



## NZTR CIRCULAR No. 19

5 January 2026

NZTR CIRCULAR 205-26 - No. 19

TO ALL RACING CLUBS AND RECOGNISED INDUSTRY ORGANISATIONS

## PROPOSED RULE AND REGULATION CHANGES

*\*(New wording is in bold and underlined, words to be deleted are struck out)*

If you would like to make any comments or provide any other feedback on the proposed Rule amendments, please do so in writing to [colin.hall@nztr.co.nz](mailto:colin.hall@nztr.co.nz) on or before **Thursday 5 February 2026**.

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**1. JUDGING RACES, FINISHING MARGINS, AND OFFICIAL PLACINGS**

When the horses in a race cross the finish line, the photo finish camera takes a picture and records the exact time each horse completes the race. This system can show how much time separated each horse, which can then be converted into "lengths" — a standard way of measuring how far apart the horses finished.

Although the system automatically calculates these margins, the Judge can choose to manually adjust them. This has led to margins sometimes being determined by personal judgement, which can cause confusion and lead to mistakes or inconsistencies.

These inconsistencies matter a lot. For example, a difference of just one length can change a horse's international rating by up to three points. Even a single point can decide whether a major race keeps its prestigious status or is downgraded. Margins are also used to set domestic ratings and are important for professional punters who study horse performance.

To improve accuracy and consistency, management recommends:

- Updating the definition of the Judge's Report
- Changing the Rules so they match current technology and judging methods
- Making sure all Judges use the same method for calculating margins
- Using the "Elapsed Time" margins (the time each horse takes to finish) as the official margins

Stewards have also suggested moving all rules about judging races and declaring official placings (Rule 703) into one section. This would make the Rules easier to follow and help avoid confusion from having them separated.

It is proposed that the definition of the Judge's Report be amended as follows:

**Judge's Report** means the report specifying for a Race the placings of **all horses which finished the Race (and such other information as NZTR may require)**, which is prepared and signed by the Judge in accordance with Rule 641.



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It is proposed that the Rule 641 be deleted and replaced with the following new Rule 641:

### JUDGING OF THE RACE AND DECLARATION OF THE OFFICIAL RESULT OF PLACINGS.

- 641** (1) The Judge must, as soon as possible after the finish of a Race, obtain a copy of the finish report from the photo finish camera system and use it to place and name all horses which finished the Race, according to the order in which their noses have reached the winning post.
- (2) Where the finishing times of, and the margins between, the horses in a Race are provided by the photo finish camera system, such information must be used by the Judge, without amendment, in preparing the Judge's Report for the Race.
- (3) Once all information required by the draft judge's report has been added, the Judge must ratify such report. The ratification of the report by the Judge shall deem it to be the Judge's Report.
- (4) Once completed, the Judge's Report must be immediately delivered to the Stipendiary Stewards and to the Clerk of the Scales. A copy of the Judge's Report must also be sent to NZTR.
- (5) The decision of the Judge of the order in which the horses have reached the winning post shall be final except:
- (i) the Judge may correct any mistake prior to the declaration of the Official Result of Placing; and
  - (ii) the Stewards may alter a determination made by the Judge prior to or after the declaration of the Official Result of Placing if the Stewards are satisfied on the available evidence, that the Judge has made a mistake in the determination of the finishing order of the Race.
- (6) If for any reason, the photo finish camera system fails, or fails to provide the finishing times of horses or the margins between them, for a Race, the Judge must immediately notify the Stewards of such failure and must, using available video footage and in consultation with the Stewards, place the horses and calculate the margins between them, using such method for calculating the margins as has been approved for that purpose by NZTR.
- (7) Once the Stipendiary Stewards:
- (i) have received the Judge's Report, which may have been corrected as provided for in Rule 641(5), and
  - (ii) have received confirmation from Clerk of the Scales that the Riders have weighed in at the correct weight and in compliance with the Rules; and
  - (iii) are satisfied that an information of the type referred to in Rule 907(2) that may result in an alteration of the placings of one or more of the horses in a stake bearing place has not been filed, or reasonably believe that such information is not about to be filed,



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the Stipendiary Stewards will declare the Official Result of Placings for that Race.

- (8) If an information of the type referred to in Rule 907(2) that may result in an alteration of the placings of one or more of the horses in a stake bearing place in a Race has been filed, or is reasonably believed by a Stipendiary Steward to be about to be filed, the Stipendiary Stewards must not declare the Official Result of Placings in that Race until the information (if filed) has been determined. Once the information (if filed) has been determined, the Adjudicative Committee shall direct the Stipendiary Stewards to declare the Official Result of Placings in the relevant Race in accordance with the Adjudicative Committee's decision.
- (9) Any alteration to the finishing order of a Race by the Stipendiary Stewards after the Official Result of Placings has been declared by them will not affect the payment of dividends on the Race.

Rule 703 deleted.

Rule 642(2) amended as follows:

- (2) For the purposes of Rules 637 and 642:
- (a) placed horse shall be a horse which is placed first, second, third, fourth or fifth by the Judge, provided that the Stewards, in their discretion, may allow a protest made under Rule 642(1) to be made on behalf of a horse that has been placed below fifth by the Judge.

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## 2. ELIGIBILITY OF HORSES FOR RACES

The increasing focus on equine welfare requires NZTR to ensure (to the extent reasonably possible) that horses do not have to endure any unnecessary suffering. There should also be documented evidence that NZTR clearly prohibits or strictly regulates procedures which may cause suffering.

There are a number of procedures which have been identified as causing unnecessary suffering, or which should be regulated by racing authorities (including NZTR) because of the nature of their effect. These procedures are listed in the International Agreement on Breeding, Racing and Wagering.

NZTR recommends that the Rules be amended as follows to regulate the relevant procedures:

### New Definitions:

Thermocautery means the application of cautery (commonly referred to as 'firing' or 'pin-firing') to the legs of a horse as a remedial or preventative treatment for lameness from injury to any one or more musculoskeletal tissues

Blistering means the application of a substance to cause blistering (vesiculation) and inflammation of the skin and underlying tissues.



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Chemical Castration means giving a horse any drug or implant that shuts down the testes or male hormones to make the horse act like a gelding, without surgically removing the testes.

Immunocastration means giving a horse a vaccine or similar treatment that makes the immune system block hormones, so that the horse stops producing testosterone, sperm, or showing stallion behaviour.

### New Rules 525(2)(j), (k) and (l)

- 525 (1) The horses mentioned in sub-Rule (2) of this Rule are hereby:
- (a) prohibited from being trained upon a Racecourse or Training Facility; and
  - (b) deemed to be ineligible to be entered for or to start in a Race,
- and any such horse which is entered for or starts in a Race shall be liable to any penalty which may be imposed pursuant to Rule 803 and the person who entered the horse in that Race commits a breach of these Rules.
- (2) A horse is subject to the disabilities contained in sub-Rule (1) of this Rule if it is:
- (j) a horse which has been subjected to Thermocautery. (Note: horses which have had this procedure are permanently banned because the procedure causes permanent damage to the horse's tendons.)
  - (k) a horse which has been subjected to a Blistering procedure at any time within the previous 12 months.
  - (l) a horse which has been subjected to a Chemical Castration or Immunocastration procedure at any time within the previous 12 months.
- 801 (1) A person commits a Serious Racing Offence within the meaning of these Rules who:
- (af) performs, or attempts to perform, on a horse or who causes or permits, or attempts to cause or permit, a person to perform on a horse, any of the following procedures :
    - (i) Thermocautery;
    - (ii) Blistering;
    - (iii) Chemical Castration;
    - (iv) Immunocastration.



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### 3. EQUINE WELFARE.

It is never acceptable to stop a horse from having water, unless a veterinarian has specifically told you to do so. This behaviour should be dealt with seriously. While Rule 1402(1) generally requires that a horse's needs are met, deliberately not giving a horse water is considered a much more serious matter and should be clearly banned by the Rules.

NZTR proposes that Rule 1402(2) be amended as follows:

1402 (2) Without limiting sub-Rule (1) of this Rule, each person to whom this Rule applies in respect of a horse must:

- (a) ensure that the horse receives, as soon as is reasonably practicable, husbandry or treatment that alleviates any deficiencies in nutrition or provisions or unreasonable or unnecessary pain or distress being suffered by the horse;
- (b) **not withhold water from the horse to the detriment of its health, welfare or safety.**

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### 4. SAMPLING.

Rule 210(1) allows Stewards to take a sample from a horse at any time, starting from when withdrawals begin up until race day. However, samples must be collected following swabbing instructions or any other directions provided by NZTR.

Currently, swabbing is managed by the Racing Integrity Board (RIB), which creates and updates the swabbing instructions. These instructions are standard procedures that guide sample collectors and are developed by the RIB Executive, who have the necessary expertise. NZTR's role is limited to posting these instructions on its website to comply with the Rules, making it appear as though the instructions come from NZTR.

NZTR believes this process is inefficient and not needed. It recommends changing the Rules so that the RIB is officially responsible for developing and issuing swabbing instructions.

It proposes that Rule 210(1)(b) be amended as follows:

- 210 (1) From any time at which withdrawals close for any Race Meeting and during any Race Meeting Stipendiary Stewards and Investigators have power where any horse has been entered for or has run in any Race, to order that at the expense of the Owner: [Amended 1 December 2013]
- (a) any person take, and maintain, possession of any horse at any place for such period and under such conditions as the Stipendiary Stewards or Investigators specify; and/or
  - (b) the horse be examined and/or tested and/or have any Sample taken there from. Any such Sample ordered to be taken shall as far as practicable be taken in accordance with the swabbing instructions or other direction (if any) from ~~NZTR~~ **the RIB** in force at the time of the order. [Amended 1 December 2013]



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### 4. SOCIAL MEDIA

Social Media platforms can be used to abuse participants within the racing industry. NZTR has reviewed the current Rules and found that they could be improved to more effectively address this type of harmful behaviour. As a result, NZTR is proposing an update to Rule 801(1)(s)(ii) to ensure that all forms of abuse on social media are clearly covered. These changes are intended to better protect everyone involved in the industry from online abuse.

NZTR proposes that Rule 801 be amended as follows:

- 801 (1) A person commits a Serious Racing Offence within the meaning of these Rules who:
- (s) either by themselves or in conjunction with any other person:
    - (i) does or permits or suffers to be done any act which an Adjudicative Committee deems fraudulent, corrupt or detrimental to the interests of racing; or
    - (ii) at any time writes or causes to be written (including in any form of electronic or digital communication), publishes or causes to be published, or posts or causes to be posted on any website, medium, forum, platform or any social media or social networking service, or utters or causes to be uttered, any insulting or abusive words with reference to a Tribunal, NZTR, committee of a Club or a member or Official of any such body or a Stipendiary Steward or Investigator, or Registered Medical Practitioner;
    - (iii) without limiting sub-Rule (1)(s)(ii) of this Rule, posts or causes to be posted on any website, medium, forum, platform, or any social media or networking service, that is available to the public, or any section of the public, any comment, image, video, digital or electronic communication, that may insult, humiliate or cause serious emotional distress to any entity or person referred to in that sub-Rule or to any Licenceholder or other industry participant, or that is otherwise harmful to the reputation or standing to the New Zealand racing industry;

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### 5. USE OF DEVICES WHILE HANDLING HORSES

Rule 352 currently says that Riders cannot hold or use a mobile phone or any other electronic device while riding a horse. NZTR feels that it should apply whenever someone is in control of a horse, not just when mounted. Because horses can be unpredictable and dangerous, anyone handling a horse should not be distracted by devices like phones. Using electronic devices while in charge of a horse is a serious safety risk. The rules should clearly state that such risky behaviour is not allowed in the racing industry.





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NZTR proposes moving Rule 352 to Rule 304B. The updated rule would then apply to all Licence Holders, not just Riders. It would also make it clear that Licence Holders are not allowed to use electronic devices while they are in control of a horse.

It also proposes amending Rule 304A which requires that all licence cards be visible when licence holders are carrying out their duties as the cards are now electronic and are on mobile devices.

NZTR is also proposing a change to Rule 304A. Currently, this rule requires that all licence cards are visible when licence holders are doing their work. Since licence cards are now electronic and stored on mobile devices, the rule will be updated to make it clear that showing the electronic card on your phone or device meets this requirement.

NZTR proposes that Rule 352 be deleted and a new Rule 304B be added, and Rule 304A be amended, as follows:

~~352 Unless permitted to do so by a Stipendiary Steward, a Rider must not when mounted on a horse use, or hold in their hand, any mobile phone, radio, or other electronic device, apparatus, or instrument or equipment capable of receiving, transmitting or playing information.~~

304A All Licenceholders attending to any horse, or fulfilling any duties, at any Race Meeting or Trials (including jump-outs or tests for certification purposes) must ~~wear, so as to be visible by relevant officials,~~ or be able to produce on demand, a current identification card issued by NZTR.

**304B Unless permitted to do so by a Stipendiary Steward, a Licence Holder must not when mounted on or leading a horse, or at any time when in control of a horse, use, or hold in their hand, any mobile phone, radio, or other electronic device, apparatus, or instrument or equipment capable of receiving, transmitting or playing information.**

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## 6. REPORTING OF CONCUSSIONS.

Concussions in horseracing are a serious issue because they can cause lasting problems. Symptoms including confusion, headaches, or feeling down can last for months or even years. Having more than one concussion, especially close together, increases the risk of developing brain conditions such as dementia, Alzheimer's Disease, stroke, or problems with thinking and memory. There is also a risk of developing Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy (CTE), a serious brain disorder.

NZTR has a Concussion Policy to help manage cases when they are reported. However, it's very important for doctors to know if someone has had previous concussions. This is because the risks are much higher if a person had more than one.

If Riders don't share their full concussion history, it can put them at greater risk for long-term health problems. It also makes it harder for NZTR to keep Riders safe, and for doctors to give the right treatment.

To help protect Riders, NZTR recommends new rules: every Rider who gets a head injury should be checked for concussion. If they are diagnosed with a concussion, they must let NZTR know.

NZTR proposes that new Rules 353(1) and (2) be added as follows:



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- 353 (1) a Rider who suffers any incident, irrespective of where it occurs and whether related to horseracing or not, which could result in a concussion, must ensure that they are assessed for concussion by a suitably qualified medical practitioner within 48 hours of the incident.
- (2) A Rider who is diagnosed with a concussion, irrespective of where it occurs and whether related to horseracing or not, must report such concussion to NZTR.

### 7. PARAMEDICS AT TRIALS.

A Club running the Trials must make sure an ambulance is present, as well as an “ambulance officer.” St John has explained that fully qualified Paramedics are trained to carry out concussion checks using their standard St John concussion assessment. NZTR believes that the person provided by St John for Trials needs to be able to do a concussion assessment. For this reason, the Rules should clearly state that a Paramedic must be available at all Trials to ensure riders’ safety.

Management proposes that the Third Schedule be amended as follows:

#### Third Schedule – Regulations for Trials

- 9 The Club shall:
- (a) ensure the presence of an ambulance; and have a ~~doctor on stand-by in the near vicinity, and/or a fully qualified St John Ambulance Officer~~ **Paramedic** (or similar) in attendance.

### 8. ADDITIONAL MICROCHIPS, ALTERATIONS TO PERMANENT IDENTIFICATION MARKINGS.

Recent conversations about adding a second microchip to a horse, for reasons other than registration, have shown that it’s important to have clear rules about changes to a horse’s identification. While someone may have a good reason for changing markings or adding another microchip, these changes can create confusion when identifying horses at auctions, Trials, Races, or during export. NZTR is proposing rules to make sure any changes to a horse’s identification, like adding a microchip or altering markings, must be approved first - helping everyone avoid mix-ups and keep identification accurate.

NZTR proposes that the following new Rule 407A be added:

- 407A (1) No microchip shall be inserted into a horse other than as required by NZTR for the purpose of registration in accordance with Rule 407(a), without the prior written approval of NZTR. NZTR may grant approval for additional microchips to be inserted into a horse for such reasons and on such conditions as it sees fit, in its sole discretion.**
- (2) Alterations must not be made to any freeze brand, or any other permanent identification marking, of a horse at any time after the application for registration of the horse has been submitted to NZTR, without the prior written approval of NZTR.





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NZTR may grant approval for an alteration to the freeze brand or other permanent identification marking of a horse for such reasons and on such conditions as it sees fit, in its sole discretion.

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- (3) NZTR may cancel the registration of any horse which has been microchipped or whose freeze brand or other permanent identification marking has been altered, other than in accordance with Rule 407 or this Rule 407A.
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### 9. WHIP USE IN JUMPS RACES

The recent Jumps Racing season has shown that stricter rules are needed when it comes to using whips during Jumps races. NZTR believes it is especially important to pay close attention to how the whip is used on horses that are clearly very tired near the end of a race. This will help ensure the welfare of the horses and present a better image of jumps racing.

NZTR proposes that sub-Rule 683(3)(h) (i) be amended to read:

- (i) strike a horse with a whip more than ~~10~~ **7** times **in total** ~~prior to the 100-metre mark.~~ (other than in a slapping motion down the shoulder with the whip hand remaining on the reins); or

If you would like to make any comments or provide any other feedback on the proposed Rule amendments, please do so in writing to [colin.hall@nztr.co.nz](mailto:colin.hall@nztr.co.nz) on or before **Thursday 5 February 2026**.

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