

British Horseracing Authority Announces Adjustments to Whip Rules

The Board of the British Horseracing Authority today announces adjustments to the Rules on the use of the whip in Horseracing, following discussions with representatives of the Professional Jockeys Association (PJA) and other stakeholders earlier this week.

Around a year ago, the Authority commenced a review of the use of the whip in Horseracing, focusing on the need for such use, any potential equine welfare issues and the effectiveness of the existing penalty structure. Whilst this process was commenced before the issue was brought to wider public attention, the importance of the review was highlighted by the widespread and significant public comment following a number of high-profile breaches of the Rules.

The process was formalised in April 2011 with a Review encompassing wide consultation both within and outside the industry and led by a dedicated Review Group. The resulting report – ‘A Review of the use of the whip in Horseracing’ – set out clear principles behind the role of the whip in the sport and the need to ensure that the Rules surrounding its use robustly safeguarded the welfare of both jockeys and horses, and protected and enhanced the reputation of Racing. The Review was clear regarding the need to achieve behavioural change amongst jockeys and others; a change in attitudes towards the whip was required.

The Review was approved by the Authority’s Board and widely endorsed upon publication, including by jockeys both in the statement issued by the Authority and independently by the PJA in their own statement of 27th September. However, following the introduction of the new Rules some concerns were raised by the PJA regarding their implementation and, in light of this, the Authority invited the PJA to make representations to the Authority’s Board.

The Board emphasises that it must be the role of the Regulator, not the sport’s participants, to set and enforce the Rules. Regulation cannot be a negotiation, but must involve due consultation. Having undertaken regulatory due process and given careful consideration to the concerns raised by the PJA, the Board has decided that the following Rule adjustments be made:

1. Removal of the numerical limits in place on the use of the whip in the final stages of races (the last furlong of a Flat race and after the last obstacle in a Jumps race). It should be noted in this context that numerical limits on the use of the whip in the final stages of races were in place prior to the new Rules being introduced, including in the final furlong. Numerical limits relating to the number of times that the whip can be used in total throughout a race will remain in place (up to seven times in a Flat race and eight times in a Jumps race). Again, the Board emphasises that these numbers must be viewed as upper limits and not a target number for jockeys in races.
2. Jockeys’ riding fees will no longer be included in the penalties for whip offences.
3. The number of days’ suspension for whip Rule breaches before the jockey’s prize money percentage will be forfeited is to be increased from 3 to 7 days. The effect of this is that where a jockey has used the whip one more time than is allowed

under the Rules, the jockey's prize money percentage will no longer be forfeited, but a suspension will continue to apply.

4. Amending the penalty advice where a rider is referred to the Disciplinary Panel having incurred a fourth suspension of five days or more within the previous 12 months. This advice will be changed to a suspension within the range of two months to six months and an entry point of three months.

These adjustments will take effect from the start of racing this afternoon, Friday 21st October. As with all of the Authority's work, these adjustments will be subject to constant monitoring. Additionally, clear processes are in place for annual reviews of all Rules.

The Board has also considered the impact on those jockeys who have received penalties that would not have been applied if these adjustments had been in place since the introduction of the new Rules. These penalties will be rescinded and appropriate measures have been taken, including the release of riding fees and prize money where applicable, and riding suspensions either annulled or adjusted.

The Board is committed to the highest standards of regulation in the sport, and ensuring that British Horseracing continues to lead the way in matters of equine welfare.

This is a sport not without its challenges, but they will always be outweighed by the sport's strengths. These challenges will best be met – and are being met – by finding a common purpose amongst the sport's participants, and by putting the sport first.

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For more information contact:

Robin Mounsey
British Horseracing Authority
t:02071520048
m:07584171551
e:rmounsey@britishhorseracing.com