendation at their meeting of 23 April 2025 to amend the COP referred to above as proposed, and to progress the matter to RA for consideration.

#### **Summary**

The Board of Racing Australia approved the amendments to the COP (under Policy and Protocols) and AR 88B set out below in red.

During PRA consultation it was identified that the change to the COP required a necessary wording change to AR 88B Horses Returning from Extended layoffs, Injuries etc (1) to ensure both the rule and COP were consistent. The Board of Racing Australia approved the amendments to AR 88B as set out below in red.

## **Code of Practice (COP) - Horses that have not started for 12+ months or Unraced 5yo and older**

### **Policy**

Where a horse has not raced for 12 months or longer, **or the horse is aged five years or older and has not started in a race**, a satisfactory veterinary clearance must be obtained and the horse must trial satisfactorily before being granted permission to nominate for a race.

### **Protocols**

- 1) Veterinary clearance before trialling

**The trainer of a horse that;**

- (i) **has not raced for 12 months or longer, or**
- (ii) **is aged five years or older and has not started in a race,**

must produce to the Stewards a veterinary clearance as well as any other information, examination or report they require, from a qualified veterinary surgeon indicating that the horse is suitable to resume trialling and racing. Details of any injury or medical condition which might have caused the prolonged break from training or racing must be provided with the veterinary clearance

Following receipt of a satisfactory veterinary clearance, the Stewards may grant written permission for the horse to be nominated for and participate in an official trial or jump-out.

### **AR 88B Horses returning from extended layoffs, injuries etc.**

(1) Where a horse has not participated in a race for 12 months or more, **or the horse is aged five years or older and has not started in a race**, the trainer and any other person in charge of the horse must comply with the Racing Australia Code of Practice: Horses that have not started for 12+ months (as amended from time to time) in respect of any future running of the horse in a race, official trial or jump-out.

**Date of effect: 1 June 2026**