

**NZTR CIRCULAR No. 18**

19 December 2025

NZTR CIRCULAR 2025-26 – No. 18

TO ALL RACING CLUBS AND RECOGNISED INDUSTRY ORGANISATIONS**DRAFT 2026-27 RACING CALENDAR**

Please find attached a draft copy of the 2026-27 Racing Calendar (**Draft Calendar**), as developed in consultation with TAB NZ, Entain and the other racing codes.

The process for consultation on the Draft Calendar is the same as that followed for the adoption of this season's Racing Calendar. Accordingly, Clubs are required to make submissions on the Draft Calendar to their racing code, who will then provide their views to the TAB NZ Dates Committee.

The Draft Calendar has been developed through several meetings with TAB NZ, Entain and Harness Racing New Zealand (HRNZ). As was the case with the development of the current season's dates calendar, we have explored with TAB NZ and Entain, through the Dates Calendar process, opportunities for growing wagering on our racing. The Draft Calendar reflects the outcome of discussions with TAB NZ and Entain on those opportunities. It has been a very collaborative process, and NZTR, TAB NZ and Entain have readily worked together in an endeavour to produce a Draft Calendar that, to the extent reasonably possible, meets our respective objectives.

We have also been conscious of the need to ensure that the industry is sustainable after the expiry of the "distribution guarantee" period. Accordingly, we have worked closely with Entain to identify and maximise, opportunities to achieve this through the Dates Calendar process. In saying this, we note that the Draft Calendar contains significantly fewer substantive changes than the dates calendar for the current season and the 2024-25 season.

The following key points should be considered when reviewing the Draft Calendar:

1. Licence Numbers

It is proposed that a total number of 311 Thoroughbred meetings will be held in the 2026-27 season, which is three more than in the final dates calendar for the current season. Two of these meetings are, however, due to there being five Saturdays in August 2026.

There are 48 meetings scheduled for Fridays, and 64 meetings scheduled for Sundays in the Draft Calendar, with 14 Sundays having dual Thoroughbred meetings. This is a reduction of six in the total number of Sunday meetings compared to the current racing season.

In finalising a Draft Calendar with that number of meetings, we have tried to balance the need to ensure we are putting on racing that maximises opportunities for horses to race, while also



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maintaining strong field sizes and ensuring the betting attractiveness of our racing product, as this is what ultimately will positively impact returns to NZTR and its participants.

2. Minimum Funding Guarantee

As noted above, the draft calendar has been developed taking into account the level of income “protection” provided by Entain’s five-year minimum funding guarantee as part of its strategic partnership with TAB NZ, under which it acquired management rights in respect of TAB NZ’s wagering and Trackside media businesses for 25 years.

Despite the guarantee, it will still be necessary for NZTR to monitor its costs closely as its share of the guarantee does not necessarily increase to cover costs incurred by NZTR in running more meetings or races than those included in the Draft Calendar. That said, depending on the industry’s financial position, NZTR could still schedule additional meetings and/or additional races to meet demand and may remove meetings or races, if required.

3. Venues

The process of finalising the Draft Calendar has been complicated by potential issues around the availability of some venues for racing in the 2026-27 season. The Draft Calendar also reflects that we will not be racing at Avondale in the 2026-27 season. Based on the success of the Waipukurau JC meeting at Waipukurau in November, we have allocated a single meeting to that venue in the Draft Calendar.

4. Jumps racing

The Draft Calendar contains a Jumps Racing programme that is consistent with the 2025 Jumps Racing programme.

NZTR will consult separately with the Jumps Racing Committee on the programme for each Jumps meeting.

Underlying Strategy

The process and strategy driving the Thoroughbred-related elements of the Draft Calendar should be considered by racing Clubs and other RIOs in the context of:

- Ongoing work by the NZTR Executive and Board to optimise the racing calendar from a wagering perspective while still meeting NZTR’s statutory objectives and functions;
- NZTR’s commitment to improving its racing product, not just domestically but also how we present our racing in Australia and more broadly. NZTR continues to review and assess initiatives in this area, as well as working with Entain and other wagering operators outside of New Zealand to best present our racing product. Venue utilisation, including the prioritisation of our principal wagering venues, remains a key element of this;



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- Infrastructure changes, including the timing of key infrastructure projects (e.g. major track renovations) and any reassessments of jumps racing may impact the future allocation of race dates; and
- The future financial position of the industry – the strategic partnership between Entain and TAB NZ, and Entain's desire to invest in the industry, provides Thoroughbred racing with a number of opportunities to grow revenue from outside of New Zealand, while continuing to focus on delivering a higher quality product domestically.

NZTR reserves the right to make further changes to the Draft Calendar, in conjunction with the other codes, should changes be warranted in its view or should opportunities for maximising wagering (and other) revenue be identified before the 2025-26 Dates Calendar is approved formally by the TAB Dates Committee.

Submission Process

Submissions are due to NZTR from racing Clubs and other RIOs on the Draft Calendar by 5pm on **Friday 20 February 2025**.

Where possible, submissions should include supporting information and seek to specifically identify the impacts of any suggested changes to the Draft Calendar. NZTR will work with TAB NZ and Entain to understand the likely wagering outcomes of any changes. NZTR will endeavour to ensure wagering revenue is maximised through the Dates Calendar process, while providing a sensible balance for Club benefits and community engagement.

Please send all Thoroughbred-related submissions on the Draft Calendar to submissions@nztr.co.nz.

Issued by the Office of New Zealand Thoroughbred Racing

18 Dick Street, Cambridge 3434

Tel: 0800 WINNER (946 637)

International: +64 4 576 6240

office@nztr.co.nz