



2017 Equestrian Competitor Forums - Feedback

Forums were held in Whangarei, Rotorua, Hawkes Bay, Feilding, Masterton, Rangiora, Mosgiel and Winton with 190 people attending in total.

A presentation was made with questions posed, as well as having an open floor question time.

A summary of the presentation, questions and answers is as follows.

Where did it all begin?

- For some years now the RAS Executive has been advocating that equestrian competitors are stakeholders, our clients, and we need to find ways to get input from them
- The RAS Executive initiated equestrian competitor forums throughout the country
- Feedback from those forums, as well as feedback from a variety of other sources, culminated in 3 key remits that went before the membership.

Thanks to the panel who worked on the feedback received

- Nicky Hutchinson
- Alan Windle
- Kevin Cholmondeley-Smith
- Rachel Walker
- Melissa Jebson

What was the feedback?

- Essentially the competitors wanted improved, accurate and up-to-date information available to them on a database.
- Competitors found the current database lacking and wanted more services not currently available e.g. the ability to track the showing history of any horse or pony wins
- It was generally accepted that a user pays formula would need to be implemented to make improvements, so long as costs weren't prohibitive

How to go about achieving those aims?

- To get more accurate, up-to-date information we need to change the way we do things
- Building a new database is key to the project. The current database is limited and restricted in what it can do as it was set up for a specific purpose – solely to record heights and check novice status.
- Research other databases – look at what ESNZ and Pony Club are doing, as well as talk to key providers Main Events, Equestrian Entries and Show Day.
- Think about the big picture, what we want to achieve and work back from there
- Creating a one-stop-shop website, and the RAS being the portal entry for all A&P show entries/results
- The end product would work as follows – competitor logs in identity and details, competitor registers horse/pony – when they go to enter a show all details are available to be utilised at any show. Any classes entered would flag to the entrant if in the wrong class – e.g. no longer a novice rider or novice horse/pony, wrong rider age group etc. The RAS website would “talk” to the entry providers of Show (e.g. Main Events) entry system so it is streamlined.

What were the principles behind the three key remits – microchipping, competitor registration and horse/pony registration

- Remit 1 – Microchipping of all horses/ponies that require a height certificate from 1 August 2018

- Microchipping has grown in prominence and appears to be the future. Many other countries already have this in place.
- Key in identifying the horse or pony at the measuring stand
- Simplify measuring systems.
- Removal of the diagram from the certificate meant less paperwork and allowed room for other initiatives – more space for owners and leases, allow the recording of separate paced and mannered wins, and the ability to record First Ridden P&M wins
- The one off cost of microchipping was taken in to consideration, and it was proposed to assist by having vets present at measuring days.
- Remit 2 – Competitor Registration & Fees
 - Create a direct line of contact between the RAS and the competitors
 - Create competitor representative positions with those representatives having a direct line of access to the Horse Stewards Council Executive, and attended RAS Conference to put across the competitor's point of view.
 - Be able to monitor rider age groups and novice rider going to open rider.
- Remit 3 – Registration of horses & ponies that compete in the RAS classes
 - At first point of registration time, a new certificate would be issued with a dedicated number. Photos of the horse/pony would be submitted at first registration and held on file.
 - The dedicated number would be allocated.
 - The number would stay with the horse/pony for life and all wins would be logged against this number
 - If certificate lost, certificate would be re-issued with same number.
 - If owner wanted a name change, this could be done, and certificate re-issued maintaining the same number
 - Number could also be used as back number
- **To Summarise**
 - All three remits are the basis of the bigger picture and progressive future.

- The components interlock allowing for the improved systems the competitors have said they want
- Having a one-stop-shop website and being the portal entry for all shows is the key to making life simpler for all involved – measuring, A&P Show Secretaries & Committees and the competitors.

Question 1

Despite the remits being lost, several who voted against wanted more information, or thought prices needed adjusting before they could vote 'For'.

The first question is 'Are the principles correct, and if yes how do we progress them?'

Answers –There was overwhelming agreement with the principles and the great potential for the future acknowledged, however more work needs to be done. That work and thought needs to centre round

- Look at the option of branding as well as microchipping. This lead to discussion on Equine Health and the view microchipping would become mandatory in the future whether we like it or not; there are already moves afoot to ban some aspects of branding.
- Longer phase in time for implementing microchipping.
- If no diagram on height certificate, how is the horse/pony identified going in to the ring?
- Look at other options to identify horses/ponies e.g. QR codes and have apps on phone/iPad
- Understand there are several components and all needs to fit together – look at a package price so cost is not prohibitive (Some people felt the costs put forward were prohibitive, whereas others through they were very reasonable considering the cost of other activities research indicating the average cost of keeping a competitive horse was around \$15,000 annually.
- Look at casual start options
- Liked the idea of having a central “storage” system for competitor and horse/pony details for ease of entering any show/event, and having flags within the system to identify if entering the wrong class

- Progress the ideas but scope the project thoroughly, work out the cost, look at funding options and then put a full business case to the members so they can see the costing aspects.

Question 2

How do we provide flexibility for the RAS organisation allowing the “casual or non-competitive” rider to compete as well as the more competitive rider? How do we take care of the smaller shows who rely on their competitors for survival, yet balance this against the medium to larger size shows who are able to provide more for the competitors?

Question 3

Will introducing RAS Recreational Classes (less rules & regulations) assist with the flexibility and taking care of the smaller shows, and also providing a pathway for competitors to develop into showing competition?

Feedback – Ana Coleman from the West Coast supplied some insight in to the difficulties experienced on the West Coast which reinforced the need for flexibility, keeping costs down as much as possible, and look at packages.

The majority of people felt it was important to be flexible, and if there is a market wanting these opportunities, then the show needed to look at that. Some were of the view that it was “dumbing down or detracting” from the showing classes however this was not the majority view.

At the Feilding forum representatives were present from the Pleasure Horse Society. They gave insight in to what their classes were all about, and how they saw them fitting in to the Showing Movement. Their view was they were different than the showing classes (they are not about conformation, it is all about Paces & Manners) and they are also different from pure recreational classes. They remain keen to affiliate to the RAS – it was suggested to them they needed to re-look at some of their wording and they needed to work with the A&P Societies so they understood their Society and classes.

Other Items for Discussion

- a. Remit 5 – All riders & harness drivers wearing of safety approved helmets – passed 69 for, 19 against – 79% for 21% against. Following the lead of Pony Club & ESNZ – all helmets need to be red tagged for easy identification that they are compliant. Showing competitors can access ESNZ tagging days as we build our own network of opportunities to tag helmets.

Feedback – generally accepted this needed to come in. Some expressed the view a lead in time would have been favourable – it was pointed out that this matter was discussed at the 2016 equestrian forums and it was signalled at that time, that RAS were considering bringing this in.

- b. The Clydesdale Society has identified a number of challenges with the safety helmet remit in relation to the harness side of the equation. The Clydesdale Society made a submission to the RAS Executive, and a one year exemption has been granted for Clydesdale classes involving harness/sled classes only.

Feedback – generally accepted as a good solution.

- c. Side Saddle – Safety Helmets. At the Mosgiel Forum, Sue Kent tabled a letter from the Side Saddle Association. Essentially Side Saddle would like exemption from this ruling due in the main to tradition.

Feedback – generally it was the view that Health & Safety must outweigh tradition however Side Saddle were advised they had the right to put forward a remit next year. They would also need to discuss their concerns and reasoning with the A&P Societies and other Equestrian Breed Societies, as they were the voting members.

- d. From RAS Conference – remove First Ridden section from HOY, based on the HOY environment is not the right place for a transition ring, which is what First Ridden is meant to be.

Feedback – majority view was it should be removed from HOY, and this should apply to Lead Rein as well. Need to look at what happens to both sections within the A&P Show movement – ideas put forward included, 12 months for First Ridden, 6 rider wins and then in to the open pony rings or delete section all together and put first Ridden classes in the 12.2 and 13.2 pony rings.

- e. From Jennifer Hislop – RAS create their own Horse of the Year, based on the classes could get the best ground and maximum exposure.

Feedback – majority view felt that the opportunity to do so had well and truly gone. While they agreed with the reasoning behind having an RAS HOY, the current HOY is more than just the showing section. The atmosphere, social aspect, and trade, are some of the reasons why people go to HOY, not just for showing. The RAS should focus on ensuring the best conditions possible for Showing at HOY. It was felt the RAS needed to concentrate on its flagship events (i.e. Royal Show) and give these more prestige.

- f. From Vicki Ratcliffe - Suggest allowing adults to compete in all pony classes not just novice classes.

Key points:

- Will increase numbers in the pony rings.
- A number of pony owners / breeders struggle to get riders. This will enable them to compete themselves & have more quality ponies competing.
- We lose a lot of riders once they have to go on to hacks as some simple cannot manage the transition.
- A lot of smaller riders look out of proportion when on a hack.
- Do we open up all pony rings for adults for all classes & put weight restrictions on the riders?
- Only open up Ring A to allow adults to ride in all classes?
- Or open up Ring A & B to allow adults to ride in all classes?
- Introduce a new ring for Adults on ponies?
- Or a Galloway section?

Feedback – while some were in favour of this (gives the opportunity for adults to school young/green horses/ponies), the majority felt that it was unfair for young riders to compete against adults, and felt this would be off putting rather than encouraging children to enter showing classes.

- g. Heather Wilson – Showtym Horses – Judging matter, to be forwarded on to judges for discussion.

- h. Heather Wilson – Showtym Horses - We stopped attending A and P shows due to their frustrating deadlines for entry. We know of many others that have also stopped competing for same reason. If you do not grow with the times I fear your shows will continue to decline in numbers and cater only for the ardent showies (which may be what you want). Plans change for many reasons and if you cannot attend a show because of family plans etc and these change last minute then many of us would go to shows if we could enter late. However adamant, inflexible and stringent deadlines are killing any desire to attend these shows.

Feedback – this caused interesting discussion, and depending on whether you were a show competitor or administrator often shaped a certain view point. The discussion did allow each group to see the other point of view and the consensus was it was up to the individual show as to what they could manage. The administrative workload of late entries was acknowledged.

- i. Breed Societies – Arab, Gypsy Cob, Pinto, Standardbred - They would like to see a “combined height certificate” that could record all wins, not just RAS class wins. If this is the case, the database would need to be able to record these as well as having a certificate to do the same.

Feedback – while this was not discussed in depth it was noted that Breed Societies are members and consideration should be given to their wishes when looking at the big picture, to see how they could be incorporated.

Open Floor Discussion

- Merran Hain – qualifying section for HOY means unable to combine sections when you have low numbers. On further discussion it is the Paced & Mannered class that is causing the problem – forward to HSCE for further discussion.
- Merran Hain - Why have qualification for HOY? Quality rather than quantity – if no qualification would have to look at capping numbers in classes.
- Need to promote Showing Movement to younger judges to get them to come through

- Judging of Livamol classes – change order. Why strip? Time involved and can lose the class for the competitor.
- Lack of good fitting helmets that meet the safety requirements.
- Facebook – suggested rather than air negative thoughts on Facebook, private message the concern and follow it through that way.
- Look at Survey Monkey for continuing to receive feedback
- Amanda Barlow & Amanda Berridge – Suggested hold introductory evenings/days to give people an insight in to the Showing Classes – for some trying to enter the first time it is a very scary process. Have a Question Box at the door. This could be something Districts could progress.