

TAB Clubs Grading Policy Review Discussion Paper

This Discussion Paper follows a series of grading seminars conducted throughout the State with interested trainers, officials and industry groups. The paper focuses on 11 areas that were commonly raised throughout the initial consultation period.

Interested parties are now invited to provide submissions on the discussion paper. Submissions should be made by 23 November 2011 and sent to either:

Email: admin@grnsw.com.au or

Postal: Grading Policy Review
PO Box 170
Concord West NSW 2138

1. 5th Grade Qualification (Clause 7)

Issue

A common concern raised is the unfairness evident when younger, inexperienced greyhounds with good form and high points are drawn against greyhounds either dropping back in grade, having significant total category and/or total wins, or having double figure total wins after racing in category C or D races. The challenge is to find a medium whereby the interests of younger inexperienced greyhounds are balanced with those of older 'out of form' greyhounds dropping back in grade.

Suggested Solutions

Suggestions for change included:

- Place a limit on the total wins from both a Category and Total wins perspective to be eligible to contest a 5th grade race when having its first start at a particular track and distance. At present the Policy only applies a limit with respect to Category A winners nominating at Category B meetings and/or Category B winners nominating at Category C meetings;
- Place a limit on the disparity of wins between runners in 5th grade races, particularly when drawing drop back greyhounds. The disadvantage of this approach is that greyhounds that would otherwise be eligible to be drawn will not be;
- Automatically grade Group race winners (excluding Group Maiden races) as 4th grade greyhounds at their first start at a particular track and distance category.

2. Category B 5th Grade – additional clause (Clause 4.3)

Issue

Exclusion of greyhounds having won 4 races inclusive of 2 Category A wins from FFA's and 3/4th grade at Category B meetings. This is effectively excluding well performed, high earning greyhounds from a draw, leading to diminished fields in higher grade events.

Suggested Solution

Suggestions included an addition to Clause 4.3 on eligibility for events. This clause will enable younger greyhounds which manage to win two Category A wins but have not yet won more than 4 races, to be drawn in a FFA & 3/4th grade events at Category B meetings.

The recommended total of 4 wins is cognizant of the eligibility clause for Free For Alls, which requires that a greyhound must have two category wins and five total wins before being considered for FFA's.

Suggested clause:

4.3 (ii) notwithstanding the provisions of part (i) of this Clause, a greyhound having total wins of 4 or less at that particular distance category, inclusive of two Category A wins, shall be eligible to be drawn in a Free for All and 3/4th mixed grade event at Category B & C meetings.

3. Preference Orders (Clause 7)

Issue

Poorly performed greyhounds having a reserve preference under this clause being drawn ahead of well performed greyhounds with significant ratings points. This is particularly evident at times with such greyhounds drawn into a higher division of graded event and affects Category A meetings.

Suggested Solution

That the reserve preference be moved down the order of entry (clause v) behind winners and placegetters at all tracks in graded events, and behind first start greyhounds for maiden races.

This will result in better class fields in all grades and remove criticism currently expressed when greyhounds with very poor form gain preference over well performed greyhounds and maidens having their first start.

4. Mixed Grades (Clause 4.4)

Issue

On some occasions greyhounds have been available to be drawn into mixed stake races, however due to the provisions of Clause 4.4 (i) (a) have not been able to be drawn due to insufficient wins. This has occasionally resulted in 4th grade Category A greyhounds failing to secure a start at Category B meetings.

Solution

The following addition to clause 4.4(i) is suggested:

- b) Notwithstanding Part (a) of this Clause, a greyhound having won one (1) Category A race, exclusive of a Maiden win, shall be exempted from the provisions of clause (a) when nominating for Category B or C race meetings.

5. Guarding (Clause 7.6)

Guarding of some events occurs under the provisions of Clause 7.6. Guarding implies that greyhounds owned and/or trained by the same person will be separated into different races whenever and wherever possible. Guarding remains a vexed issue within the sport and as such comments are sought in regard to the following questions:

- Should guarding be applied across all grades?
- Should guarding be abolished?
- Should clauses be introduced preventing discrepancies occurring when greyhounds are guarded into advantageous/disadvantageous races?

Suggested clauses;

- 7.6 (i) (d) Guarding shall not be applied to any greyhound into a field containing greyhounds which have in excess of 5 wins of the greyhound to be guarded.
- (e) Greyhounds having won two or less races shall not be guarded into fields containing greyhounds which have won more than 5 races.
- (f) The provisions of clauses (d) and (e) shall not apply to greyhounds drawn as reserves in any event.

6. Drop Back Policy (Clause 6)

Issue

Dropping back in grade allows a greyhound which, for reason of injury, age or loss of form, becomes uncompetitive in a higher grade. This maximises the greyhound's racing career in NSW.

A strong criticism of the current Policy is the placing of greyhounds with a high number of category or total wins against a younger, less experienced greyhound coming through the grades with a lower number of total wins. This can be said to be exaggerated by the drop back policy on occasions, dependant on the number of nominations received and is particularly evident at Wentworth Park from time to time.

Question:

Is the current policy provision of just two unplaced runs sufficient to ensure equality in all such drop back situations?

Views expressed on this topic at the grading seminars included:

- The drop back greyhound invariably finds itself in the best quality 5th grade event;
- The drop back greyhound usually has comparatively few points due to poor form, which then makes it harder for this greyhound to pick up it's point rating when it is drawn in the more difficult division;
- On the occasion when it is drawn in an event with inexperienced greyhounds, other competitors will invariably complain about the eligibility of the drop back greyhound.

Suggested Solution

- Should there be a “safety clause” which prevents such disparity in total category and career wins, as in topic (1) above?

GRNSW proposes to examine the numbers of greyhounds to which the drop back policy has been applied and the success rate or otherwise of those runners. Such statistics will be available on the web site shortly.

7. Point Score System (Clause 7)

The weighted point score of a greyhound is used to assist in determining the order of entry under Clause 7 of the TAB Grading Policy. It is the last entry clause used for the purpose of determining fields and recognises the most recent five starts in assessment of total rating.

With the introduction of Category C racing in early 2010 a new level in-between Category B and non-TAB racing was created. The question to be asked may be - has this proven effective given that the previous allocation meant a clear doubling of points from Non TAB wins and placings to that of Category A meetings, aside from maiden class?

As total points score rating only comes into effect after the drawing of the highest meeting category win greyhounds, and then the highest total number of wins, it is often not a determining factor in deciding field make up. Very often the total points simply decide an order for reserve allocation.

Other questions to be asked include:

- Should the ratings for each Category be reviewed to make the allocation more effective, particularly in light of further introduction of TAB C meetings?
- Why is there a far greater percentage disparity in points gained between 3rd and 4th placings at all Categories?

8. Marring Effects

Issue

Greyhounds that suffer a marring event not of their doing in a particular race are disadvantaged when nominating for future races as their total point score is diminished by the event.

Suggested Solution

That a greyhound which has its points score rating diminished by inclusion of a performance which had been affected by a marring greyhound, should have that run disregarded for the purposes of future grading.

9. Drawing of reserves

Issue

At present the allocation of reserves is done by drawing the relevant number of highest point score reserve greyhounds as the first reserve, followed by the lowest point score greyhounds as second reserves within a particular grade. This sometimes results in greyhounds being offered a start in fields where they would not normally be drawn and are heavily out-graded.

Suggested Solution

Reserve greyhounds to be drawn, where possible, into races of closest grading according to the wins and/or points score rating.

10. Late nominations

Issue

A common opinion was that greyhounds which have been properly nominated at the advertised closing time of nominations, should be given preference over greyhounds nominated when extension of nomination closing time is necessary.

However, as there is no change to the qualification placed on those late nominations, is it fair to exclude them from being drawn alongside earlier nominations? To do so would discourage people from providing greyhounds as late nominations and therefore adversely affect field sizes. In many cases greyhounds provided as late nominations may have been intended to nominate at alternate venues and then would miss a start altogether if excluded under such a provision.

Suggested Solution

When nomination closing time is extended due to insufficient nominations being received, that late nominations for a grade with excess nomination numbers be the last drawn greyhounds and/or made reserves where applicable.

11. Drawing of Category D winners

Issue

Drawing of last start Category D winners as a preference when nominating for Category C meetings.

Solution

That last start winners at Category D meetings be given a preference when nominating for Category C meetings. This is further supported by the fact that Category C and D wins are treated as one and the same in the Non-TAB Policy.