



BHA

BRITISH HORSERACING AUTHORITY

A GUIDE TO HANDICAPPING

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INTRODUCTION

The essence of handicapping is a well-tried proposition that the weight a horse carries ultimately affects the speed at which it can gallop. A handicap is a race where each horse is set to carry a weight, allocated according to the horse's ability, in an attempt to equalise every horse's chance of winning. Every time a horse runs in a race the performance is analysed by the 'Handicapper' and the horse (depending on various qualifying criteria) is allocated a rating. Every case is judged on its individual merits with the Handicapper taking into account all the pertinent variables such as the weight the horse carried in relation to other runners, the race distance, the ground, the draw (if a Flat race), the finishing margins between runners, the pace at which the race was run, the strength of the current form of the runners, and whether any incidents occurred that could have impeded one or more of the runners or exaggerated a horse's performance. The ratings are expressed in imperial pounds and are based on the concept that all horses can be assessed on a numerical scale that enables their ability as a racehorse to be compared to others.

Whilst the assessment by the Handicapper of each horse's performance is based mostly on factual indicators, it will also include an element of subjectivity, based on the Handicapper's informed opinion of what happened in any given race. Handicap ratings are therefore a combination of mathematical fact and the Handicapper's interpretation. On all occasions, the Handicappers must be able to provide logical and reasoned explanation for the decisions they have made.

By judging the individual performance of every horse in every race and allocating a weight for that horse based upon the amalgam of its past performances, the current handicapping system aims to provide races which are as competitive as possible. This will generally mean that the racing public will regard a larger proportion of the field as having a chance of winning, and connections will regard a larger proportion of the entries as having a chance of winning and will therefore declare in numbers accordingly.

Safe to say that handicaps are popular with the sport's followers as they not only produce competitive races, but races which often have above average field sizes, all of which is important for promoting British Racing both as a sporting spectacle and as a betting medium.

Handicaps represent approximately 60% of races currently run in Great Britain.

ROLE OF HANDICAP RACES

Handicaps are intended to produce a competitive race structure that provides an exciting spectacle for followers of the sport, both for those who enjoy watching closely matched horses in tight finishes and also from a betting perspective. Betting data confirms that handicaps are popular with punters, with less competitive races (in terms of the number of runners and the relative levels of ability) tending to generate lower betting activity.

THE HANDICAPPING TEAM

Each Handicapper tends to have a "core" group of horses (based on race distance) for which they are responsible. However, flexibility is applied depending on the time of year and the volume of different races being run.

Head of Handicapping

Phil Smith

Deputy Head of Handicapping

Dominic Gardiner-Hill

Senior Handicappers

Martin Greenwood

Matthew Tester

Handicappers

Adam Barnes

Stewart Copeland

David Dickinson

Michael Harris

Andrew Meador

Chris Nash

Mark Olley

Graeme Smith

During the height of the Flat season there tends to be nine handicappers working on the Flat and three on the Jumps, whilst in the winter three more Handicappers will usually transfer across from Flat to Jumping.

The example of the Handicappers' weekly group of horses shown below is taken from the height of each season, although this is merely an example and the responsibilities will often change on a weekly basis, depending on a number of factors.

Flat

Chris Nash	5f, 6f (Class 4)
Stewart Copeland	6f (Class 1-3, 5-7)
Mark Olley	7f
Dominic Gardiner-Hill	8f (1-4), 9f
Graeme Smith	8f (5-7)
Greg Pearson	10f-11f (4-7)
Phil Smith	10f-12f (1-3)
Stephen Hindle	12f (4-7), 13f+
Matthew Tester	All 2yo races

Jumping

David Dickinson	2m to 2m 1½f Hurdles
Chris Nash	2m 2f to 2m 4f Hurdles
Martin Greenwood	2m 4½f+ Hurdles
John de Moraville	2m to 2m 4f Chases
Mark Olley	2m 4½f to 2m 7½f Chases
Phil Smith	3m+ Chases

AIMS OF THE HANDICAPPERS

The work of the Handicappers is based on professional judgement, working to principles that reflect them being consistent, fair, logical and acting with integrity at all times. The aims of the Handicappers can be summarised as follows:

1. To achieve a competitive race with a close finish with a view to providing an exciting sporting spectacle. We want owners, trainers and the betting public to feel their horse has a chance of winning for as long as possible in a race.
2. To ensure that every horse's handicap rating gives it a theoretical equal chance of success on its best recent form under its optimum conditions.
3. To set an interesting puzzle that the public find intriguing to solve.
4. To aim for competitive betting in handicap races, thereby indicating that the public believe that horses have a reasonable chance of success.
5. To re-evaluate ratings after a race so that horses that have raced competitively together are weighted to, theoretically, equalise the form if they were to meet next time they ran.

6. Give significant reductions to the ratings of horses which appear to be deteriorating but also to ignore poor runs by horses with solid recent form for integrity reasons and because they are not weight related.
7. Favour the majority at the expense of the minority. If one horse is rated too highly, then that one horse may not have an equal chance of success on its next start. If one horse is rated too low, however, then every horse it races against may not have an equal chance of success on their next start.
8. To keep the median ratings of all horses on file as consistent as possible with previous years. Both 'slippage' and 'uppage' within the overall rating file are undesirable as they can lead to a mismatch between the racing population and the race programme.
9. To be as open as possible with trainers and owners seeking information about their horse's handicap rating.
10. Be consistent over time so that different generations of horses can be compared internationally and for stud and export purposes.

HANDICAPPING METHODOLOGY

The Handicappers' methodology for handicapping horses is a two-part process as follows:

1. The Handicappers assess each individual performance by a horse, awarding it a performance figure.
2. With reference to the performance figure, the Handicappers produce a handicap rating, which is used to determine the weight that a horse will be set to carry in a particular handicap race.

Each of these stages will be explained in detail below but, firstly, the eligibility rules that govern the circumstances in which horses are awarded a handicap rating are summarised.

ELIGIBILITY RULES

The current rules relating to handicap eligibility are set out in Rules (F) 31, 32 and 42 of the Rules of Racing. Generally speaking, the Rules have been extended in recent years with a view to providing more horses with the option of running in handicaps.

There are various conditions relating to horses that have previously run overseas or are trained overseas but the principal Eligibility Rules can be summarised as follows:

Flat Handicaps excluding Nursery Handicaps (F) 31

To qualify a horse must have run at least three times in a Flat race in Britain, or have run in no more than two Flat races run in Britain and won at least one of them.

In the case of handicap race with a total prize fund of at least £30,000, the horse must have run at least three times.

Nursery Handicaps (i.e. for 2yos) (F) 32

Generally speaking, a 2yo must have run at least three times in a Flat race in Britain to run in a nursery.

In addition, a 2yo may run in a nursery handicap if the horse has run once and won a Flat race in Great Britain and the Handicapper is prepared to allot it a rating of 80 or below, or if the horse has run twice and won at least one of those two races and the Handicapper is prepared to allot a rating of 85 or below.

Jump Handicaps (F) 42

There are specific eligibility conditions relating to novices and juveniles looking to run in a handicap but, more generally, a horse may run in a Jump handicap if it has run at least three times (in aggregate) in a steeple chase or hurdle race in any of Great Britain, Ireland or France, or it has run a minimum of twice (in aggregate) in a steeple chase or hurdle race in any of those countries and, on each occasion, has been placed in the first four, or it has run fewer than three times (in aggregate) in a steeple chase or hurdle race in any of those countries but, having won such a race, is not a novice or juvenile in the type of race entered.

Where a horse has qualified on races abroad the rule states that a trainer has to give the Handicapper ten days before entry so that the appropriate foreign Handicapper can be contacted.

CALCULATING PERFORMANCE FIGURES

Performance figures can be considered as the building blocks of handicap ratings. They are calculated for each performance and are ultimately used to produce handicap ratings.

In producing performance figures for the horses that have participated in any particular race, the Handicapper will tend to identify one or more 'yardstick' or 'marker' horses through which the level of the race is established. These will generally be horses that the Handicapper believes have run in recent performances to the same level as in the current race, or have performed in the current race to the same level as their current handicap rating.

After finding the most plausible fit with the yardstick horse(s), the relativity between them and the other runners is interpreted by the Handicapper according to an approximate pounds-per-length conversion (illustrated below) and adjusted for the weights carried:

Flat

5f:	3lbs per length
6f:	2.5lbs per length
7f-8f:	2lbs per length
9-10f:	1.75lbs per length

11-13f:	1.5lbs per length
14f:	1.25lbs per length
15f+:	1lb per length

Jump

1lb per length is used in most instances except over very long distances or on very testing ground.

Depending on which yardstick horse is selected, a wide range of interpretations of the merits of a particular race is possible. Experience shows that in handicaps of between 11 and 13 runners, for example, on average only two or three horses will have performed to a level that exceeds their handicap rating. This may not be the case in non-handicap races, which in many instances will have a much wider range of possible interpretations.

When compiling performance figures, the recent form of horses going into the race is obviously taken into account. Many other factors are considered such as whether or not a particular horse's form is progressive or regressive, and whether or not a particular horse is consistent or inconsistent. Reference is made to a horse's highest recent handicap ratings and performance figures; where the performance figures for the race under consideration exceed the 'ran off' handicap rating (i.e. the rating on which the weight to be carried by the horse had been calculated), the Handicapper will decide to what extent such 'improvement' is plausible. The Handicapper's general aim in assessing the merit of each race is to narrow the envelope of possible interpretations in order to obtain the most reasonable and plausible assessment.

PRODUCING HANDICAP RATINGS

(i) New handicap ratings

As explained above, in most cases a horse will have run on three occasions before being allocated a handicap rating. When handicapping a horse for the first time, it is necessary for there to be a clear correlation between the horse's various performance figures and the handicap rating. Ideally from a handicapping perspective, the three qualifying runs would all be to a similar level, allowing a degree of confidence that the initial handicap rating is accurate. If a horse returns performance figures of 60, 60 and 60, the Handicapper would almost certainly award an initial handicap rating of 60. The difficulty arises in three very different performance ratings, particularly in the case of a good run followed by two moderate performances. Generally the Handicapper will err on the side of caution with a handicap rating, giving emphasis to the best performance figure as long as that race looks solid. However, if the horse disappoints in its initial handicap, then a degree of leniency is likely to be shown. This would bring in a sharper than usual drop as long as sufficient evidence is available and conditions were similar to those when the horse achieved its highest performance figure.

(ii) Raising existing handicap ratings

A winner's handicap rating will be raised when the Handicapper has formed the view that the horse needed to improve on its previous form in order to win the race. This would be

reflected by the horse's performance figure for the race it had won, which would be higher than its 'ran off' handicap rating.

In handicaps, because each horse is believed to have an equal chance at the weights, it is reasonable to assume that in almost all cases a horse will have had to improve on its handicap rating to be able to win the race. This is not necessarily the case in a nonratings related race, where a horse may have been perfectly entitled to win a race based on simply running to the same (or even a lower) level of form than it had previously achieved.

There is no hard and fast rule how much a winner has to go up and this will depend on a number of factors, with the average on the Flat being around 6lbs (Jumping 7.5lbs).

It is often also necessary to raise placed horses, particularly in handicaps. In a large and competitive field, the placed horses have beaten most of their rivals despite them having an equal chance. This might imply, therefore, that they too have run above their handicap rating. To maintain an accurate relationship between all horses, and to give those horses that have finished out of the frame a theoretical chance of turning the form around, not only with the winner but the placed horses as well, means a rise in their rating may be perfectly justifiable.

Failure to raise anything but the winner would also result in slippage in the rating file, which would have adverse consequences for the matching of the horse population with the race programme.

(iii) Lowering existing handicap ratings

A horse will have its handicap rating lowered when the Handicapper believes that its current rating is no longer a fair reflection of its ability and therefore does not give it a fair chance of competing successfully.

This may be evidenced when a horse's performance rating is below its handicap rating although the Handicappers do not normally lower ratings after one such performance on the basis that to assume the horse has deteriorated on the evidence of one disappointing run may be too quick a reaction.

However, if a horse continues to return low performance figures (relative to its handicap rating), the Handicapper will usually lower the horse's handicap rating.

The extent of the drop will depend on the profile of the horse. If it is a successful and consistent horse, the Handicapper may be conservative in dropping the horse until convinced that the horse is on the downgrade. On the other hand, if the horse is a less successful animal with only occasional better performances, the Handicapper may decide to drop its handicap rating more quickly.

There is no hard and fast rule when it comes to determining the amount to drop a handicap rating and the Handicappers will use their experience and consider what the horse is achieving at that time in reaching their decisions.

It is worth stressing that in the event that a trainer or jockey provides a report under Rules (C)34 or (D)49 following a disappointing performance, this does not mean that the Handicappers will ignore the performance and therefore not drop the horse. The

seriousness of these reports varies significantly and the Handicapper is more likely to take notice of it if the subject of the report has, in all likelihood, affected the horse's performance, particularly with a horse that had come into the race in good form.

ACTUAL PERFORMANCE VERSUS POTENTIAL PERFORMANCE

Handicapping – if it is to achieve its aim of producing competitive races where horses have been allocated weights to equalise their chance of winning, and therefore are attractive for people to run their horses in and for people to bet on – cannot, by definition, be an exact science. Handicap ratings cannot be compiled solely based on what a horse had actually achieved, but, to some degree, must be based on what the Handicapper believed the horse might have achieved if, for example, it had not fallen at the last fence or had not suffered interference, or had been ridden out to the line when winning easily.

It is hard to argue that it is unfair to put up the rating of a horse that falls at the last fence when clear, for example, because if it were to meet the same horses again on the same terms, most people would judge it to be favoured by the revised weights thus conflicting with the overarching principles followed by the Handicappers.

Given the Handicappers' principal aim is to give horses an equal chance in future races, they have to apply their judgement when allocating handicap ratings and not simply confine their ratings to what the horse actually achieved. The case of a last fence faller having its rating raised by the Handicapper may be considered to be 'unfortunate' for the associated connections rather than 'unfair', and handicap ratings should always be aiming to make future races as competitive as possible.

REASONS FOR REFUSING TO ALLOT A HANDICAP RATING

Rule (F) 42.9 states that the Handicapper may in any case decline to allot a handicap rating if, in his opinion, he does not have sufficient information upon which to allot one.

When refusing to allot a rating, every case is considered on its own merits with the overarching consideration being whether the Handicappers have sufficient evidence to allocate an accurate handicap rating to a horse.

As a guide, the Handicappers might refuse to allocate a rating in the following circumstances:

Both codes:

- Horse not ridden to achieve best possible placing
- Running and riding enquiry held at which connections explain why the horse could not show what it was capable of (but not found in breach)
- Insufficient evidence on which to base a rating such as a race for newcomers, or most horses in the race had never run before, or the best run was affected by something which means it would be guesswork to put a figure on it
- Badly hampered on more than one occasion
- Heavily eased

- Report from jockey suggesting the horse is significantly better than it appears to have shown in a way that cannot be quantified e.g. unsuitable going, choked
- Incompetent performance by a jockey including complete misjudgement of pace of race from front or back
- Horse showed such signs of temperament as to make it impossible to gauge its merit
- When a horse has no rateable form after 3 runs
- Horse stumbled or hung so badly that the horse could not be effectively ridden □ Very slowly away more than once

Flat:

- First time out winners where there is little evidence provided by beaten horses or horse wins so easily it is impossible to quantify what they have achieved
- Where the best run mathematically was affected by any of the above
- When the distance over which a horse has run to qualify is blatantly inappropriate

Jump:

- Where the horse has not completed the race after 3 runs
- Where the horse has not been not competitive at any point in the race on 2 occasions
- Exceptionally poor jumping
- Lack of headgear (compared to good previous Flat or bumper form)

Every case is considered on its own merits with the Handicappers' overarching consideration being whether they have sufficient evidence to allocate an appropriate handicap rating to a horse.

Furthermore, in order to refuse to allocate a handicap rating, Handicappers are obliged to secure the approval of the Head or Deputy Head of Handicapping, thereby ensuring consistency in all such cases. If a trainer wants to dispute a case involving a horse not being allocated a rating, the trainer can revert to the BHA if they wish to instigate the handicap rating appeals procedure that is available.

COLLATERAL CHANGES TO HANDICAP RATINGS

The definition of a 'collateral' change to a rating is when the Handicapper amends a horse's rating (up or down) in the light of subsequent form displayed by other horses which suggests a change in the original level of the race is needed.

The performance figures put on any given contest are the Handicappers' best assessment based on the evidence available at the time – as more information becomes available the Handicappers may refine their thoughts and figures in the pursuit of their primary goal, making handicaps as fair and as competitive as possible.

The tool for keeping tabs on how races are working out is the 'Historical' option on each race result within the domestic handicapping system. This allows the Handicappers to see all the runners' five performances prior to any given contest and the five subsequent performances. Comparing performance figures from a horse's subsequent races quickly highlights whether or not the original level on the race was correct or whether changes need to be made.

This is particularly pertinent in early season Maiden races and with two year olds, where there is often limited evidence available when the original assessment of a race is made. Each Monday prior to the rating deadline, the Handicappers will return to their Maiden races from previous weeks and feed in subsequent performances to make sure the level is correct – should the race be working out well then certain ratings may have to go up. Conversely, if the race is working out poorly and it is obvious the Handicapper overrated the race, then certain ratings will come down.

Latest analysis from the two year olds Handicapper suggests that 62% of the collateral changes made during 2011 were down whilst 38% were up.

Whilst most collateral movements are from Maidens and two year old contests on the Flat and Novice races over Jumps, all previous races are checked on a weekly basis and changes made where necessary.

In steeple chases and hurdle races, the number of collateral drops outnumber the rises by a ratio of 3:1.

As far as handicaps are concerned, the Handicappers would overlook one performance from the principals that might suggest the level needs changing – horses can improve or run poorly for all sorts of reasons – but two or more performances from the placed horses in particular that suggest that the level needs adjusting will usually be acted upon. If the second and third in any given handicap go on to win their next start the Handicapper will usually move the winner up in line with their new marks unless the winner has already run and been beaten off his revised rating – the same is usually true in reverse if the principals disappoint next time.

Where possible the Handicappers will try not to take any collaterally adjusted horse out of its current handicap band as connections may well have targeted a particular race, but the figures do not always allow for this and the Handicapper's primary task must be to put the horse to a mark which gives him/her no obvious advantage over others.

As with many aspects however, the policy is that each individual case will be judged on its own merits and any collateral rise or drop in a horse's rating is at the discretion of the Handicapper.

HORSES RETURNING AFTER AN ABSENCE

When a horse has not run for approaching a year its rating will be deleted from the published file. When it comes back into training it is the trainer's responsibility to contact the relevant Handicapper to apply for a new rating.

When re-assessing the absent horse, it is, of course, vital for the Handicapper to take into account the horse's form prior to the absence. If the horse was regressive and running poorly then the drop will be at the top end of the scale, perhaps as much as 8lbs. whilst a young, lightly raced progressive type who had been winning races might not receive a drop at all. Clearly how the form of the absent horse has worked out in the interim will be taken into account.

The general level of the horse's performance will also be taken into account. The higher the horse was previously rated, the more difficult it may be for those heights to be attained again so the drop is likely to be slightly more generous, whilst horses rated below 50 on the Flat are usually returned to the file at a very similar level in an effort to get them into a race so that the Handicapper can have a "look" at them, and the time, money and patience spent by connections getting the horse back on track is not immediately thwarted by constant elimination from handicaps.

The Handicapper will also check to see if the horse has been running under another code or been running abroad. A horse that has been absent from the Flat for three years but has won a number of hurdle races in the interim is obviously still fit and well and probably more than capable of being competitive off his old mark; thus they will usually be returned to the Flat file on their last published mark.

Similarly, if a horse has been successful in point-to-points since last running over Jumps, the Handicapper will be cautious in considering any prospective drop in rating.

Any horse returning to this country from time abroad will have his rating from the country concerned researched and, more often than not, be returned to the BHA file on that rating.

It is important to point out that any drop for an absence of any kind is at the Handicapper's discretion and not the "given" that some trainers believe it to be.

ALLOCATION OF SEPARATE TURF AND AWT RATINGS

The Handicappers may allot separate ratings to a particular horse for Turf and AllWeather races when they believe that the difference in performances is being caused by the surface.

When reassessing a horse that has two ratings, the Handicapper has to take a number of factors into consideration when deciding whether to alter just one or both of the horse's ratings. These include:

- Is the horse an improving sort who is likely to carry over any improvement onto the other surface? If this is the case then the alternative rating is likely to be raised in line with the rating for the surface that has been raced on.
- Is the horse returning to a level of form that it has previously achieved earlier in its career? If it is, then it may well also return to previous levels it has achieved on the other surface.
- Is the horse significantly better on one of the surfaces? As shown in the table below, some horses have a 20lbs+ difference in their two ratings. If this is the case then the change to the alternative rating is more likely to be minimal.
- Is the horse an exposed, regressive type who is likely to be going 'backwards' whatever the surface? In this case any drop in rating is often replicated on the other surface.

- Do recent performances on both surfaces suggest that there is now little to choose between them? If so then the All-Weather rating would commonly be deleted.
- A horse who does well on the All-Weather during its 2yo/3yo winter will normally return to the grass with a single rating that is much higher than its performances on the Turf the previous summer. If the horse fails to run up to its rating when returned to the Turf, a new All-Weather rating would usually be created to reflect the better performances on the All-Weather and the Turf rating dropped to reflect the lower levels of performance on grass.

WEIGHT-FOR-AGE

Weight-for-Age (WFA) is a weight allowance to compensate a horse for lack of physical maturity.

In practice, the WFA table describes a sliding scale of weight allowances that younger horses receive from older ones, based on the principle that, on average, Flat horses become fully mature at around the beginning of the turf season as 4 year olds, and that young Jumpers are the equal of their older counterparts as hurdlers towards the end of their 4 year old year and, as steeplechasers, approximately one year later.

Younger animals are considered to be more disadvantaged in races over longer distances and the sliding scale reflects this. For example, a 3 year old is presumed to be the equal of his elders over 5 furlongs by November. However, a 3 year old running over a mile on the same day would receive an allowance. Similar distance-based factors are included in the Jump scale.

The WFA scale is designed to reflect the physical development of the average horse. When a Flat horse is described as having 'failed to train on' from two to three, it may be the case that the horse was precocious and had less than average scope for physical development at the end of its 2yo season. It will therefore have regressed relative to its peers. Conversely other horses may improve by more than the scale suggests.

In handicap races with different age groups, the Handicapper deducts the WFA allowance from the weight carried by any horse that receives it.

Each racing nation sets its own WFA scale. The international protocol is that Handicappers normally use the scale in operation in the country where the race was run.

This is not necessarily the case with regards to Irish Jump races because their scale is significantly out of line with Britain's. The policy in all cases is set by the Head of Handicapping.

As the breed develops, it is possible that the WFA scale may require further adjustment from time-to-time.

The Jumping WFA scale has been amended twice in the last 12 years and the Handicappers are satisfied that it is currently working well.

HANDICAPPING CONTROL PROCEDURES

It is essential that each Handicapper within the team adopts a consistent approach, wherever possible.

There are three main control procedures in place to ensure that the Handicappers are operating consistently:

1. Training

Anybody joining the handicapping team undergoes an extensive training process under the guidance of the Deputy Head of Handicapping, usually lasting around six months, before they are given their own group of horses to handicap.

In addition, there are tri-annual meetings for the entire handicapping team which include training sessions to ensure that the team has commonality of approach. This often involves particularly challenging races being selected and each Handicapper assessing the race alone and then justifying to the rest of the group the approach and performance figures/handicap ratings they have awarded.

2. Monitoring by the Head and/or Deputy Head of Handicapping

The Head and/or Deputy Head of Handicapping monitor the work of their team in a number of ways. They may discuss individual horses with the relevant Handicapper on a daily basis and they also check the work of the Handicapper when the treatment of a particular horse is raised by an owner or trainer.

In addition, the Head of Handicapping will review two random races every week per Handicapper. This involves checking that each race's pounds per length is appropriate, that there are no arithmetical errors in the calculation of performance figures and that changes in any horse's handicap rating is in accordance with the Handicappers' broader aims. The review will also consider whether the chosen yardstick or marker horses are sensible.

3. Weekly consultation between Handicappers

The method by which races and horses are allocated between the team of Handicappers also helps to ensure a consistency of approach between the Handicappers.

On a weekly basis, the Deputy Head of Handicapping divides the work of the Handicappers by code and race distance to ensure a fair allocation of races and horses to rate.

The constant movement of horses between distance categories means that the Handicappers are always monitoring each other's work.

This is achieved by a process which involves the Handicappers producing a weekly conference sheet which highlights any horse that the Handicapper is looking at during that week which has also been assessed by a different Handicapper relatively recently.

No such horse can have its handicap rating raised or lowered without the agreement of the Handicapper that previously looked at it.

A further element is added to the weekly conversations between the Jump Handicappers who also have to decide whether a change in a horse's rating might need to be replicated over the alternative obstacle, thereby ensuring that the progress and deterioration which horses show may be reflected in both its chase and hurdle handicap rating.

This consultation process is particularly important for new members of the handicapping team who, as a result, can quickly reach the levels to which the other Handicappers are working.

HANDICAP RATING APPEALS PROCEDURE

In the event that a trainer is concerned with the treatment of a particular horse and has raised the matter to no avail with the Handicapper and also with the Head or Deputy Head of Handicapping, a formalised process exists which enables them to ask an independent group to review the Handicappers' position.

The process, which has been agreed with the NTF, involves a three-man panel reviewing written evidence provided by the trainer and the Handicappers, as well as reviewing the relevant race performances.

The panel has considered relatively few cases with, on average, just one case a year being submitted by trainers, usually disputing a rating or the Handicappers' decision not to allot a rating. In the majority of cases, the panel has supported the Handicappers' position but there have also been cases in which the appellant has been successful.

The handicap rating appeals procedure is as follows:

1. A trainer (described as 'the Applicant') may contact the British Horseracing Authority's Racing Director in writing to indicate that they wish the handicap rating of a named horse, or the refusal to allot a handicap rating, to be reviewed.
2. All communication will be in writing (which includes email).
3. The Applicant can initiate an Appeal in any circumstances providing that they have already requested that both the relevant Handicapper and, subsequently, the Head (or Deputy Head) of Handicapping undertakes a review of the particular rating, or the refusal to allot a handicap rating, since the horse's most recent performance.
4. The Racing Director will co-ordinate the Appeal, and will email the Applicant to request that they supply a written submission and a deposit of £150. Every effort will be made to ensure that the Applicant understands the procedure and is given a fair opportunity to comply with it.
5. Either the deposit will be paid by cheque (which will be presented at once and which must be honoured on first presentation) or the Applicant can authorise in writing that their racing account with Weatherbys be charged with the deposit. In the latter case,

the sum will be charged only if and when the deposit is to be forfeited, which will be determined at the discretion of the Panel.

6. On receipt of the Applicant's written submission, the Head (or Deputy Head) of Handicapping will be asked to supply a written submission explaining the current rating, or the refusal to allot a handicap rating, within two working days.
7. The Panel will already have been put on notice and they will now be sent the first two submissions and asked to watch the relevant races.
8. Both the Applicant and the Head (or Deputy Head) of Handicapping, will be forwarded the respective submissions. Each will be invited to provide any additional written comments within a further two working days.
9. On receipt of any additional comments from the Applicant and the Head (or Deputy Head) of Handicapping (or the expiry of the period for submitting them), and if the Appeal is to continue, these are then passed, together with any comments from the Raceday Integrity Co-ordinator where relevant, to the members of the Panel who are to act. The Panel's review will be conducted by studying the races and the written submissions, and by telephone conversations between them, without necessarily meeting. They are to respond as quickly as possible. All three members of the Panel will be required to adjudicate on each case and in the event that a unanimous decision is not reached, a majority decision will be required.
10. The Panel need not recommend specific changes in the rating of the horse. It is acknowledged that the Panel are not 'super Handicappers'. They can either confirm the rating or they can require the Handicapper to reconsider it, giving greater weight to one or more factors. One member of the Panel will be appointed by the BHA as the co-ordinator and will produce a report which weighs the pros and cons for change. If the recommendation is for no change the result will be notified to the Racing Director at once, with the promise of reasons to follow promptly.
11. In the event that the Panel requires the Handicapper to review the rating concerned, or in the case of the Handicapper having refused to allot a rating and the Panel decides that the Handicapper should reconsider, the Handicapper must give effect to the Panel's recommendation promptly, and then notify the Panel of his actions. Once the rating is agreed, the Applicant will be notified by the Head (or Deputy Head) of Handicapping of the revised rating and the rating will be published on the BHA's Racing Administration website at the earliest opportunity. In addition, the report prepared by the Panel will be forwarded to both the Applicant and the Handicapper.
12. If the horse runs again before the Panel's decision is known, the Appeal will automatically cease. The Panel will decide whether the deposit should be forfeited.
13. If as a result of the intervening performance of another horse the Handicapper amends the rating in the normal course of his work, the Appeal will automatically come to an end but the applicant will recover his deposit in any event. It will be open to the Applicant to apply afresh for an Appeal of that new rating.

14. In all cases the Panel will decide whether the Applicant's deposit is to be retained or forfeited.

THE HANDICAPPING TIMETABLE AND THE ENTRY CYCLE

The Handicapping Timetable

On a weekly basis, the Handicappers submit any rating changes and/or new ratings by 7.00a.m. on a Tuesday morning. Their submission takes into account all races staged in the previous week, running from Sunday to Saturday. So, for example, the ratings provided by the Handicappers on Tuesday 20th September took into account performances from Sunday 11th September to Saturday 17th September.

All rating changes and new ratings are published on the BHA Racing Administration Website by 9.00a.m. on Tuesday morning.

Entry Cycle

Since the introduction of 48-hour declarations, the racing week has been based on a 6day entry cycle with the exception of races staged on Saturday, for which a 5-day cycle operates:

Raceday	Entry and confirmation of entry for early closing races	Confirm weights	Declaration for Flat races	Declaration for Jump races
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Saturday	Sunday
Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Sunday	Monday
Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Monday	Tuesday
Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Tuesday	Wednesday
Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Wednesday	Thursday
Saturday	Monday	Tuesday	Thursday	Friday
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Friday	Friday

Note: 48 hour declarations also apply to certain categories of Class 1 Jump races in addition to all Jump races on a Sunday. Certain important races under both codes close early but the declaration timetable is unaffected.

Relationship between the Handicapping Timetable and the Entry Cycle

For qualification purposes, the rating available on the day of closing is applied and hence, providing a horse already has a rating at the time, trainers are aware of whether their horse is eligible for a particular race.

This is not necessarily the case, however, if the horse is unrated at the time of entry and, in such situations, trainers are encouraged to contact the relevant Handicapper for guidance as to the likely rating of the horse. If the horse is entered and is subsequently given a rating that makes it ineligible for the race it has been entered for, the entry is expunged and the connections incur no cost.

The relationship between the entry and handicapping timetables means that the rating that will be used to determine the weight that the horse will carry is not confirmed until 9:00a.m. on Tuesday morning. This means that, when entering on Monday, the trainer cannot be certain of the handicap rating that the horse's weight will be based on and is therefore effectively entering 'blind'.

This issue has been considered on a number of occasions and various alternative options debated with the NTF. However, it has been accepted that the current process should remain in place, albeit recognising that the challenge of entering 'blind' on Mondays remains an issue. It is the general, although not unanimous, view that as long as trainers continue to be able to get a guide of the scale of a potential rating change from the Handicappers before entering on a Monday, the current system remains the preferred approach.

THE PENALTY STRUCTURE IN HANDICAP RACES

The race conditions for most handicaps includes applying a standard penalty of 6lbs in Flat races and 7lb in Jump races for any horse that wins after the Handicapper has had the opportunity to take account of the win in setting the weight to be carried by each horse.

This standard penalty is based on the median weight rise applied to winners under both codes of racing.

THE ELIMINATION PROCESS IN HANDICAP RACES

The process for eliminating horses from handicaps is set out in Schedule (F) 8 within the Rules of Racing.

In Heritage Handicaps, Nurseries, any other Flat Handicap with a rating range of more than 20lbs, and all Jump handicaps (other than the Grand National), elimination occurs in the following sequence:

1. Horses with the lowest weights
2. Where it is necessary to eliminate some horses with the same weight, those that have incurred penalties will be eliminated first. Those without penalties will be eliminated by random ballot.

In other (standard) Flat handicaps, the first stage in the elimination sequence involves eliminating horses with a handicap rating that is below the rating range stipulated in the race conditions. If necessary, the two stages referred to above are then followed.

The rationale for the current approach is that it aims to ensure that the best horses (as defined by the weight that the Handicapper sets them to carry in order to provide an equal chance of success) line up in every handicap.

A consequence, however, of this approach is that, particularly where there is a large weight-for-age allowance, it can prove difficult for 3yos to get a run.

This impact has been mitigated to some extent by programming an increasing number of 3yo-only handicaps. However, it can prove difficult for many 3yos to get a run in some high profile all-aged handicaps where there is a sizeable weight-for-age allowance being applied and such races tend to see the majority of runners being made up of older horses whilst younger horses fail to make the cut. This issue has probably been exacerbated by the fact that the prize money for these high profile handicaps often significantly exceeds the amount available in alternative weight-for-age races, including Listed and even Group 3 events.

The relative merits of the two approaches, eliminating by weight or eliminating by rating, have been reviewed in-depth on a number of occasions. However, the current approach remains the more-favoured option, primarily on the basis that it is appropriate that horses with the greatest current ability (without having regard to maturity) are favoured within the elimination process.

APPRENTICE AND CONDITIONAL JOCKEYS' RACES

Rule (F) Schedule 13 (paragraph 6.2 and 6.3) states that the winners of races confined to apprentice or conditional jockeys will only incur penalties in subsequent races which are similarly confined to apprentice or conditional jockeys. The full wording is confirmed below:

6.2 *The winner of a flat race confined to Apprentice Jockeys, which takes place under these Rules or the Rules of the Irish Turf Club, shall not incur a penalty in any Flat race unless the race is confined to Apprentice Jockeys and the conditions of the race provide for a specific penalty for winners.*

6.3 *The winner of*

6.3.1 a Conditional Jockeys' race,

6.3.2 a Hands and Heels' steeple chase or hurdle race (as specified in the list of races published annually in The Racing Calendar), or

6.3.3 an opportunity race run under the Irish National Hunt Steeple Chase Rules,

shall not incur a penalty in any steeple chase, hurdle race or National Hunt Flat Race except for conditional jockeys' races and Hands and Heels' races in which the conditions provide for a specific penalty for winners.

There are two main reasons for the current treatment, both relating to ensuring that there will be sufficient opportunities within the race programme for young jockeys to develop their race-riding skills on the racecourse.

The first is to encourage connections to allow their horses to run in these races. Historically, field sizes in these races have, on average, been below the field sizes in similar events open to professional jockeys. The current treatment helps to address this situation by encouraging owners and trainers to run horses in these restricted races. This has had some success with, for example, the average field size in all handicaps confined to apprentices currently at the same level as for all Flat handicaps at Class 3 and below.

In the light of historical trends, some racecourses have displayed reluctance to programme races for apprentices or conditionals beyond the minimum number required by General Instruction 2.4 (one race for every four fixtures on the Flat, and one for every three over Jumps). By making these restricted races potentially more attractive to horsemen, this has helped to address racecourse concerns and, thus, assisted with the programming of these events.

The current treatment of winners of apprentice and conditional riders' races does mean that the winners of these races can run again on advantageous terms if reappearing before their revised handicap rating becomes effective. Clearly this is inconsistent with the principle normally followed by the Handicappers to favour the majority of runners over the minority. However, the importance of retaining apprentice and conditional opportunities, and the industry's interest in the encouragement of young riders, is felt to outweigh the main handicapping principles on this occasion.