

things you need to know as an owner

“The buzz of having a runner in a race is second to none, you just can’t beat it.”

Okay, you now own a horse – let’s book it into the next race at Trentham!
If only it was that easy.

Remember that there is quite a bit of administration attached to owning a horse – your trainer can advise you on what is required, but as an owner or syndicate manager, the majority of the responsibility lies with you.

The NZTR website contains most of the forms you will require, each showing any costs associated with the transaction.

Realistically, it will be some time before your horse makes it to the track. Before a horse can race, it must be broken in. The breaking in process takes at least 6 weeks and involves teaching the horse many skills: turning, stopping, wearing a saddle and, ultimately, having a jockey on its back. It also learns how to follow the running-rail of a racetrack, gets accustomed to the starting gates and generally learns its trade. Once your horse is broken in, it’s usually sent for a spell before being brought back in work for racing preparation.

Injuries can delay or even end your horse’s racing career. Some physical problems can be avoided by critically assessing the conformation of your horse before purchasing. Trainers and bloodstock agents can help you buy a sound horse, but, unfortunately, not all injuries can be foreseen.

Of course, you may have bought an older horse that’s already in work – if so, enjoy the experience.

Weight is another consideration when choosing a jockey. Your horse will be given a weight handicap for each race (unless running in a ‘set weights’ race where weight is based on gender or age). If it’s just beginning its racing career, the handicap will probably be small. Some jockeys are too heavy (even if it’s only by a kilogram) and cannot make the smaller weight handicaps.

It may seem obvious, but your trainer will recommend or select a jockey he or she feels will give your horse the best chance of winning. Different jockeys have different styles and some work better with certain types of horses. Finding the right match is a very important factor in your horse’s success. Conversely, if your horse has been given a larger weight handicap, your trainer may opt for an apprentice jockey. An apprentice jockey has less experience, but, because of this, the rules of racing allow apprentices to claim a reduction in the weight handicap. An apprentice can claim up to 4kg in any race where claims are allowed. As an apprentice wins more races and gains more experience, the amount he or she can claim is reduced. Claiming apprentices are popular choices for horses at the top of the weights. However, it’s a trade-off to use apprentices as they are less experienced.

At some point in your horse’s career it may be the subject of an enquiry or protest after a race. The former is where the Stipendiary Stewards (the police of racing) decide something untoward may have occurred during the race and they want to look into it: the second is where a jockey or the connections of a horse feel they did not get a fair run during the race. Depending on their decisions, the result of the race may change.

